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The People's New Testament

B. W. Johnson





The People's New Testament

Author(s): Johnson, B. W.

Publisher: Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library

Description: The American pastor and teacher Barton Warren Johnson was born in 1833, educated in the backwoods of Illinois, and later attended Bethany College. He taught at Eureka and Oskaloosa colleges and pastored several churches. His commentaries are highly valued, and this *People's New Testament* is one of the most useful. The volume first includes several helpful lists of information like a harmony of the gospels and a list of Jesus' miracles and parables. The end of the commentary also holds a few valuable lists, such as a reference to the Old Testament verses quoted in the New Testament, and a lists of cities and towns mentioned in the New Testament. The commentary itself is also well-researched and viable. It follows the traditional chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse format, but helpfully includes a short summary of what happens in each chapter. Johnson's commentary is used by a diverse group of people, professionals, and laymen alike. It is a resource that should be preserved and used for many years to come.

Abby Zwart
CCEL Staff Writer

Subjects: The Bible
New Testament
Modern texts and versions

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T H E
PEOPLE'S NEW TESTAMENT
THE COMMON AND REVISED VERSIONS
WITH REFERENCES.

WITH
EXPLANATORY NOTES

AUTHOR OF
"A VISION OF THE AGES,"
"COMMENTARY ON JOHN,"
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ST. LOUIS 3, MO.

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Preface

This work has been prepared, not especially for the learned and critical class, but for the people. The aim is indicated by the title. It has been a cherished purpose to prepare a People's New Testament, with such aids as would enable the common reader to arrive at an understanding of every portion of the sacred message. If the Bible is God's message to the common people, the most important object that piety and learning can propose is to put that message in their hands in such a shape and with such aids that the ordinary reader can understand it readily. That message was first given thousands of years ago, in far away lands, to men of strange languages and customs. In the shape in which it was originally recorded no one of only common English education could understand it. If one were to demand the Scriptures as given by the sacred writers, he would receive them in strange characters and unknown tongues of which he could not understand a word or a letter. It is needful for his use that they be translated out of the original tongues and printed in his own vernacular. In order to understand them it is not only necessary that he have the aid of a translation, but even when this is done he will find much that is obscure or hard to understand. There are allusions to the customs of the times and countries in which the Scriptures were written, to the history of Israel and surrounding nations, to the geography of Palestine and other Bible countries, to men of prominence in secular history, and to various matters which must be understood if we would have a clear meaning of the sacred text. Without this understanding the reader moves through a maze of obscurity. Often, too, the meaning of passages of Scripture can only be determined by comparison with other passages. Hence, in order to a clear view of the meaning of the sacred record, not only is there need of the aid of translation, but of a library of Bible Dictionaries, Sacred Geographies, Concordances, etc., unless the result of study of these latter works is condensed in brief explanatory notes on all difficult passages.

The latter is what I have sought in this work to accomplish. The problem has been to give notes on all such passages sufficiently comprehensive to enable the ordinary reader to get a clear meaning of the sacred text, and at the same time to condense a commentary on the whole New Testament in two volumes of about six hundred pages each. I trust that the results will prove that this purpose has been attained. In order to accomplish this at the least expense of space possible, I have given the comment upon Matthew with considerable fullness, omitting no passage the meaning of which is not apparent. Where the same accounts occur in Mark and Luke, the remaining synoptic Gospels, unless some new feature is added, I have cited the reader to the place where the notes are found in Matthew, thus avoiding repetition of comments in the same volume. As the Gospel of John is, to a great extent, independent, the notes are fuller, and the references to Matthew are less frequently made. By this comparison of the parallel accounts the reader will find in the space of this volume all



that is needful for an understanding of the Historical books of the New Testament, including The Acts of the Apostles.

The two versions of the Scriptures accepted among all English speaking people are placed side by side; the Common Version, so dear by the associations of ages, in large type for daily reading; and the Revised Version, embracing the latest results of the critical examination of manuscripts, in smaller type for comparison. Often a passage that is obscure in the Common Version will have new light thrown upon it by reading it in the Revision. If, after both readings have been examined, the difficulty remains, then the notes should be carefully studied. The Harmony that has been inserted from the Oxford Teacher's Bible and the Various Tables will also be found valuable aids.

If this work shall tend to create a greater interest among common readers in the New Testament and help them to "delight in the law of the Lord, and in his law to meditate day and night," I shall praise the Heavenly Father for the grace and mercy he has granted to his servant. May the reader be made wise unto salvation and walk in the footsteps of Him whom these pages reveal until he enters the heavenly rest!



Books of the New Testament

I. BIOGRAPHICAL.

ORDER.	BOOK.	NO. OF CH.
1	Matthew.	28
2	Mark.	16
3	Luke.	24
4	John.	21

II. HISTORICAL.

5	Acts of the Apostles.	28
---	-----------------------	----

III. DIDACTICAL.

6	Romans.	16
7	I. Corinthians.	16
8	II. Corinthians.	13
9	Galatians.	6
10	Ephesians.	6
11	Philippians.	4
12	Colossians.	4
13	I. Thessalonians.	5
14	II. Thessalonians.	3
15	I. Timothy.	6
16	II. Timothy.	4
17	Titus.	3
18	Philemon.	1
19	Hebrews.	13
20	James.	5
21	I. Peter.	5
22	II. Peter.	3
23	I. John.	5



24	II. John.	1
25	III. John.	1
26	Jude.	1
IV. PROPHETICAL.		
27	Revelation.	22

Harmony of the Gospels

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
	The divinity of Christ	---	---	---	---	1:1-5
	<i>Preface</i>	---	---	---	1:1-4	---
5 b.c.	Annunciation of birth of John the Baptist	Jerusalem	---	---	1:5-25	---
	Espousal of the Virgin Mary	Nazareth	1:18	---	1:27	---
	The Annunciation of the birth of Jesus	Nazareth	---	---	1:26-38	---
	The visitation of Mary to Elisabeth	Hebron, or Juttah	---	---	1:39-55	---
	Her return to Nazareth	---	---	---	1:56	---
	Joseph's vision	Nazareth	1:20-25	---	---	---
4 b.c.	Birth and infancy of John the Baptist	and Hebron	---	---	1:57-80	---
	Birth of Jesus	Bethlehem	---	---	2:1-7	---
	Adoration by shepherds	Bethlehem	---	---	2:8-16	---



	Circumcision	Bethlehem	1:25	---	2:21	---
	Presentation and purification	Jerusalem	---	---	2:22-29	---
	<i>Genealogies</i>		1:17	---	3:23	---
3 b.c.	Adoration by the wise men	Bethlehem	2:1-12	---	---	---
	Flight into Egypt		2:13-15	---	---	---
	Massacre of the Innocents	Bethlehem	2:16-18	---	---	---
1 a.d.	Return to Nazareth	Nazareth	2:19-23	---	2:39	---
	Childhood of Jesus	Nazareth	---	---	2:40	---
7 a.d.	With the doctors in the temple	Jerusalem	---	---	2:46-50	---
7-26 a.d.	Youth of Jesus	Nazareth	---	---	2:51	---

**MISSION
OF JOHN
THE
BAPTIST**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
26 a.d.	Ministry of John the Baptist	Bethabara	3:1-4	1:1-8	3:1-6	1:6-15
	Baptisms by John the Baptist	Bethabara	3:5	1:5	3:7	---

Witness to Bethabara Christ by John the Baptist	3:11, 12	1:7, 8	3:15–18	---
Baptism of Bethabara Jesus by John the Baptist	3:13–17	1:9–11	3:21, 22	---
Temptation Wilderness of Jesus of Judæa	4:1–11	1:12, 13	4:1–13	---
John the Bethabara Baptist's second testi- mony	---	---	---	1:19–35
Call of the Bethabara first dis- ciples (five)	---	---	---	1:37–51

**CHRIST'S
FIRST AP-
PEAR-
ANCE**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
27 a.d.	First Mir- acle, at Cana	Cana	---	---	---	2:1–11
	Visit to Ca- pernaum	Capernaum	---	---	---	2:12
	First PAS- SOVER; first cleans- ing of temple	Jerusalem	---	---	---	2:13–23
	Discourse with Nicodemus	Jerusalem	---	---	---	3:1–21

T h e Ænon	---	---	---	3:25-36
Baptist's last testimony				
Christ's vis- i t t o Samaria	---	---	---	4:1-42
Christ's re- turn to Cana	---	---	---	4:43-46
Ch r i s t ' s healing of the noble- man's son	---	---	---	4:46-54

**FIRST
PUBLIC
PREACH-
ING**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
27 a.d.	Imprison- ment of John the Baptist	Machærus	4:12	1:14	---	---
	Ch r i s t ' s preaching in Ga- lilee:—	---	---	---	---	---
	Ch r i s t ' s preaching at Nazareth	Nazareth	---	6:1	4:15-30	---
	Ch r i s t ' s preaching at Caper- naum	Capernaum	4:13	---	4:31	---
	Call of An- drew, Peter,	Capernaum	4:18-22	1:16	---	---

James and John					
Miracles:— Capernaum	---	1:23	4:33	---	---
Casting out a devil					
Miracles:— Capernaum	---	1:29	4:38	---	---
Healing of P e t e r ' s mother-in- law					
Miracles:— Capernaum	---	1:32	4:40	---	---
Healing of many sick and dis- eased					

**FIRST
GENERAL
CIRCUIT**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
27 a.d.	<i>Preparatory Prayer</i>	---	---	1:35	4:42	---
	C i r c u i t through Ga- lilee	---	4:23-25	1:39	4:44	---
	SERMON ON THE MOUNT	Hill above Gennesaret	5-7:27	---	---	---
	Sermon in the boat; miraculous draught of fishes	Gennesaret	---	---	5:1	---
	Healing of a leper	---	8:2-4	1:40	5:12	---

<i>Retirement for prayer</i>	— —	— —	1:45	5:16	— —
Healing of palsied man	Capernaum	9:2	2:1	5:17	— —
Call of Mat- thew (Levi), supper, and discourse	Capernaum	9:9	2:13–18	5:27–33	— —

**SECOND
YEAR'S
MINISTRY**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
28 a.d.	Second Pas- sover	Jerusalem	— —	— —	— —	5:1
	Miracle at Bethesda, and dis- course on it	Jerusalem	— —	— —	— —	5:2–47
	The Sab- bath; pluck- ing corn	Galilee	12:1	2:23	6:1	— —
	The miracle of the withered hand	Capernaum	12:10	3:1	6:6	— —
	Opposition of Herodi- ans	Capernaum	12:14	3:6	6:11	— —
	<i>Retirement for prayer</i>	Capernaum	— —	3:13	6:12	— —
	Ordination of Twelve Apostles	Capernaum	10:2–4	3:14	6:13	— —

SERMON IN THE PLAIN (of Gennesar- et)	near Caper- naum	---	---	6:17-49	---
Healing of the centuri- on's servant	near Caper- naum	8:5-13	---	7:1	---
Healing son of widow of Nain	Nain	---	---	7:11	---
M e s s a g e from John the Baptist; C h r i s t ' s testimony	Capernaum	11:2-7	---	7:17-24	---
Warning to Chorazin, &c.	Capernaum	11:20-28	---	---	---
Mary Mag- dalene	Capernaum (?)	---	---	7:36	---

**SECOND
GENERAL
CIRCUIT**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
	Throug Galilee	Galilee	---	3:19	8:1-3	---
	Healing of a demoniac	Capernaum	12:22	---	---	---
	Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost	Capernaum	12:24	3:22	---	---
	The un- clean spirit	Capernaum	12:43	---	---	---

	The inter- ruption of His relat- ives	Capernaum	12:46	3:31	---	---
28 a.d.	Parables:— The Sower	Plain of Gennesaret	13:1-9, 18-23	4:1, 14-20	8:4, 11-15	---
	The Tares	Plain of Gennesaret	13:24	---	---	---
	The Mus- tard seed	Plain of Gennesaret	13:31	4:30	---	---
	The Leaven	Plain of Gennesaret	13:33	---	---	---
	The Candle	Plain of Gennesaret	---	4:21	8:16	---
	The Treas- ure	Plain of Gennesaret	13:44	---	---	---
	The Pearl	Plain of Gennesaret	13:45	---	---	---
	The Net	Plain of Gennesaret	13:47	---	---	---
	C h r i s t calms storm	Sea of Gen- nesaret	8:24	4:37	8:23	---
	Christ suf- fers devils to enter the swine	Gadara	8:28	5:1	8:27	---
	P a r - ables:—Bride- groom	Capernaum	9:15	---	---	---
	New cloth and new wine	Capernaum	9:16, 17	---	---	---

Miracles:— Gennesaret } Issue of blood	9:18	5:22	8:41	---
J a i r u s ' Capernaum daughter				
Two blind Capernaum men	9:27	---	---	---
Dumb spirit Capernaum	9:32	---	---	---

**THIRD
GENERAL
CIRCUIT**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
28 a.d.	Mission of the Twelve Apostles	---	10:1	6:6-11	9:1-3	---
	Death of John the Baptist	Machærus	14:1	6:14	9:7	---
	Feeding of five thousand	Bethsaida	14:13	6:30	9:12	---
	Walking on the water	Lake Gen-nesaret	14:25	6:48	---	6:1 6:19
	Discourse on the plain and in the synagogue	Capernaum	14:34	---	---	6:26-70

**THIRD
YEAR'S
MINISTRY**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
	Discourse on pollution	Capernaum	15:1-20	7:1-23	---	---

	Syrophoeni- cian woman	Phoenicia	15:21	7:24	---	---
28 a.d.	Miracles:— Healing of the deaf and dumb man	Decapolis	---	7:32	---	---
	Healing of many sick	Decapolis	15:29	---	---	---
	Feeding of four thou- sand	Gennesaret	15:32	8:1	---	---
	Parable of leaven	Gennesaret	16:5	8:14	---	---
	H e a l i n g blind man	Bethsaida	---	8:22	---	---
	Peter's con- fession of Christ's Di- vinity	---	16:13	8:27	9:18	---
	TRANSFIG- URATION	M o u n t Tabor, or Hermon	17:1	9:2	9:28	---
	Healing de- m o n i a c child	M o u n t Tabor, or Hermon	17:14	9:14	9:37	---
	Prediction of His Pas- sion	Galilee	17:22	9:30	9:43	---
	The stater in the fish's mouth	Capernaum	17:27	---	---	---
	Lesson on docility	Capernaum	18:1	9:33	9:46	---

Lesson on Capernaum 18:15 forgiveness	9:43	---	---
Lesson on Capernaum 18:18 self-denial	---	---	---
Parable of Capernaum 18:23 the unmerciful servant	---	---	---
T H E Jerusalem FEAST OF T A B E R - N A C L E S	---	---	7:2, 10
Discourses Jerusalem	---	---	7:10-46
O f f i c e r s Jerusalem sent to ar- rest Him	---	---	7:30, 46
The adul- Jerusalem teress	---	---	8:3
Discourses Jerusalem	---	---	8:12
Threatened Jerusalem with ston- ing	---	---	8:59
Healing of Jerusalem blind man, and dis- courses	---	---	9:1
Christ the Jerusalem D O O R	---	---	10:1
Christ the Jerusalem G O O D S H E P - H E R D	---	---	10:11
FEAST OF Jerusalem D E D I C A - T I O N	---	---	10:22

Christ's Jerusalem oneness with the Father	---	---	---	10:30
Christ's re- treat across the Jordan	---	---	---	10:40
Christ's raising of Lazarus	---	---	---	11:1
Christ's re- treat to Ephraim	---	---	---	11:54
* ¹ Samaria	---	---	9:53	---
* Mission of the Seventy	---	---	10:1-17	---
* Parable of the Good Samaritan	---	---	10:30	---
* Visit to Martha & Mary	---	---	10:38	---
* The Lord's Prayer	of 6:9-13	---	11:2-4	---
Parable of the impor- tunity of a friend	of Mount Olives	---	11:5	---
The dumb spirit	Jerusalem	---	11:14	---

1 As an interval of nearly three months occurred between the Feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication, some place the events marked * in that interval, and vary their order, putting the "healing of the ten lepers" immediately after the "repulse by the Samaritans."

The rich Jerusalem fool	---	---	12:16	---
God's Jerusalem providence to birds and flowers	---	---	12:22-30	---
The barren Jerusalem fig tree	---	---	13:6	---
The woman Jerusalem with an infirmity	---	---	13:11	---
* The mustard seed	---	---	13:18	---
* Healing the man with dropsy	---	---	14:1-4	---
* Lesson on humility	---	---	14:7	---
Parables:— The Great supper	---	---	14:12	---
Lost sheep and pieces of silver	---	---	15:1	---
Prodigal son	---	---	15:11	---
Unjust steward	---	---	16:1	---
Dives and Lazarus	---	---	16:19	---
* The ten lepers	---	---	17:11	---
Parables:— Impor-	---	---	18:1	---

tunate widow						
Pharisee Jerusalem and publican	---	---	18:9	---	---	---
Rich young man	19:16	10:17	18:18	---	---	---
Labourers in the vineyard	20:1	---	---	---	---	---
Ten pounds	---	---	19:12	---	---	---
* Healing of blind Bartimæus	20:29	10:46	---	---	---	---

THE LAST PASSOVER

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
29 a.d.	The supper in Simon's house	Bethany	26:6-13	14:3-9	---	12:1
	Mary anoints Jesus	Bethany	26:7	14:3	---	12:3
	Triumphal entry into the temple	Jerusalem	21:1-17	11:1-11	19:29-41	12:12-20
	Retirement to Bethany	---	21:17	11:11	---	---
	Cursing the fig tree	Mount of Olives	21:18	11:12	---	---
	Cleansing of the temple	Jerusalem	21:12	11:15	19:45	---

Retirement to Bethany	— —	— —	11:19	— —	— —
The Mount of withered fig Olives tree and its lesson	— —	— —	11:20	— —	— —
Discourses in the temple:—	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
The father Jerusalem and two sons	21:28	— —	— —	— —	— —
The wicked Jerusalem husband- men	21:33	12:1	20:9	— —	— —
The wed- ding gar- ment	Jerusalem 22:1	— —	— —	— —	— —
Tribute money	Jerusalem 22:15	12:13	20:20	— —	— —
The Sad- ducees and resurrection	Jerusalem 22:23	12:18	20:27	— —	— —
The great command- ment	Jerusalem 22:34	12:28	— —	— —	— —
The wid- ow's mite	Jerusalem — —	12:41	21:1	— —	— —
The eight woes	Jerusalem 23	— —	— —	— —	— —
Destruction of Jerus- alem and of the world	Jerusalem 24:1	13:1	21:5	— —	— —

Parables:— Mount of Olives	of 25:1	---	---	---
The ten virgins				
Talents	Mount of Olives	25:14	---	---
Sheep and goats	Mount of Olives	25:31	---	---
Warning of the betrayal	Bethany	26:1	---	---
The counsel of the Sanhedrim	Jerusalem	26:2	14:1	22:1
Judas' betrayal	Jerusalem	26:14	14:10	22:3
Preparation of the Passover	Jerusalem	26:17	14:12	22:7
Washing the apostles' feet	Jerusalem	---	---	---
The breaking of bread	Jerusalem	26:26	14:22	22:19
"One of you shall betray me"	Jerusalem	---	---	22:21
"Is it I?"	Jerusalem	26:22-25	14:19	---
The giving of the sop, "That thou doest, do quickly"	Jerusalem	---	---	---
Departure of Judas	Jerusalem	---	---	---

P e t e r Jerusalem warned	26:34	14:30	22:34	13:36
The blessing of the cup	Jerusalem 26:28	14:24	---	---
The discourses after supper	Jerusalem ---	---	---	14-16
Christ's prayer for his apostles	Jerusalem ---	---	---	17
The hymn	Jerusalem 26:30	14:26	---	---
The agony	G e t h s e - mane 26:37	14:33	22:39	18:1
The prayer (repeated thrice)	G e t h s e - mane 26:39-44	14:36-39	22:42	---
His sweat and the angel's comfort	G e t h s e - mane ---	---	22:43, 44	---
The sleep of the apostles	G e t h s e - mane 26:40-45	14:37-41	---	---
Betrayal by Judas	G e t h s e - mane 26:47-50	14:34, 44	22:47	18:2-4
Peter smites Malchus	G e t h s e - mane 26:51	14:47	22:50	18:10
Christ heals the ear of Malchus	G e t h s e - mane ---	---	22:51	---
Christ taken His disciples	for- by mane 26:56	14:50	---	---

Christ led Jerusalem to Annas	---	---	---	18:12
Christ tried Jerusalem by Caiaphas	26:57	14:53	22:54	18:15
Peter follows Christ in Jerusalem	26:58	14:54	22:55	18:15
The high priest's ad- juration	26:63	14:61	---	---
Christ condemned, buffeted, mocked	26:66, 67	14:64, 65	22:63-65	18:17-24
Peter's denial of Christ	26:69	14:66	22:55-59	18:25-27
Christ before Pilate	27:1	15:1	23:1	18:28
Repentance of Judas	27:3	---	---	---
Pilate comes out to the people	---	---	---	18:29
Pilate speaks to Je- sus privately	---	---	---	18:33
Pilate orders Him to be scourged	27:26	15:15	---	19:1
Jesus crowned with thorns	27:29	15:17	---	19:2

Jesus exhibited by Pilate; “Ecce Homo”	Jerusalem	---	---	---	19:5
Jesus accused formally	Jerusalem	27:11	15:2	23:2	---
Jesus sent by Pilate to Herod, mocked, arrayed in purple	Jerusalem	---	---	23:6-11	---
“Behold your King!”	Jerusalem	---	---	---	19:14
Pilate desires to release Him	Jerusalem	27:15	15:6	23:17	19:12
Pilate receives a message from his wife	Jerusalem	27:19	---	---	---
Pilate washes his hands	Jerusalem	27:24	---	---	---
Pilate releases Barabbas	Jerusalem	27:26	---	---	---
Pilate delivers Jesus to be crucified	Jerusalem	27:26	15:15	23:25	19:16
Simon of Cyrene carries	Jerusalem	27:32	15:21	23:26	---

ries the cross						
They give Golgotha Him vinegar and gall	27:34	15:23	23:36	---		
Nail him to the cross	27:35	---	23:33	19:18		
The super- scription	27:37	15:26	23:38	19:19		

THE SEVEN WORDS

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
29 a.d.	1. <i>Father, forgive them</i>	Golgotha	---	---	23:34	---
	His garments parted, and vesture allotted	Golgotha	27:35	15:24	23:23-34	19:23
	Passers-by rail, the two thieves revile	Golgotha	27:39-44	15:29-32	23:35	---
	The penitent thief	Golgotha	---	---	23:40	---
	2. <i>To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise</i>	Golgotha	---	---	23:43	---
	3. <i>Woman, behold thy Son, &c.</i>	Golgotha	---	---	---	19:26, 27
	The darkness	Golgotha	27:45	15:33	23:44	---

4. <i>My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?</i>	Golgotha	27:46	15:34	---	---
5. <i>I thirst!</i>	Golgotha	---	---	---	19:28
The vinegar	Golgotha	27:48	15:36	---	19:29
6. <i>It is finished</i>	Golgotha	---	---	---	19:30
7. <i>Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit</i>	Golgotha	---	---	23:46	---
Rending of the veil	Jerusalem	27:51	15:38	23:45	---
Opening of the graves, and resurrection of saints	Jerusalem	27:52	---	---	---
Testimony of centurion	Golgotha	27:54	15:39	23:47	---
Watching of the women	Golgotha	27:55	15:40	23:49	---
Piercing His side	Golgotha	---	---	---	19:31
Taking down from the cross, and burial by Joseph of Arimethea	Golgotha	27:57-60	15:46	23:53	19:38

a n d
Nicodemus

A guard The Garden [27:65, 66](#) --- --- [19:39-42](#)
placed at
the door,
which was
sealed

**THE
GREAT
FORTY
DAYS**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
29 a.d.	W o m e n carry spices to the tomb	The Garden	28:1	16:2	---	---
	The angel had rolled away the stone	The Garden	28:2	---	---	---
	Women an- nounce the resurrection	Jerusalem	28:8	---	24:9, 10	20:1, 2
	Peter and John run to the tomb	The Garden	---	---	24:12	20:3
	The women return to the tomb	The Garden	---	---	24:1	---
	The guards report these things to the chief priests	Jerusalem	28:11-15	---	---	---

**APPEAR-
ANCES OF**

**CHRIST
AFTER
HIS RE-
SURREC-
TION**

Date	Events	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
29 a.d.	1. To Mary Magdalene	The Garden	---	16:9, 10	---	20:14
	"All hail! Fear not. Touch me not."	---	28:9	---	---	20:17
	2. To the women returning home	The Garden	28:9	---	---	---
	"Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee; there shall they see me."	---	28:10	---	---	---
	3. To two disciples going to Emmaus (Exposition of prophecies on the passion)	Emmaus	---	16:12	24:13	---
	4. To Peter (1 Cor. 15:5)	Jerusalem	---	---	24:34	---

<p>5. To ten Jerusalem Apostles in the upper room</p> <p><i>“Peace be unto you As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you“.</i></p> <p><i>“Receive ye the Holy G h o s t . Whose sover sins ye re- mit,” &c.</i></p>	<p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p>	<p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p>	<p>24:33</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>16:14</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p>	<p>20:19</p> <p>20:21</p> <p>20:22, 23</p> <p>20:26</p> <p>20:27</p> <p>20:29</p> <p>21:1–24</p>
<p>6. To the el- e v e n Apostles in the upper room</p> <p><i>“Peace be unto you.”</i></p> <p>To Thomas.</p> <p><i>“Reach hith- er thy fin- ger,” &c.</i></p> <p><i>“Blessed are they that have not seen, yet have be- lieved.”</i></p>	<p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p>	<p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p>	<p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p> <p>— —</p>	<p>20:26</p> <p>20:26</p> <p>20:27</p> <p>20:29</p>
<p>7. To seven disciples at</p>	<p>— —</p>	<p>— —</p>	<p>— —</p>	<p>21:1–24</p>

the Sea of
Tiberias

To Peter.

“Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs.” — — — — — 21:15–17

8. To the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:5) Galilee 28:16 — — — — —

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” — — — — — 28:18

“Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them,” &c. — — — — — 28:19

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” — — — — — 28:20

9. To five hundred brethren at once (1 Cor. 15:6) Galilee, or Bethany — — — — —

10.	To	---	---	---	---	---
	James (1					
	Cor. 15:7)					
11.	Ascen- Bethany	---	16:19	24:50, 51	---	---
	sion (1 Cor.					
	15:7)					
12.	To Paul Damascus	---	---	---	---	---
	(1 Cor. (?)					
	15:8)					

Our Lord's Miracles

Miracles	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
<i>I. Narrated only in one Gospel</i>					
Two blind men healed	Capernaum	ix.	---	---	---
A dumb moniac healed	de-Capernaum	ix.	---	---	---
Stater in the mouth of the fish	in the Capernaum	xvii.	---	---	---
The deaf and dumb healed	Decapolis man	---	vii.	---	---
A blind man healed	Bethsaida	---	viii.	---	---
When Christ passed through the multitude	Nazareth	---	---	iv.	---
Draught of fish	of Bethsaida	---	---	v.	---
Raising the widow's son	the Nain	---	---	vii.	---
Healing the woman with an infirmity	the Jerusalem woman with	---	---	xiii.	---
Healing the man with the dropsy	the Jerusalem man with the	---	---	xiv.	---
Healing ten lepers	the Samaria	---	---	xvii.	---



Healing the Gethsemane ear of Malchus, servant of the high priest	---	---	xxii.	---
Turning water Cana into wine	---	---	---	ii.
Healing the Cana nobleman's son of fever	---	---	---	iv.
Healing the Jerusalem impotent man at Bethesda	---	---	---	v.
Healing the Jerusalem man born blind	---	---	---	ix.
Raising of Bethany Lazarus	---	---	---	xi.
Draught of Bethsaida fish	---	---	---	xxi.
<i>II. Narrated in two Gospels</i>				
Healing the Tyre daughter of the Syro- phoenician	xv.	vii.	---	---
Feeding the Gennesaret four thousand (?)	xv.	viii.	---	---
Cursing the Mount fig tree Olives	xxi.	xi.	---	---
Healing the Capernaum centurion's servant of palsy	viii.	---	vii.	---

The blind and dumb demoniac	Galilee	xii.	---	xi.	---
The demoniac in a synagogue	Capernaum	---	i.	iv.	---
<i>III. Narrated in three Gospels</i>					
Stilling the storm	the Sea of Galilee	viii.	iv.	viii.	---
The legion of devils entering the swine	Gadara	viii.	v.	viii.	---
Healing Jairus' daughter	of Capernaum	ix.	v.	viii.	---
Healing woman with an issue of blood	the Gennesaret	ix.	v.	viii.	---
Healing man sick of the palsy	the Capernaum	ix.	ii.	v.	---
Healing leper	the Gennesaret	viii.	i.	v.	---
Healing Peter's mother-in-law	Bethsaida	viii.	i.	iv.	---
Healing man with the withered hand	the Capernaum	xii.	iii.	vi.	---

Healing the Mount Tabor demoniac (?) child	xvii.	ix.	ix.	---
Healing the Jericho blind Bartim- aeus	xx.	x.	xviii.	---
Walking on Sea of Galilee the sea	xiv.	vi.	---	vi.
<i>IV. Narrated in four Gos- pels</i>				
Feeding the Bethsaida (Ju- five thousand lias)	xiv.	vi.	ix.	vi.

Our Lord's Parables

Parables	Locality	Matt	Mark	Luke	Lessons
<i>I. Recorded in one Gospel</i>					
The tares	Gennesaret	xiii.	---	---	Good and evil in life and judgment.
The hid treasure	Gennesaret	xiii.	---	---	Value of Gospel.
The goodly pearl	Gennesaret	xiii.	---	---	Christian seeking salvation.
The draw net	Gennesaret	xiii.	---	---	Visible Church of Christ.
The unmerciful servant	Capernaum	xviii.	---	---	Danger of ingratitude.
The labourers in the vineyard	Jerusalem	xx.	---	---	Call at various epochs.
The two sons	Jerusalem	xxi.	---	---	Insincerity and repentance.
The marriage of the king's son	Mount Olives	of xxii.	---	---	Need of righteousness.
The ten virgins	Mount Olives	of xxv.	---	---	Watchful and careless profession.
The ten talents	Mount Olives	of xxv.	---	---	Use of advantages.



The sheep and goats	Mount Olives	of xxv.	---	---	Final separation of good and bad.
The growing secretly	Gennesaret	---	iv.	---	Gradual growth of religion.
The householder	Gennesaret	---	xiii.	---	
The two debtors	Galilee	---	---	vii.	Gratitude for pardon.
The good Samaritan	Jerusalem	---	---	x.	Compassion to suffering.
The friend at midnight	Jerusalem	---	---	xi.	Perseverance in prayer.
The rich fool	Jerusalem	---	---	xii.	Worldly-mindedness.
The wedding feast	Jerusalem	---	---	xii.	Vigilance towards Second Advent.
The wise steward	Jerusalem	---	---	xii.	Conscientiousness in trust.
The barren fig tree	Jerusalem	---	---	xiii.	Unprofitableness under grace.
The great supper	Jerusalem	---	---	xiv.	Universality of Divine call.
The piece of money	Jerusalem	---	---	xv.	Joy over penitence.
The prodigal son	Jerusalem	---	---	xv.	Fatherly love to penitent son.
The unjust steward	Jerusalem	---	---	xvi.	Preparation for eternity.

The rich man and Lazarus	Jerusalem	---	---	xvi.	Recompense of future life.
The unprofitable servants	Jerusalem	---	---	xvii.	God's claim to all our service.
The unjust judge	Jerusalem	---	---	xviii.	Advantage of persevering prayer.
The Pharisee and publican	Jerusalem	---	---	xviii.	Self-righteousness and humility.
The pounds	Jerusalem	---	---	xix.	Diligence rewarded; sloth punished.
 <i>II. Recorded in two Gospels</i>					
House on rock and sand	Galilee	vii.	---	vi.	Consistent and false profession.
The leaven	Gennesaret	xiii.	---	xiii.	Pervading influence of religion.
The lost sheep	Jerusalem	xviii.	---	xv.	Joy over penitent.
 <i>III. Recorded in three Gospels</i>					
New cloth and old garment	Capernaum	ix.	ii.	v.	New doctrines on old prejudices.
New wine in old bottles	Capernaum	ix.	ii.	v.	New spirit in unregenerate heart.

The sower	Gennesaret	xiii.	iv.	viii.	Hearers divided into classes.
The mustard seed	Gennesaret	xiii.	iv.	xiii.	Spread of Gospel.
The wicked husbandmen	Jerusalem	xxi.	xii.	xx.	Rejections of Christ by Jews.
The fig tree and all the trees	Mount of Olives	xxiv.	xiii.	xxi.	Indications of Second Advent.

N.B.—These miracles and parables are grouped according to their record by the Evangelists; for their chronological position reference must be made to the “[Harmony](#).”

Our Lord's Discourses and Conversations

In Nearly the Order of Their Delivery.



	Subject	Place	The record
1.	The New Birth.	Jerusalem.	John 3:1–21.
2.	The Water of Life.	Sychar.	John 4:1–12.
3.	The Scriptures filled.	Ful- Nazareth.	Luke 4:16–31.
4.	Sermon on the Mount.	Galilee.	Matt. 5–8.
5.	Instruction to Apostles.	Galilee.	Matt. 10:5–12.
6.	Woes and Warnings.	Capernaum.	Matt. 11:20–24.
7.	The Father and the Son.	Jerusalem.	John 5:17–47.
8.	The Sabbath and Its Observance.	Galilee.	Matt. 13:1–8.
9.	The Unpardonable Sin.	Capernaum.	Matt. 12:23–37.
10.	The Bread of Life.	Capernaum.	John 6:22–71.
11.	Internal Purity.	Capernaum.	Matt. 15:1–20.
12.	Offences and Injuries.	Capernaum.	Matt. 18:1–20.
13.	His Divine Mission.	Jerusalem.	John 7:14–31.
14.	Living Waters.	Jerusalem.	John 7:32–53.
15.	The Light of the World.	Jerusalem.	John 8:12–30.
16.	Freedom by Truth.	Jerusalem.	John 8:31–58.
17.	The Shepherd and the Sheep.	Jerusalem.	John 10:1–38.
18.	Rebukes and Warnings.	Jerusalem.	Luke 11:29–36.

19. Humility and Jerusalem. Prudence. [Luke 14:7–14.](#)
20. The Way of Life. Jerusalem. [Matt. 19:16–30.](#)
21. Sufferings and Death. Jericho. [Matt. 20:17–19.](#)
22. True Greatness. Jericho. [Matt. 20:20–28.](#)
23. Paying Tribute. Jerusalem. [Matt. 22:15–22.](#)
24. The Resurrection. Jerusalem. [Matt. 22:23–33.](#)
25. The Great Commandment. Jerusalem. [Matt. 22:34–45.](#)
26. The Destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem. [Matt. 24:1–51.](#)
27. Comfort and Instruction. Jerusalem. [John 14–17.](#)
28. The Last Communion. Galilee. [Luke 24:44–49.](#)

The Discourses in Acts of the Apostles

1. Peter's Discourse on Pentecost. [Acts 2:14–39](#).
2. Peter's Sermon on Solomon's Porch. [Acts 3:12–26](#).
3. Peter's Address before the Sanhedrim. [Acts 4:8–12](#).
4. Stephen's Defence. [Acts 7:1–53](#).
5. The First Sermon to the Gentiles. [Acts 10:35–43](#).
6. Peter's Defence before the Church. [Acts 11:5–18](#).
7. Paul's Address at Antioch. [Acts 13:17–41](#).
8. Paul's Address in Athens. [Acts 17:22–31](#).
9. Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders. [Acts 20:18–35](#).
10. Paul's Defence in the Temple. [Acts 22:3–21](#).
11. Paul's Address before Felix. [Acts 24:10–21](#).
12. Paul's Address before Agrippa. [Acts 26:2–29](#).
13. Paul's Address to the Jews at Rome. [Acts 28:23–28](#).



Tables of Time, Measures, Weights, Etc



A Table of Measures

- A Cubit, somewhat more than one foot nine inches English.
- A Span, half a cubit, or nearly eleven inches.
- A Hand-breadth, sixth part of a cubit, or a little more than three inches and a half.
- A Fathom, four cubits, about seven feet and three inches and a half.
- A Measuring Reed, six cubits and a hand-breadth, or nearly eleven feet. The was used in measuring buildings.
- A Measuring Line, fourscore cubits, about one hundred and forty-five feet eleven inches. This was used to measure grounds; hence *the lines* ([Psalm 16:6](#)) are taken figuratively for the inheritance itself.
- A Stadium, or Furlong, nearly 146 paces .
- A Sabbath Day's Journey, about 729 paces.
- An Eastern Mile, one mile and 403 paces, English measure.
- A Day's Journey, upwards of thirty-three miles and a half.
- NOTE.—A pace is equal to five feet.
- There were different kinds of cubits. The common cubit, called the cubit of a man, was about eighteen inches ([Deut. 3:11](#)). The king's cubit was three inches longer than the common one. The holy cubit was a yard, or two common ones.



A Table of Weights

- A Shekel, nearly half an ounce, Troy weight.
- A Maneh, sixty shekels, about two pounds and a quarter.
- A Talent, three thousand shekels, or 113 pounds, and upwards of ten ounces.

A Table of Money

A Shekel of Gold, worth about	\$8.75
A Golden Daric, about	5.24
A Talent of Gold, about	26,280.00
A Shekel of Silver, about	.55
A Bekah, half a shekel, about	.28
A Gerah, twentieth part of a shekel	.25
A Maneh, or Mina, fifty shekels	27.32
A Talent of Silver, 3000 shekels, about	1,639.30
A Silver Drachma, about	.16
Tribute Money, two drachmas	.31
A Piece of Silver (<i>Stater</i>)	.62
A Pound (<i>Mornai</i>), 100 drachmas	15.50
A Roman Penny (<i>Denarius</i>)	.16
A Farthing (<i>Assarium</i>), about	.03
Another Farthing (<i>Quadrans</i>), half the former	
A Mite, the half of this latter	

Measures of Liquids

- The Cor, or Chomer, seventy-five gallons and somewhat above five pints.
- The Bath, the tenth of the chomer, or seven gallons and four pints and a half.
- The Hin, sixtieth of a chomer, about a gallon and a quart.
- The Log, about three-fourths of a pint.
- The Firkin (*Metretes*), somewhat more than seven pints.

Measures of Dry Things

- The Cab, somewhat above two pints.
- The Omer, above five pints.
- The Seah, one peck and about half a pint.
- The Ephah, three pecks and about three pints.
- The Letech, about four bushels.
- The Homer, about eight bushels.
- The Choenix ([Rev.6:6](#)) was the daily allowance to maintain a slave. It contained about a quart, some say only a pint and a half. When this measure was sold for a denarius, or Roman penny, corn must have been above twenty shillings an English bushel, which indicates a scarcity next to famine.



**The Gospel According to
Matthew**



Introduction to Matthew

The first of the Gospels has been assigned by the Church, from the earliest times, to Matthew, one of the Twelve Apostles, and in all ages has been given the first place in the New Testament. He was the son of Alphæus, as we learn from Luke, who also calls him Levi ([Luke 5:27–29](#)). He calls himself “Matthew the publican,” refusing to conceal in his own history the despised calling that had engaged him before he entered the service of Christ. He was a Jew, but had so far lost the national feeling that he was a collector of the hateful Roman tribute at Capernaum, and was sitting at the receipt of custom when called by our Lord to leave all and to follow him. His history of the Savior shows, however, that he was more dominated by Jewish ideas than the writers of the other three gospels. Of the life of Matthew, after the death of the Savior, we have no information, for no reliance can be placed upon the traditions concerning his later history.

The Gospel of Matthew shows the methodical habits of a business man, for of all the writers he is most systematic in his arrangement. He gives by far the fullest accounts of the Sermon on the Mount, the charge to the Apostles ([Matt. ch. 10](#)), the Discourse on Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Arraignment of the Scribes and Pharisees, of the Parables, and of the Prophecies concerning the Overthrow of the Jewish State. It has always been held that Matthew wrote before the other New Testament writers, and wrote especially for Jewish Christians. It is therefore supposed that he wrote first either in the common language of Judea at that time, the Aramaic, which was spoken by the Savior and his Apostles, or else in the pure Hebrew, which was then generally understood. This, however, is an unsettled question, and the Greek which we now possess, was, it is almost certain, written in Matthew's lifetime. There are no data for determining the exact time and place where it was written, but it was probably composed about the middle of the first century, within twenty years of the crucifixion.

Whether written originally in Hebrew or not, it can hardly be doubted that Matthew wrote for Jewish readers. He takes for granted a familiarity with Jewish customs, laws, and localities, to a far greater extent than the other writers. Dean Alford says: “The whole narrative proceeds more upon a Jewish view of matters, and is concerned more to establish that point, which to a Jewish convert would be most important, namely, *that Jesus is the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament*. Hence the commencement of his genealogy from Abraham and David; hence the frequent notice of the necessity of this or that event happening, *because it was foretold by the prophets*; hence the constant opposition of our Lord's spiritually ethical teaching to the carnal formalistic ethics of the Scribes and Pharisees.”

Chapter I

The Genealogy and Birth of Christ

Summary — *The Genealogy of Jesus Christ. Three Series of Fourteen Generations. The Betrothal of Mary and Joseph. The Immaculate Conception. The Purpose of Joseph. The Lord's Message in a Dream. The Name Jesus. The Prophecy of the Virgin. Immanuel. The Birth of Jesus.*

1. The book of the generation. Literally, “the book of birth,” or genealogy. This title applies, not to the whole Gospel, but to the tables of descent in the [first seventeen verses](#). The title was possibly copied from some Hebrew document compiled from the genealogical tables. **Jesus Christ.** Jesus, the personal name, which means “Savior;” Christ, the official title, which means “Anointed.” He is our Anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. **The son of David.** The descendant. The prophets had declared that the Messiah should be of David's seed. **The son of Abraham.** The Lord had promised Abraham ([Gen. 12:3; 22:18](#)) that in his seed all the world should be blessed. David and Abraham were the two greatest ancestors of Jesus, and are named because it had been predicted that he would be their descendant.

2. Abraham begat Isaac. Matthew begins with Abraham to trace the line down. He was writing for Jews, and Jewish history begins with Abraham. Luke ([3:23–38](#)), writing for Gentiles, goes back to Adam. For the differences between Matthew and Luke, see verse 16.

3. Tamar. Three women are named in this list: Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth. These were all Gentile women, and are named for this reason, and for their remarkable history. There were stains upon the character of Tamar ([Gen. 38:11–30](#)) and of Rahab ([Josh. 2:1](#)), but Ruth is one of the sweetest women of the Bible.

6. David the king. The greatest of line from Abraham to Christ, so exalted that one of the titles of the Messiah was “the Son of David.” **Of Uriah.** The mother of Solomon is referred to, not by name, but as the wife of Uriah. Uriah was a Hittite, a Gentile, and his wife may have been also. She was certainly a partner of David in the greatest guilt of his life.

8. Joram. Between Joram and Uzziah three names are intentionally omitted. They are found in [1 Chron. 3:11, 12](#). They were probably omitted to equalize the threefold division of generations from Abraham to Joseph. Such omissions of unimportant links are common in the Old Testament.

11. The carrying away to Babylon. The great seventy years' captivity in Babylon, following the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

12. Zerubbabel. The descendant of the ancient kings who led the Jews back from the Captivity ([Ezra 3:2](#)).

16. Jacob begat Joseph. The descendant of a long line of kings was a poor carpenter of Nazareth. As the husband of Mary he was the legal father of Jesus, and Matthew gives his



line of descent. A comparison of the table given by Luke will show that it differs in part from that of Matthew. Between David and Joseph the lists are widely different. Several views, all possible, have been presented, but the most probable explanation is that Matthew gives the line of Joseph, the legal line, and that Luke gives the line of Mary, the mother of our Lord. As the Jews regarded only male descent, unless Joseph, the supposed father, was a descendant of David they would not have recognized the genealogy as a fulfillment of the prophecies that Christ should be the Son of David; while Luke, himself a Gentile and writing for Gentiles, was more particular to give the line that shows that Jesus is really the Son of David. If Mary was the daughter of Heli, especially if an heiress, Joseph, by marriage, would become the "son of Heli." That there is no contradiction between the two tables is shown by the fact that the Jews who best understood their genealogies never charged it. These tables were preserved with great care, for various reasons, until Christ was born, but it is asserted that Herod destroyed them. If this is incorrect, they did not survive the destruction of Jerusalem.

17. Are fourteen generations. There are exactly fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and two other series are made to correspond. **From David to,** etc. David's name is counted again to make the number fourteen. The third series begins with Jeconiah and ends with Christ.

18. The birth of Jesus Christ. The word rendered here "birth" is the same in Greek that is translated "genealogy" in [verse 1](#). **Mary having been betrothed.** Not married, but engaged. Betrothal was, from the times of the patriarchs, a formal ceremony ([Gen. 24:53](#)), and was regarded a binding obligation. It generally lasted a whole year before marriage. After betrothal unfaithfulness was regarded adultery. **Before they came together.** Before marriage. **She was found.** The angel ([Luke 1:26](#)) predicted her conception, and when the prediction was verified she probably did not hesitate to reveal it. Her heart would be filled with joyous pride instead of shame. **Holy Ghost.** Correctly, Holy Spirit. The Divine power. Christ is the only example of such a birth in all history. His birth, like his life and his resurrection, is a miracle.

19. Joseph her husband. Betrothal, according to the law ([Deut. 22:24](#)), made him her husband before marriage. **A righteous man.** Just and humane. To put her away publicly was to expose her to the penalty of death. Probably she had made her defense to him, but her story was so wonderful that he was in doubt. **Privily.** Give her a bill of divorce. See [Deut. 24:1](#).

20. While he thought. Reflected, still in doubt, perplexed. **An angel.** Gabriel appeared to Mary ([Luke 1:26](#)); the name of the angel is not here given. Angels are messengers; an angel of the Lord is the Lord's messenger. These messengers are usually superhuman, but not always. **In a dream.** Often messages were conveyed by impressions made in sleep. Three times revelations were thus made to Joseph. **Thou son of David.** It was fitting that he should now be reminded that he belonged to the family from whence the Messiah was to come. **Fear not.** His betrothed was pure.

21. Thou shalt call his name Jesus. That is, Savior. The Hebrew form is Joshua; the full meaning is *Jehovah's salvation*. **Shall save his people.** Not the Jewish nation, as Joseph probably supposed, but all who accept and follow him. **From their sins.** Not a temporal salvation, but from the curse of sin, condemnation and banishment from God's favor and heaven.

22. That it might be fulfilled. Matthew neglects no opportunity to show the Jews that their prophets described Christ. The prophecy will be found in [Isaiah 7:14](#).

23. Behold, a virgin. Rather *the* virgin, as in the Revision. Isaiah had in view a particular virgin, the mother of the true Immanuel. Like many other prophecies, it had a double, a typical and a true, fulfillment. The first was in the reign of Ahaz, concerning a temporal deliverance, but the higher reference is to the spiritual Deliverer of the world. The first is the type, the second is the great event that inspired the message. **Immanuel.** This means "God with us," an appropriate title for Jesus among men.

24. And Joseph ... did. He obeyed at once, a fitting example for all men. When the Lord's will is spoken there should be no delay in obedience.

25. Knew her not. A Hebrew form for conjugal intercourse. The language of the verse does not imply the perpetual virginity of Mary.



Chapter II

The Wise Men and the Flight into Egypt

Summary — *The Wise Men. The Star in the East. The King of the Jews. Herod and Jerusalem Troubled. Christ to Be Born in Bethlehem. Herod's Demand of the Wise Men. The Star over the Young Child. Gifts Laid at His Feet. Joseph Warned in a Dream. Flight into Egypt. The Massacre of the Children. Rachel Weeping. Joseph Called to Return. The Home in Galilee. The City of Nazareth.*

1. When Jesus was born. Though the home of Joseph and Mary was Nazareth, prophecy had declared that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, the native place of David; and this was accomplished by the agency of the Roman emperor. See notes on [Luke 2:1](#). The pride of the Jews in their genealogies would lead them to the head cities of their families; thus, Mary traversed with her husband the length of the land, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the city of David, to whose house they both belonged. **In Bethlehem of Judea.** Bethlehem was one of the oldest places in the land of Judea, and had been in existence at least 1,500 years before the Savior was born. It was the scene of events so touchingly related in the Book of Ruth. It was known as the city of David, because it was his birthplace. The little town has an imposing aspect and commanding site. It stands on the summit of a narrow ridge, which projects eastward from the central mountain chain of Judah. It is about six miles south of Jerusalem, on the road toward Hebron. It contains at the present time about four thousand inhabitants, chiefly Christians of the Greek Church, who obtain much of their sustenance from the sale of relics to pilgrims and visitors. **In the days of Herod the king.** This statement gives data for ascertaining the time of the birth of Jesus. It is conceded that it took place in the last year of Herod's reign. But it is known that Herod died about three years before the first year of our era. Therefore, if the Savior was born "in the days of king Herod," he must have been about four years earlier than the date assigned. Herod was only partly of Jewish blood, was a man of most bloody and unscrupulous character, a great tyrant, the murderer of even his own wife and sons. Seven of the Herods are named in the New Testament. (1) "Herod the king," here named, called by Josephus Herod the Great, the first of the Herodian kings, a man of great force of character, but a bloody tyrant. He held his royal authority by the appointment of the Romans. (2) Herod Archelaus, his son and successor in Judea ([Matt. 2:22](#)). The Romans deposed him and appointed a Roman governor in his stead. (3) Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, who slew John the Baptist ([Matt. 14:1](#)). Also a son of Herod the Great. (4) Herod Philip, a third son, the lawful husband of Herodias ([Matt. 14:3](#)). (5) Another son, also named Herod Philip. He is only referred to in the New Testament in [Luke 3:1](#). (6) Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, named in [Acts 12:1–3, 23](#). (7) Herod Agrippa, the son of the last, the King Agrippa before whom Paul made his famous defense

(Acts 25:13, 23; 26:27). **There came wise men from the east.** The word rendered “wise men” is more correctly “Magi,” a term which designates an order of priests and philosophers which belonged originally to Persia and Media, and who were extensively distributed over the region of the Euphrates. Those described in the book of Daniel as wise men, astrologers and magicians, belonged to this order. We can only conjecture where these “wise men” came from, but the probability is that they journeyed from the valley of the Euphrates.

2. Where is he that is born King of the Jews? Their question shows two things: 1. That they partook of the general expectation that about this time there would appear in the East a Ruler divinely appointed to his mission. The works of profane writers of this period show that this expectation was general. 2. It is plain that the wise men misapprehended the mission of Christ, and expected him to be a secular king. **We have seen his star in the east.** No certain conclusion can be reached as to what this appearance in the heavens was, and it is useless to enter into the discussion. It seemed a part of God's plan that Gentiles as well as Jews should offer homage to the infant King.

3. Herod ... was troubled. The trouble of Herod is easily accounted for. He was a usurper. This news seemed to portend a legitimate king, a rival for the throne, around whom the Jewish nation would rally. **All Jerusalem with him.** The capital was in commotion. It was the seat of Herod's power, and his staunchest supporters were there.

4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes together. Literally, “high priests.” The high priests, and perhaps the heads of the twenty-four courses of priests, are included. See [1 Chron. 24:1–19](#). The “scribes” were the successors of Ezra, the official copyists of the Scripture, who naturally became its expounders, and were the theologians of the time of Christ. The priests, as the head of the Jewish religion, and the scribes, as the chief expounders of the Scriptures, were the proper persons to answer Herod's question. **Where Christ should be born.** This demand concedes: 1. That the Jews expected a Messiah; 2. That the Scriptures had foretold his coming; 3. That the very place of his birth had been pointed out.

5. In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet. The prophet here referred to is Micah, who lived about seven centuries before Christ. See [Micah 5:1, 2](#).

6. And thou Bethlehem. The quotation is made freely from the Septuagint version (Greek), which was in common use, and from which the Savior and his apostles constantly quoted. The Hebrew is literally, “But thou Bethlehem Ephrata, too small to be among the thousands of Judah (*i. e.*, the towns where the heads of thousands resided, the chief towns in the distribution of the tribes), out of thee shall come forth one who is to be the ruler of Israel.” **Princes.** Put for towns, where the princes or head of thousands lived.

7. Then Herod privily called the wise men. The crafty and cruel king had gained one point: he now knew where the Christ was to be born. He therefore asks another question of the wise men, by which he hopes to ascertain the age of the royal child. **What time the**

star appeared. The fact that, as stated below, he slew the children of two years and under, denotes that the star had been seen first about two years before.

8. And he sent them to Bethlehem. Herod commanded them to search out the young child and bring him word, but lied as to his object, which was murder instead of worship.

9. They went their way. They probably departed immediately after their interview with Herod, and as the appearance of the star as soon as they started indicates that it was night, they probably saw Herod in the evening. **So the star ... went before them.** This language implies a miraculous appearance, like a star, which guided the steps of the wise men. Such a view is no less probable than that a pillar of fire should have guided Israel. This luminous appearance **stood over where the young child was.** Either over Bethlehem, or over the house where the young child was sheltered.

10. And when they saw the star. This language shows that for a time, at least, they had not seen the star until they left Jerusalem for Bethlehem. Its reappearance caused them great rejoicing, because it showed them that their quest was not in vain.

11. And they came into the house. Not, probably, the stable where the Lord was born, but a temporary home obtained after the crowd had left Jerusalem. Many suppose that Joseph and Mary remained at Bethlehem until the forty days of purification were passed; that the young child was presented in the temple as recorded in [Luke 2:22](#); that then they returned to Bethlehem; were visited shortly after by the wise man, and thence fled into Egypt. If this is correct, the young child must have been six or seven weeks old at the time of the visit. **With Mary his mother.** The child was probably in the mother's arms. **They fell down and worshipped him.** Observe that no adoration is offered his mother. **When they had opened their treasures.** They had brought these all the way from the East as an offering. They offer to him gifts such as were offered to kings by ambassadors or vassals. **Gold.** A usual offering to kings. **Frankincense.** A costly and fragrant gum distilled from a tree in India and Arabia. **Myrrh.** An aromatic gum produced from a thorn-bush that grew in Arabia and Ethiopia. The providence of God is seen in these gifts. It provided the means necessary for the flight to Egypt that was to follow at once, and to sustain the holy family in a foreign land.

12. Being warned of God in a dream. Probably they were suspicious of Herod, for they could not fail to know his character, and asked God to guide them. He did so by a dream, and hence they avoided Jerusalem on their return.

13. And when they were departed. It is probable that the Magi were led by the star to Bethlehem, offered their homage, departed, Joseph was warned, and the holy family started to Egypt, all the same night. **Flee into Egypt.** Egypt has a very intimate connection with Bible history. It was the nearest of Roman provinces independent of Herod, was the home of thousands of Joseph's countrymen, was the home of thousands of Joseph's countrymen, and was convenient for a return at the proper time.

14. When he arose, he took the young child. The message came while he was sleeping; as soon as he arose from his bed he took the Child and his mother and departed at once. There was prompt obedience, as there should always be, to the divine commands.

15. That it might be fulfilled, ... Out of Egypt have I called my Son. The prophecy here quoted is found in [Hosea 11:1](#). Israel, which was called out of Egypt, is spoken of a son. Israel, however, was a type, and the events portrayed in Israelitish history were typical prophecies. That was the dispensation of types and shadows. Hence, the great outlines were prophetic, and the calling of Israel out of Egypt a prophecy of the Leader of the true Israel being called out of that land.

16. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked. He had directed the wise men to report to him after their visit to Bethlehem. Their return to their own country without complying with his wishes seemed to Herod a mockery of his authority, and excited his rage. **Sent forth, and slew.** A band of his murderous satellites were sent, and not only slew the male children of Bethlehem, but those of that vicinity.

17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet. The saying is found in [Jer. 31:15](#), and was first spoken with reference to the desolation of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar. The survivors of the Israelites were gathered by their conquerors as captives at Ramah. There the voice of lamentation was heard from the mothers bereft of their offspring. The prophet describes Rachel, the mother of two great tribes, as weeping and refusing to be comforted. It was still more appropriate to the bereaved mothers of Bethlehem. Within half a mile of that city was the tomb of Rachel, and hence the pathetic language of the prophet is again applied to the inconsolable mothers of Bethlehem, as though the Rachel that slept in the tomb were a mourner over her slain offspring. On the site of the tomb Rachel is now a Mahometan mosque. For the burial of Rachel, see [Gen. 35:19](#).

18. In Ramah was a voice heard. Ramah was a border fortress of Judah, where the captives were collected by the generals of Nebuchadnezzar after the fall of Jerusalem.

19. But when Herod was dead. This event was the signal for the return to Judea. He died in the spring of the year 750 after the building of Rome, just before the passover. This would place his death nearly four years before the Christian era, the date from which we reckon our time. That was not fixed upon until five hundred years after the birth of Christ, and was fixed erroneously.

20. Arise ... go into the land of Israel. Notice that Joseph is not required to return to Bethlehem or to Judea, but simply to the land of Israel. **They are dead which sought the young child's life.** As "they" is plural, there must have been the death of more than one of those who sought the death of the Lord. Five days before the death of Herod he slew his son Antipater, a prince of dark, cruel, treacherous character, whom he expected to succeed him. Nothing could be more likely than that he had fully sympathized in the scheme of child-murder at Bethlehem. Now both, "they that sought the young child's life," were dead.

21. And arose and took the young child. He obeyed as promptly as before, waiting obediently upon the Divine will. **Came into the land of Israel.** This included not only Judea, but Samaria, Galilee and the country beyond the Jordan. The part first reached by Joseph on his return would be Judea.

22. When he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea. Archelaus is one of the four sons of Herod, who are named in the New Testament. See note on verse 1. **Was afraid to go thither.** This implies that he had designed to return thither.

23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth. Matthew makes no mention of the previous residence at Nazareth, and he now names it first when it becomes the home of Christ. It was an obscure village, nestled in the hills about five hundred feet above the plain of Esdraelon, on the side of Galilee. It is not named in the Old Testament, was probably a small town in the time of Christ, but now has about 6,000 inhabitants. **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets.** Not by one prophet, but the summing up of a number of prophecies. No prophet had declared in express terms that he should be called a Nazarene. They, however, did apply to Christ the term *Nezer*, from which Nazareth is derived; the Nazarites, of whom Samson was one, were typical of Christ; the meanness and contempt in which Nazareth was held was itself a prophecy of one who “was despised and rejected.” See [Isa. 11:1](#); [Jer. 23:5](#); [33:15](#); [Zech. 3:8](#); [6:12](#).



Chapter III

John the Baptist and the Baptism of Christ

Summary — *The Preaching of John. The Kingdom of Heaven. John's Raiment and Food. The Great Multitudes. The Pharisee and Sadducees. Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire. Jesus Comes for Baptism. Jesus Baptized in the Jordan. The Anointing of the Spirit. The Voice from Heaven.*

1. In those days. Many years after the incidents of the last chapter; somewhere from twenty-five to thirty. **Came John the Baptist.** Called the Baptist or *Baptizer* because he baptized the people. He came forth as a preacher and reformer. He was the subject of prophecy ([Isa. 40:3](#); [Mal. 3:1](#)); his birth was announced by an angel; he was of a priestly family, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the cousin of Mary. He was now about thirty years old. **Preaching in the wilderness of Judea.** A region thinly inhabited, used mostly for pasture, a rocky tract in the eastern part of Judea and west of the Jordan and the Dead Sea.

2. Repent ye. The great rite of John was baptism, but the great duty commanded was repentance. Repentance is more than a sorrow for sin; it is a determination to abandon it and live a new life. It means a change of the will, or heart, new purposes, a determination to leave off sinning. Sorrow is not repentance, but “godly sorrow worketh repentance” ([2 Cor. 7:10](#)). **The kingdom of heaven.** The long expected kingdom ruled by the Messiah King, predicted by the prophets, and especially by Daniel ([Dan. 2:44](#)). The announcement of this anxiously-waited-for kingdom thrilled all Judea. **Is at hand.** It is to be noted: 1. That the kingdom to which he referred was in the future, but near. It did not begin with Abraham, or David, or even with John the Baptist. 2. It is the kingdom of *heaven*, not an earthly kingdom, and hence, must have a King sent from heaven. That King was not yet revealed to the public, but we have seen that one was born at Bethlehem who was to be the King. John was not the founder, but the herald of the coming King.

3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness. John was called a *voice*, (1) because the whole man was a sermon; (2) because he would call no attention to himself as a person, but only to the Savior, whose way he had come to prepare. For the prophecy see [Isa. 40:3](#). **Prepare ye the way of the Lord.** The messengers sent before the eastern kings prepared the way for the chariots and armies of their monarchs. A “king's highway” had to be carried through the open land of the wilderness, valleys filled up, and hills leveled. Interpreted in its spiritual application, the wilderness was the world lying in evil. **Make his paths straight.** Roads that have not been properly directed at the beginning. So are the ways of men when no preparation has been made for the Great King. When John cried, *Make his paths straight*, he meant, Stop your crooked ways.



4. Raiment of camel's hair. See [2 Kings 1:8](#). Not the camel's skin with hair on it, but a garment made of the shaggier camel's hair, woven in a coarse fabric. It was recognized as a garb of the prophets ([Zech. 13:4](#)), and is still worn in the East by the poor. **A leathern girdle about his loins.** The "leathern *girdle*" may be seen around the body of the common laborer. It fastens the loose raiment of the East about the waist. **His meat.** Food. **Locusts.** Permitted to the Jews as an article of food ([Lev. 11:22](#)), and still used by the poorer classes in Arabia, Egypt and Nubia. They are a large, voracious insect, much like the Rocky Mountain grasshopper. **Wild honey.** Honey deposited by wild swarms of bees in the rocks. So abundant was it that Palestine was described as "flowing with milk and honey." John was no epicure, and used such food as the wilderness provided.

5. There went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea. These expressions must be taken, not as meaning every individual, but as showing the wonderful impression produced by his preaching. All Judea, and among the rest, the people of Jerusalem came.

6. And were baptized of him in the Jordan. Note that the baptism took place not at, but *in*, in the Jordan. [Mark](#) says, "in the river Jordan." The Jordan, the principal stream of Palestine, rises in the mountains of Lebanon, runs south into the sea of Galilee, leaves it and descends southward along Galilee, Samaria and Judea, to the Dead Sea. In many places the streams is fordable, and furnishes good facilities for baptizing. **Confessing their sins.** Baptism itself, a burial in water, a "baptism into death," a symbol of the burial of one who dies to the old life, is a confession of sins. There was, perhaps, also a verbal confession. The acknowledgment of sin, repentance and baptism are prescribed as conditions of pardon.

7. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The two principal religious sects. The first originated in the time of the Maccabees, and were a kind of Jewish Puritans, but had in the Savior's time degenerated into a set of formalists, who paid far more attention to outward forms than to inner life. They were scrupulous in observing ceremonies, very orthodox, but were filled with spiritual pride. From an early period of Christ's ministry they opposed him. The other principal sect of the Jews, the Sadducees, derived their name from Sadduc, the founder of the sect; were irreligious, sensual and skeptical. They were materialists, and denied "angel, spirit, or the resurrection of the dead." [Annas](#) and [Caiaphas](#), the high priests, were Sadducees. **Generation of vipers.** The guilty, corrupted race had become a generation of vipers; not only poisoned, but poisonous, hateful to God, hating one another. The viper is hateful, full of hate, and dangerous. **Who hath warned you?** [Malachi \(3:2; 4:5\)](#) had predicted the wrath to come. John's question expresses doubt of their sincerity.

8. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance. There is no repentance whatever unless there is a change of life as the result. The change of life is the proof of the change of heart.

9. Think not to say ... We have Abraham to our father. They believed that Abraham's race was to be saved, if all else were destroyed. John destroys this refuge of sin. **Of these**

stones. Pointing, perhaps, to the stones of the Jordan. In thus sinking the higher claims of Judaism, John points to the Gentiles, who were to become Abraham's children by faith. (See [Gal. 3:29](#).)

10. The axe laid at the root of the trees. A sign that the tree is to be cut down. The tree meant is the Jewish nation. **Every tree.** A fruitless fig-tree was afterward made by our Lord the representative of the whole Jewish nation ([Luke 13:6](#)), but here John declares a universal law. What does not bear good fruit shall finally be destroyed. **Cast into the fire.** When the tree is not fruitful, or bears useless fruit, it is fit for nothing but to be burned.

11. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. His baptism was only a water baptism. The King could send the Holy Spirit, and give a mightier baptism, in addition to the outward baptism. **Mightier than I.** In that he can *perform* all that I only *promise*. **Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.** The duty of a slave, or one greatly inferior in rank. In the Orient sandals are generally removed on entering a house, and left in charge of a servant, who brings them again when needed. So humble was John, compared with the King, that he was hardly worthy to be his servant. **He shall baptize with the Holy Spirit.** In order to know what is meant we must refer to the fulfillment. On the day of Pentecost occurred such a baptism, the first so recognized in the New Testament. Then the spirits of the apostles were overwhelmed by the Divine Spirit, so that they spoke as he gave them utterance. It was Christ who “shed forth” the baptism of that occasion. This would be plainer had the Greek *en*, here rendered “with,” has been rendered “in,” after the word baptize. Of the 2,600 occurrences of *en* in the Greek New Testament, it is rendered “in” in the Common Version 2,045 times. The American Committee of Revisers in the Revised Version (see margin) so render it in connection with the word baptize, and are doubtless right. These great scholars, mostly learned Pedo-baptists, would say, “Baptize *in* water,” “Baptize *in* the Holy Spirit.” **And with fire.** The term *fire* is used in [verse 10](#), and there means a destroying agency; it is used again in [verse 12](#) in the same sense; it is used in [verse 11](#), also, the intervening verse, and must be used in exactly the same sense as in the other two verses. It cannot mean a curse in [verses 10 and 12](#), and a blessing in [verse 11](#), without a word of explanation. It is strange, therefore, that all commentators should not agree that the baptism of fire is a baptism of trial and suffering. There were two classes before John. Some would repent and be baptized finally in the Holy Spirit; there were others who would remain impenitent, and be baptized in the awful trials that would come upon Israel. The [next verse](#) explains this. John says in it that there is the wheat and the chaff; one shall be gathered into the garner and the other burned.

12. Fan is in his hand. Rather the winnowing shovel, by which the wheat and chaff were tossed together into the air, so that the wind would blow the chaff away. In Palestine grain was threshed on an outdoor threshing floor, either by hand or the treading of cattle, and winnowed by casting it up to the wind. **Gather his wheat into the garner.** Granary, or grain depository. **Unquenchable fire.** A reference is here made to the practice of burning the

chaff under process of winnowing. The wheat is the righteous, the chaff is the wicked, and Christ is the winnower; the granary is heaven, the unquenchable fire is hell.

13. Then cometh Jesus. Not named by Matthew since he was taken to Nazareth in childhood. From [Luke](#) we learn that he was subject to his parents, at twelve years of age astonished the doctors in the temple by his wisdom, and was now thirty years of age. He had worked in Nazareth as a carpenter. **Galilee.** The northern part of Palestine, containing at this time, according to Josephus, 240 towns and villages and an immense population. **To be baptized.** He came for this purpose. He sought the rite.

14. John forbade him. The objection that John made to the baptism of Christ implies some knowledge of him. Their mothers were cousins, but there is no evidence that Jesus and John had ever met. The Spirit had told John to proclaim the Redeemer and had given him a sign by which he should know him. When Jesus came before him, he perhaps knew, by the Spirit, his purity, and may have believed that he was the Messiah, but as yet he “knew him not” (see [John 1:33](#)). He could not be certain until he saw the divine sign. **I have need to be baptized of thee.** These words were uttered under the conviction, not certainty, that Jesus was the Christ.

15. Suffer it to be so now. The term “now” implies that the relation of Jesus to his work made it proper that now he should be baptized. It is true that baptism was for sinners; Jesus was sinless; but he humbled himself, accepted the burden of human duties, and must set a perfect example to men. He obeyed the Jewish law, and it was needful also that he obey the Divine rite that John had inaugurated. **Thus it becometh us.** In order to fulfill all righteousness, show forth a perfect obedience, set a perfect example, it became him to submit to the institution of baptism, and it became John to administer it to him. “Us” refers to Jesus and John.

16. And Jesus, when he was baptized. The baptism took place in the river Jordan, and was doubtless by immersion. Dr. Whitby, of the Church of England, on this passage, says: “The observation of the Greek Church is this, that he who ascended out of the water must first descend into it. Baptism is therefore to be performed, not by sprinkling, but by washing the body.” Dr. Schaff, the great Pedit-baptist scholar, says: “While the validity of baptism does not depend on the quantity or quality of water, or the mode of its application, yet immersion and emersion is the primitive and expressive mode to symbolize the idea of entire spiritual purification and renovation.” Dr. Schaff also says: “The Greek word *baptize* is derived from a root that means 'to dip,' 'to immerse.’” These views are endorsed by all the great Pedit-baptist scholars. **Went up straightway out of the water.** The Revision says “from the water,” which is correct, as the preposition is *apo*; yet [Mark](#) uses *ek* in giving the same account, which the Revision correctly renders “out of.” He went up, praying, as we learn from [Luke 3:21](#). **Lo, the heavens were opened unto him.** The skies were parted, rolled back, so as to reveal, as it were, the throne of God. **Spirit ... descending like a dove.** In form, and

not, as some suppose, in motion merely, which would convey no definite idea. It descended to anoint him to be Christ.

17. A voice from heaven. Three times God speaks from heaven in connection with the ministry of Christ—at his baptism, his transfiguration, and in the temple just before his suffering. **Thou art my beloved Son.** The very words addressed to the Messiah in [Psalm 2:7](#); and from which the *Son of God* became one of his standing appellations. Thus the baptism of Christ was the occasion of his public recognition. No reader should fail to observe the significance of the *time* chosen by God for the acknowledgment of the Son. It is just after he has humbled himself in an act of obedience, in baptism, that the Holy Spirit anoints him as the Christ, and God formally acknowledges him as his Son. No more forcible expression of the estimate set by God on this institution could be given. This example and the New Testament harmonizes in teaching—1. That we must be baptized if we would follow Christ. 2. That it is when we repent and are baptized that we receive the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:38](#)). 3. That when we have obeyed the Lord he will recognize us as his children.



Chapter IV

The Temptation, and Christ's Ministry in Galilee

Summary —*Jesus in the Wilderness. The Tempter. The Temptation to Convert Stones into Bread. The Temptation to Cast Himself from the Temple. The Offer of Worldly Power and Glory. Ministering Angels. The Galilean Ministry. Disciples Called. Preaching and Healing. The Fame of Christ.*

1. Then was Jesus led of the Spirit. *Mark* says he was *driven* by the Spirit, a phrase that indicates a sudden and forcible impulsion. **Into the wilderness.** Tradition has placed the scene of Christ's temptation in that part of the wilderness of Judea which lies between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, and particularly in the mountain called Quarantania, from this forty days' fast. **To be tempted.** Christ must be tempted—1. Because it was impossible that one who came to overthrow the kingdom of Satan should not be attacked by the great adversary at the very threshold. 2. It was to test him. 3. It was to prepare him, by being tempted like as we are, and yet gaining the victory, to “succor them that are tempted.” 4. It was to set an example for us when we are tempted. The three great temptations mentioned by Matthew are the three great classes of temptations to which men are now exposed. **Of the devil.** Here the existence and personality of Satan are placed before us in the most distinct language. The devil is, (1) A person (*Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Heb. 2:14; Jude 6*); (2) A fallen angel (*John 8:44; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6*). The word *devil* means false accuser.

2. When he had fasted forty days and forty nights. Moses and Elijah each fasted for the same length of time. It was a period of spiritual exaltation, of meditation and prayer, of preparation for his work, and it is hardly probable that he felt the need of food. **He was afterward an hungered.** At the close of this period nature began to assert her demands, and hunger was keenly felt.

3. The tempter came to him. The devil. He chose his time craftily, as he always does when he assails man. Whether he came in a personal form or as the whisper of the evil spirit is uncertain. **If the Son of God.** “If” suggests a doubt, and, perhaps, a taunt. It is a cunning appeal to Christ to work a miracle to satisfy his hunger and to display his power. It would seem an innocent thing for Christ to make bread when he was hungry, for himself, as he afterwards did for the five thousand. Why not? Because if he had availed himself of his Divine power to escape the discomforts and sufferings of humanity he would have failed to suffer as we do, to set us an example in all things, to be tempted in all points as we are; and besides, he “came to minister,” never to use his Divine power for their own benefit. To have so exerted it for selfish and vainglorious purposes would have been sinful, and a distrust of God. Christ came to save others, not himself. Self-denial was the law of his mission.

4. It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone. The Lord uses the sword of the Spirit in his reply. The word quoted, found in [Deut. 8:3](#), should be used in its connection, in order to comprehend its force. **But by every word, etc.** The meaning is: If it pleases God to sustain by other means than bread, it will be done. His word can be trusted. God fed Israel with manna, sent by his word, and we can trust his promises.

5. Then the devil taketh him into the holy city. What way the devil took him, whether bodily or in spirit, we are not told. **On a pinnacle of the temple.** The only portion of the temple that seems to answer to the context was the lofty porch overhanging the valley of Kedron. Josephus says that from the roof to the valley below at this point was 300 feet.

6. If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down. Again the doubt is implied and the taunt uttered. Jesus had expressed his trust in the word of God. The devil now asks him to go from the extreme of distrust to that of rashly tempting God. It was, perhaps, the demand so often repeated and always refused, “to show a sign from heaven,” to make a display of his power to secure popular applause. Perhaps the evil spirit whispered to him to perform one stupendous miracle in Jerusalem, in the presence of all people, and to secure such fame that he would reach the throne without treading the thorny way of the cross. To have done so would have robbed the world of its Savior. “It behooved him to die, and to rise again.” **He shall give his angels charge concerning thee.** The enemy, like a false adviser, quotes from [Psalm 91:11](#) to justify his request, but he garbled the Scripture, leaving out “to keep thee in all thy ways,” which follows the first clause. The promise is limited to those who walk in the way appointed to them.

7. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the Savior replies in the words of Scripture, this time quoting from [Deut. 6:16](#). There is no argument, but a simple reply that shows what is asked is forbidden.

8. Taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain. From some lofty center he spreads before Jesus a panorama of the kingdoms of this world with all their glory. We are not to suppose that all the kingdoms were literally visible, but they are portrayed in such a way as to be present to the mental eyes.

9. All these things will I give thee. All disguise is laid aside. Satan claims to be the Prince of the world and the disposer of human kingdoms. Jesus came to be a King, but the pathway to the crown is weary, painful, beset with thorns and blood. Satan proposes an easier way. He will rally the Jewish nation around him, set him on the throne of David, make him the Messiah King of the world, if he will only consent to give up his idea of a spiritual kingdom, “not of this world,” and worship the god of this world by conforming his kingdom to the worldly ideas of Israel. The temptation is to turn away from the path of self-denial, the cross and the tomb, and to establish an outward, worldly domain.

10. Get thee hence, Satan. As the tempter was revealed Jesus rebukes him. The word, “Get thee hence,” “begone,” expresses abhorrence. The adversary is called by name and



bidden to depart. Then his reason is added, in the words of Scripture, found in [Deut. 6:13](#). **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.** This passage forbids every kind of religious adoration to any other object than Jehovah, whether it be idols, false gods, popes, Virgin Mary, saints, or angels. The three temptations had been met, three times the tempter had been baffled, three times the victory had been won. The first assault had been made through the door of appetite, “the lust of the flesh;” the second through vain glory, “the lust of the eyes;” the third through ambition, “the pride of life.” All had appealed to Jesus to turn away from the pathway of self-denial and suffering marked out for him. All had been met by the shield of faith, and the tempter beaten back by the word of the Spirit.

11. Then the devil leaveth him. [Luke](#) adds, “for a season.” When the devil is resisted he always flees. **Angels came and ministered to him.** When he fought off the tempter, after the victory was won, angels came to minister to him. I suppose this ministry was to supply him with food, but they also would afford spiritual sympathy.

12. Now when he heard that John was delivered up. A long period lapses between the temptation and the next event recorded. Matthew does not try to follow the order of events, and he now passes over more than a year. This year had been actively employed. The intervening events are, (1) the return of Jesus from the wilderness to Bethabara, where the first disciples are called ([John 1:15–37](#)); (2) the return to Galilee and the miracle at Cana ([John 2:1–11](#)); (3) the first passover of the Lord's ministry in Jerusalem and the temple cleansed ([John 2:14–25](#)); (4) interview with Nicodemus ([John 3:1–21](#)); (5) ministry in Judea ([John 4:3](#)); (6) leaves for Galilee, passes through Samaria, conversation at Sychar ([John 4:4–42](#)); (7) heals nobleman's son ([John 4:46–54](#)); (8) a period of retirement in Galilee, John imprisoned ([Matt. 4:12](#)); (9) attends feast in Jerusalem, miracle at pool of Bethesda ([John 5](#)); (10) returns to Galilee, April a.d. 28. We thus see that an interval of more than a year elapsed between the temptation and the imprisonment of John. John was thrown into prison because he rebuked Herod ([Matt. 14:4](#); [Mark 6:17](#)). **Withdrew into Galilee.** From prudence ([John 4:1](#)). Christ had been teaching in Judea ([John 4:2](#)).

13. Leaving Nazareth. Because rejected there ([Luke 4:16–30](#)). **Dwelt in Capernaum.** At that time a city of 30,000 inhabitants on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was one of the chief cities of Galilee, had a synagogue, a Roman garrison, and a customs station, with Matthew as the tax gatherer. It has long since disappeared. It was called “Christ's own city” because he made it an earthly home. It was on the border between the tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali.

14. That it might be fulfilled. Matthew's way of saying: “Thus was fulfilled.” The passage quoted is found in [Isaiah 9:1, 2](#).

15. By the way of the sea. The Sea of Galilee is meant.

16. The people. Those of the region just described. **Sitting in darkness.** In religious ignorance. **Saw great light.** Christ, the Light of the world. In the teaching of Jesus in the region described by the prophet there was a remarkable fulfillment of the prediction.

17. From that time. Probably from the time of the settlement of Jesus in Capernaum. **Jesus began to preach.** This is the beginning of the Galilean ministry. **And to say, Repent, etc.** The message that Jesus now preaches is identical with that of John the Baptist. See [Matt. 3:2](#). He commands repentance, and declares the kingdom of heaven is at hand, not yet come, but near. All is still preparatory. Jesus had not yet declared himself as the Messiah.

18. Walking by the sea of Galilee. So named from the province of Galilee on its western side. It is about thirteen miles long and six miles wide in the widest place. The Jordan runs through it. On its borders Jesus lived, taught, and did most of his miracles. **Saw two brethren.** These two brethren, Peter and Andrew, were already disciples ([John 1:35](#)). Simon was the name of the first until Christ changed it to Cephas, or Peter. Their home was at Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee ([John 1:44](#)). They had been John's disciples, but he directed them to Jesus. **They were fishers.** A humble, but honorable, occupation.

19. Follow me. Already disciples, they were now called to preparation for apostleship.

20. Straightway left their nets. They obeyed at once. Thus Christ ought always to be obeyed. No excuses for delay were offered, or should ever be.

21. Saw other two brethren. James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were fishermen also, are supposed to have been cousins of Jesus, probably were already disciples ([John 1:29-42](#)), but were now called to preparation for their great work. **In a ship.** A small fishing vessel. The Revision says, "boat," which gives the idea.

22. They left their father. At once. They had received a higher call. No earthly preference can excuse a rejection of the call of Christ.

23. Jesus went about all Galilee. In the [next three verses](#) are condensed the labors and teaching of a long period, of which a detailed account is given in the following chapters. **Teaching in their synagogues.** The synagogues, the Jewish houses of worship, where the Jews met every Sabbath, furnished Jesus a congregation and a suitable place for teaching. It was customary to read the Old Testament in course, and after the reading, a teacher or a rabbi, was usually called on to speak. The custom gave Jesus, and his apostles after him, a fine opportunity to declare the New Covenant.

The Synagogue is so often named in the New Testament that one ought to clearly understand its character. It corresponded to the Christian *congregation*. Wherever ten Jews were found it was their duty to form a synagogue. It had its elders, of whom the president was called the "ruler" of the synagogue. The ruler presided over the worship, and all the elders sat on raised seats. These were "the chief seats" that the Pharisees liked to sit in. There was a set lesson from the Scriptures for each Sabbath, for they were read in order. The reader was appointed by the ruler and might be any member. On one occasion we learn that Jesus was

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the reader. After the reading and prayers there was an opportunity for any Jewish theological teacher to speak. Of this opportunity Jesus, and later, Paul often availed themselves. The service of the synagogue in our times is, in many respects, similar to that of the time of Christ. The officers of the synagogue had the power of scourging, of suspending, or of excommunicating (casting out) offenders.¹ **Preaching the gospel of the kingdom.** Gospel means “good news.” He announced the good news of the speedy advent of the long expected kingdom of the Messiah. He did not, however, at this time proclaim himself to be the Messiah. **Healing every sickness.** He sympathized with all human affliction and healed the body in order that he might heal the soul.

24. His fame went through all Syria. The great Roman province north and east of Palestine, and, at the time of our Savior, including the latter. The cities of Damascus and Antioch were in the province. **Possessed with devils.** The word demon is the correct translation, and means an evil spirit. Persons were actually subject to the control of demons. Of this there is the following proof: (1) Supernatural strength ([Mark 5:4](#)). (2) *Mind* is not the source of blindness ([Matt. 12:22](#)). (3) Insanity cannot *divine* ([Acts 16:17](#)). (4) Demons knew Jesus ([Mark 1:24](#)). (5) Jesus addresses the demons ([Matt. 8:32](#)). (6) Demoniacs confess this control ([Mark 5:9](#)). (7) Apostles assert it ([Luke 10:17](#)). (8) Jesus admitted it ([Matt. 12:28](#)). (9) Peter assures use of it ([Acts 10:38](#)). **Lunatics.** Epileptics in the Revision.

25. Great multitudes from Galilee. The fame of his teaching and miracles caused great multitudes to gather from all Palestine. **Decapolis.** A district containing ten cities east of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee. Notice, in the ministry of Jesus, (1) He was *active*; (2) He went *where people were*; (3) He went where the *busiest people were*—fisherman, those at work, Simon and Andrew—those preparing to work, James and John; (4) He went where *worshiping people were*; (5) He went where *needy people were*.



¹ In the printed edition, this paragraph incongruously appears at the end of the notes on the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. Since the note on Mark 1:21 refers to the note as appearing at Matt. 4:23, the paragraph has been moved to this more appropriate location.—E.S.

Chapter V

The Sermon on the Mount

Summary — *The Beatitudes. The Salt of the Earth. The Light of the World. The Relation of Christ to the World. The Law Not to Be Disregarded. The Law Modified; The Law of Murder; of Adultery; of Divorce; of Oaths; of Retaliation; of Love.*

1. Seeing the multitudes. We gather from [Luke, chapter 6](#), that the Lord passed the night in the mountain in prayer; in the morning he chose and ordained the twelve; he then came down to the plain, where he found a vast multitude, whom he taught. **Went up into a mountain.** Thought to be the “Horns of Hattin,” a mountain about seven miles south of Capernaum, near the Sea of Galilee. **When he was set.** Eastern teachers usually sat while teaching. **His disciples came.** Not the apostles only, but all anxious to learn and follow him. Disciple means a learner.

2. Opened his mouth and taught. This wonderful discourse of three chapters is to the New Dispensation what the law given from Sinai was to the Old. That was the moral law of Judaism, this is the moral law of Christianity; that was given from “the Mount that could not be touched,” this from the Mount of blessing. Compare [Luke 6:20–49](#).

3. Blessed. There follow nine beatitudes, each of which pronounces a blessing upon those who have certain characteristics. The word “blessed” is first applied to God, and means more than “happy,” as it has sometimes been translated. Happiness comes from earthly things; blessedness comes from God. It is not bestowed arbitrarily; a reason follows each beatitude. **The poor in spirit.** The humble, in contrast with the haughty; those sensible of spiritual destitution. The same state of mind is referred to when he speaks elsewhere of a contrite and broken spirit. **Is the kingdom of heaven.** Such shall become members of the kingdom that Christ will establish. The Jews were rejected from this kingdom on account of their spiritual pride.

4. Blessed are they that mourn. Not all mourners, for there is “a sorrow of this world that worketh death.” Godly sorrow is meant, a mourning over sinfulness. See [2 Cor. 7:10](#).

5. Blessed are the meek. The mild, the gentle, opposed to the proud and ambitious, the kind who succeed in such a kingdom as the Jews expected. **Shall inherit the earth.** The land; Canaan as the type of all blessings. It is the heavenly land especially that is inherited. The especial reference is to the Messiah's kingdom, of which “the land” of Canaan was a type.

6. Blessed are they that hunger, etc. This implies the same sense of spiritual needs as [verses 3 and 4](#). Hunger is a felt want, in this case a want of righteousness before God, the righteousness that comes from the forgiveness of sins. See [Luke 15:17](#).

7. Blessed are the merciful. The merciful, those who, instead of resenting injury, are ready to forgive, shall obtain the divine mercy. The fifth petition of the Lord's prayer implies that we must forgive if we expect to be forgiven.

8. Blessed are the pure in heart. The Jew, under the tuition of the Pharisees, cared little for the state of the heart, so that outward forms were duly kept. Jesus, however, demands that the heart, the affections, the mind, shall be purified, as the fountain from whence flows the moral and religious life. A pure heart begets a pure life; an impure heart, a corrupt life. **They shall see God.** Not with the natural eye, but the spiritual vision; by faith. In the pure heart the Lord will dwell and his presence will be recognized. See [John 14:23](#).

9. Blessed are the peacemakers. Not the soldiers of a warrior king, such as the Jews expected but the men who, in the name of the Prince of Peace, go forth to proclaim peace and good will among men. Christ is the great Peacemaker.

10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. The Jews expected a conquering kingdom, and its citizens to be lords among the nations, but Christ pronounces a blessing on those who are persecuted, not for misdeeds, but for righteousness. These shall have the kingdom. Doubtless these words have sustained and cheered many a martyr.

11. Blessed ... when men revile you. This is a personal application of what has just preceded. Some of those who listened were reviled by the Jews, and persecuted unto death. **For my sake.** In the [preceding verse](#) it is said "for righteousness' sake." The two expressions mean the same.

12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad. On account of persecution. The reason why they may justly rejoice is given: **Great is your reward in heaven. So persecuted they the prophets.** Isaiah is said to have been sawed asunder; Jeremiah was thrown into a dungeon and threatened with death; Elijah was hunted by Ahab and Jezebel.

13. Ye are the salt of the earth. Salt preserves from corruption. The disciples of Christ preserve the world from general corruption. Whatever becomes utterly corrupted is doomed to be destroyed. **But if the salt have lost its savour.** Salt is worthless if it has lost its qualities. It preserves no longer. It is fit only to be cast out and trodden under foot. So, too, if those who are the salt of the earth cease to communicate saving power, they are fit only to be cast out, and Christ will cast such out of his mouth (see [Rev. 3:16](#)).

14. Ye are the light of the world. The business of the church is not only to save, but to enlighten. Christ is light, and his disciples must be light. **A city set on an hill.** Anciently cities, for the sake of defense, were placed on hills. Such cities are seen from afar. So must the church give forth its light.

15. Light a candle and put it under a bushel. A lamp, in the Revision, which is correct. Candles and candlesticks were not used in Scripture times. It would be foolishness to light a lamp and put it under a bushel measure.



16. Even so, let your light shine. Like the city set on a hill, or the lighted lamp on a stand. We are told, 1. To let our light shine. 2. Before men. 3. By good works. 4. That they may glorify the Father in heaven. Christ is the Light; we will shine reflected light if we walk in his light. If we give forth light it will honor God.

17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. The preceding verses were so opposed to the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees that some might assert that he was a destroyer of the law. He replies that he has not come to destroy it, but to fulfil. He does not say that he has come to perpetuate it. **To fulfil.** To complete its purpose. He was the end of the law. It was a “schoolmaster to bring us to Christ” (Gal. 3:24), but “after faith is come we are no longer under the schoolmaster.”

18. One jot or tittle. Jot means the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, while tittle refers to a simple turn by which one letter is distinguished from another. The expression, “jot or tittle,” was proverbial for the smallest part. **Till all be fulfilled.** “Till,” says Dr. Schaff, “implies that after the great events of Christ’s life, and the establishment of his kingdom, the old dispensation, as a dispensation of the letter and yoke of bondage, as a system of types and shadows, will pass away, and has passed away (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:13); while the spirit and substance of the law, *i. e.*, love to God and man, will last forever.”

19. Shall break one of the least of these. The Pharisees taught that some commands were more important than others, and that it was a trivial matter to break the smallest commands. The papists still divide sin into *mortal* and *venial*. Christ shows that the spirit of obedience does not seek to make such distinction. **Shall be least.** He may get into the kingdom, possibly, but such a spirit will give him a very low spiritual rank.

20. Your righteousness shall exceed. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees has just been referred to (see Matt. 3:7). They claimed to be the teachers and examples of righteousness, but they lacked the humble spirit of true obedience.

21. Ye have heard. Jesus now gives the law a new form to adapt it to his kingdom. It takes a new, a deeper, a more spiritual shape and meaning. **By them of old time.** In this case, Moses. See Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17. **Thou shalt not kill.** One of the ten commandments. Christ, the Divine Lawgiver, modifies it. **In danger of the judgment.** The civil courts. The law provided in every city a court of seven judges, who could sentence a criminal to death (Deut. 16:18).

22. But I say unto you. Jehovah had spoken the Decalogue to Israel. Christ assumes the right to amend it. Such a claim is based on a claim of divinity. **Whosoever is angry with his brother.** Jesus goes back of the murderous act, and forbids the anger and the reproachful words that precede it and are likely to lead it. He places the murderous heart on the level of actual murder. **Raca.** An epithet of contempt; “empty head,” or “spit out,” that is, a heretic. **The council.** The Sanhedrim, the highest court of Israel. It corresponded to our Supreme Court, and had seventy members. **Thou fool.** The original implies a stupid, wicked fool. **Of**

hell fire. The Greek is “the Gehenna of fire.” The term Gehenna arose from the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the Canaanites burned human sacrifices to Moloch. After the return of the Jews from the Captivity they made it a place of defilement, where the refuse of the city was thrown and burned. The name was applied to the place of future punishment by the Jews. The word is often used in the New Testament ([Matt. 23:33](#); [5:29](#); [10:28](#); [18:9](#); [Mark 9:43](#)), and always denotes a place of future punishment.

38

23, 24. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar. This springs immediately out of the modification of the law, Thou shalt not kill, which required that there should be no anger with a brother. If about to offer a gift on the altar, and the remembrance comes that a brother hath aught against thee, leave the gift, go and make it right with him, and then offer thy gift. This shows that one guilty of wrongs to his fellow-man cannot offer acceptable worship of God.

25. Agree with thine adversary quickly. By adversary is meant an opponent in a lawsuit who is supposed to have a just claim, in this case a creditor. **Officer.** The same as our sheriff. Under all the old laws debt could be punished with imprisonment.

26. Thou shalt not come out from thence. After the debtor was cast into prison he was held until the debt was paid, and if it were not, he remained in prison until he died. **Farthing.** A small, insignificant copper coin. The warning against lawsuits is clear, but there is a higher idea still. The Lord would warn us to make everything right before it is too late. Before the judgment there is a chance; after it there is nothing but payment.

27, 28. Thou shalt not commit adultery. The Jewish rabbins held that a man was guiltless who did not commit the act. Christ, as he always did, lays the laws upon the heart. If it is impure, full of unholy desires, one is guilty. It is our duty to keep the heart pure.

29. If thy right eye offend thee. The eye that giveth a lustful look. A licentious passion, or anything that tempts to sin, whether thoughts within, friends, or surroundings. **Pluck it out.** Cast far from you what would lead to sin. **It is profitable.** Better to suffer deep mortification by self-denial than to be judged worthy of hell. **Body.** Used for the whole man.

30. If thy right hand. The same thought as in [verse 29](#), with a new illustration.

31, 32. Whosoever shall put away his wife. The divorce laws were very lax among the Jews. A man could put away his wife “for any cause” ([Matt. 19:8](#)). Moses directed a legal letter of divorcement ([Deut. 24:1](#)). Christ positively forbids divorce except for unchastity. Marriage is a divine institution, and the obligation is for life ([Matt. 19:3–9](#); [Rom. 7:1–3](#); [1 Cor. 7:10–17](#)).

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33. Thou shalt not forswear thyself. (See [Lev. 19:12](#); and [Num. 25:2](#).) The Jews held that this only prohibited swearing falsely and by the name of God.

34, 35. Swear not at all. Christ does not forbid judicial oaths. Note, (1) God sometimes swears by himself ([Gen. 22:16, 17](#)); (2) Jesus made oath before the Sanhedrim ([Matt. 26:63](#)); (3) Paul made oath to the Corinthians ([2 Cor. 1:23](#)). He does forbid all profanity and idle

oaths, such as were common among the Jews, and still so defile the mouths of men. **Neither by heaven.** The Jews held that it was impious to swear by the name of God, but that one could swear “by heaven,” “by the earth,” “by Jerusalem.” One was God's throne, the second his footstool, Jerusalem the city of the Messiah King, all too holy for profanation.

36. By thy head. Senseless, since the oath could have no meaning. Dr. Thompson (The Land and the Book) says the Orientals are still terribly profane, swearing continually by the head, the beard, the heart, the temple, the church.

37. Let your speech be, Yea, yea. All foolish appeals are forbidden. A simple statement is all Christ permits. All beyond is evil, “and cometh of evil.” Indeed, it makes one doubt the truth of him who has to confirm every assertion by an oath.

38. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The law quoted is found in [Exod. 21:23–25](#) and [Lev. 24:18–20](#). Moses intended it to protect person and property by prescribing what punishment the law should inflict. He who took a life should lose his life; he who robbed another of an eye should be punished by the loss of an eye. The Jews perverted it to justify *private* retaliation.

39. Resist not evil. Jesus does not forbid the judicial application of the law, but personal revenge, such as was common among the Jews. Instead of turning upon those who injure us, and becoming a party to personal broils, it is the duty of Christians to suffer meekly. **Turn to him the other.** This must be the Christian spirit, the great law of love, which “endureth all things.” This is not a code to be slavishly observed in the letter, but its spirit must always be preserved. See [John 18:22](#), and [Acts 23:3](#), for the application.

40. If any man would sue. That is, is about to sue thee. **Take thy coat.** The inner garment, the tunic or shirt. **Cloak.** The outer garment, the covering at night. It could not be held by a creditor ([Exod. 22:26–27](#)). Better to give it up, too, than to engage in litigation. Many a poor soul has realized this when it was too late, and the lawyers had divided his property. Avoid lawsuits.

41. Compel thee to go a mile. In those days, when there were no stages, railroad trains, postal lines, or regular means of conveyance, it was common for officers traveling to impress men to assist them on the route. It was a necessary, but oppressive, exaction. Christ directs to yield the service, and double it rather than refuse it. **A mile.** A Roman word from *mille*, a thousand. A Roman mile was a thousand paces, 1,520 yards.

42. Give to him that asketh thee. Palestine swarmed with blind, lepers, and maimed, who were dependent on charity. **Turn not away.** The Lord does not bid to give to *every* one, not to loan to *every* one, for this would not be a blessing, but to have a spirit that will be ready to do so whenever it is right.

43. Thou shalt love thy neighbor. See [Lev. 19:18](#). The Jews gave the command a very limited application. For Christ's application, see parable of the Good Samaritan ([Luke 10:30–37](#)). It embraces any one so near us as to need and to receive our acts of kindness.



Hate thine enemy. A Jewish perversion of the meaning of [Deut. 23:6](#). It exhibits the spirit of the whole heathen world. Plato praises the Athenians because they hated the Persians more than any of the other Greeks.

44. I say ... Love your enemies. The fundamental law of Christ's kingdom. Henceforth love is to be boundless as the ocean. His own earthly life is its perfect application. The enemies are to be conquered by love. See [John 3:16](#). Love will return blessing for cursing, good will for hating, prayers for evil treatment and persecution. Christ on the cross prayed for his enemies; so did Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

45. That ye may be children of your Father. We are God's children when we have the spirit of our Father. We are not if we have the spirit of the world. Our Father above sends blessing, the rain, and the sunshine, on the just and the unjust. He loves all, and even sent his son to have a wicked world because he loved ([John 3:16](#)).

46. Do not even the publicans so? The publicans, the gatherers of the Roman tribute, were generally odious, and deemed the scum of the earth, but even they loved those who loved them.

47. Salute your brethren only. The Jews usually disdained to speak to a Gentile, a publican, or a "sinner," but would salute orthodox Jews. Even the Gentiles, the heathen nations, had enough of love for this. Unless the disciples could love better than the Jews, they would be on a level with publicans and heathen.

48. Be ye therefore perfect. To carry out fully this great law of love would lift man to the Divine standard of perfection. This must be the aim of life. We have before us as a pattern for the perfect God; we have the Divine perfection embodied in Christ. It will require a constant struggle while in the flesh to come near so high an ideal, but it must be our continual aim. This does not teach such sanctification that we cannot sin, nor that we, here on earth, attain absolute perfection, but we have placed before us, as a model, the perfect ideal, and we will constantly ascend higher by striving to attain it.



Chapter VI

The Sermon on the Mount:—Continued.

Summary —*The Right and Wrong Way of Righteousness. Charity Not for Show. Our Alms-Giving Not to Be Sounded with a Trumpet. Prayer Not to Be Offered for Public Praise. The Model Prayer. Fasting to Be in Secret. Impossible to Serve God and Mammon. Trust in the Heavenly Father. The First Aim of Life.*

1. Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen. The Common Version is wrong, and the Revision right, in using “righteousness.” The Savior condemns ostentatious piety, and then he singles out three illustrations of his meaning. The Christian is not forbidden to practice righteousness before men, but to make it his object to be seen.

2. When, therefore, thou doest alms. This is the first example. The wrong way, that of the hypocrites, is described. The Greek word rendered hypocrite means a theatrical actor, one who is not real, but acts a part. Their method was to give ostentatiously. In our age the world rings with the praises of the millionaire who gives a few thousands, but is silent concerning the humble ones who have taken from their necessities and given to the same cause. **Sound a trumpet before thee.** This seems to be a proverbial expression to denote the making of a thing publicly known. The meaning is, when you give to the poor, do not make a show of it. **Hypocrite.** A Grecian actor. The actors wore masks and appeared to be somebody else than they really were. So, too, the religious hypocrites.

3, 4. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. A strong expression, to indicate that there must be no publishing of our alms deeds. **That thine alms may be in secret.** It is not concealment that is required, so much as to avoid ostentation. **Openly.** Literally, “in the open place,” in the last day, when every secret thing is made manifest.

5. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be, etc. The second example of the right and wrong kind of righteousness is now given. That men ought to pray is assured. The wrong way is that of the hypocrites, the men who make a public show of their devotions that they may have the name of sanctity. **Love to pray standing in the synagogues.** These love, not to pray, but to pray where they will be seen, and pray that they may be seen. So the Pharisees took pains to be in some public place, where they could strike an attitude of prayer in the sight of many observers. The same spirit is often seen still.

6. When thou prayest, enter into thy closet. Private devotions are meant, nor is this designed to prohibit prayers in public assemblies. The Lord himself both prayed “in the mountain alone,” in the night alone, and in public in the presence of his disciples. We have records of many prayers offered by the apostles in public assemblies. “Thy closet” may mean any secret place. Peter's closet was on the house-top; the Savior's on a mountain alone.

7. Use not vain repetitions as the heathen do. What is forbidden is not *much* praying, nor praying *in the same words* (the Lord did both), but making the number of prayers, length of prayers, or time spent in praying, a point of observance and of merit. **1 Kings 18:26** gives an example of the repetitions of the heathen. Mahometans and Catholics still hold that there is merit in repeating certain prayers a set number of times.

8. For your Father knoweth. Here is given abundant reason for short prayers. Many prayers apparently aim to give God information on matters connected with this world.

9. After this manner pray ye. The Savior does not bid us use these words, nor command any set form, but gives this as a proper example of prayer, simple, brief, condensed, yet all-embracing. **Our Father which art in heaven.** These words reveal a very tender relationship between God and the true worshiper, and base the petition on the fact that the child speaks to the Father. **Hallowed be thy name.** Of the seven petitions of the Lord's prayer the first three are in behalf of the cause of God; the glory of his name, the extension of his kingdom, and the prevalence of his will. The other four, which are properly placed last, as least important, pertain to our individual needs. No one can offer the first three petitions who is in disobedience. *Hallowed.* Holy, sacred, revered.

10. Thy kingdom come. The Messiah's kingdom had not yet come, but was proclaimed by the Lord as at hand. It did speedily come, but in its fulness, and in its final triumph over evil, it has not yet come. For this coming we may now pray, and the prayer is answered in part by each success of the gospel. **Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.** None can pray thus who have not merged their own wills into the divine will. He, in effect, prays the prayer of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine, be done." It is mockery for disobedient lips to utter such a prayer.

11. Give us this day our daily bread. We are bidden to ask for our bread, not for future years, but for "this day."

12. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive, etc. Debts mean moral obligations unfulfilled—our shortcomings, our sins. Let it be noted with emphasis that God is asked to forgive us *as* we forgive others. We ask, in other words, that he may mete out to us what we measure to others.

13. Lead us not into temptation. The thought is that God may preserve us from temptations that might lead us astray. No man can pray these words who does not try to keep out of temptation. **For thine is the kingdom.** This clause, called the doxology, is wanting in the oldest and best manuscripts, and is undoubtedly an addition by men.

14, 15. For if ye forgive men ... your heavenly Father will forgive you. Our Lord makes it a condition of our obtaining forgiveness, that we shall have a merciful, forgiving spirit.

16, 17, 18. When thou fastest. This is the third example of the right and wrong way of righteousness, in contrast. The same principle of doing nothing for mere show is still insisted upon. Fasting is not wrong, and, indeed, is often blessed richly, but not when our object is

to appear to men to fast. **Of sad countenance.** It was common to assume a woe-begone look, put ashes upon the head, and even wear sackcloth, in order to show to the world deep humiliation. This is condemned. **Anoint thine head.** That is, dress as usual. **Wash thy face.** The usual practice before eating. **Thy Father ... shall reward thee.** Our self-denial must be for the eyes of God, not of men.

19. Lay not up treasures on the earth. This forbids, not the laying up of treasures, but laying them up on the earth; that is, the piling up of worldly wealth for worldly purposes. Riches are no sin in themselves, but the improper use of riches is a sin. **Where moth and rust corrupt.** Unused garments often become moth-eaten; unused coin sometimes rust. All earth treasure will finally perish. **Thieves break through.** Literally, “dig through.” Often robbers in the East dig through the house walls of mud or unburnt brick.

20. Lay up ... treasures in heaven. This is the only way to save our wealth. It is a positive precept. Our wealth must be consecrated to God and used as his work demands. Wealth used for doing good is treasure laid up in heaven.

21. For. This introduces a reason for the preceding precepts. **Where thy treasure is will be thy heart.** This states a universal truth. A man's heart will be upon what he treasures most. If his treasure is in heaven, heaven will have his heart.

22, 23. The light of the body is the eye. This is not an abrupt transition, but bears on the same subject. If one's eye is diseased, all he sees is wrong. So the mind, or conscience, is the light of the soul. If these be darkened, all is darkness; if these see aright, all is light.

24. No man can serve two masters. He cannot give his heart to two services at the same time. He cannot follow two callings successfully. **Ye cannot serve God and mammon.** This is the direct application. The Chaldee word “Mammon” means money or riches. It is here personified as an idol. “Mammon” originally meant “trust,” or confidence, and riches is the trust of worldly men. If God be not the object of supreme trust, something else will be, and it is most likely to be money.

25. Take no thought for your life. At the time the Common Version was made, the expression “Take thought,” meant to be anxious. The Revision properly renders it, “Be not anxious.” The Greek word means, “to have the mind distracted.” Christ does not forbid prudent forethought. **Is not the life more than food?** The argument is: God gave the life, and it is higher than food. If he gave it, he will see that it is sustained, if you trust in him. So, too, he made the body. He will see that it is clothed.

26. Behold the fowls of the air. God feeds the birds without their sowing or reaping, but they do the work for which they were created, and God takes care of them. So, too, he will take care of us—not in idleness or improvidence—but if we do the work for which God created us.

27. Which of you can add one cubit, etc. There can hardly be a doubt that this ought to be rendered, “add one cubit to his age,” or period of life. The idea is: “What is the use of



anxiety? Who, by his anxiety, can add anything to life's journey"? If it is proper to speak of "length of life," it is also appropriate to speaking of adding a cubit to its length.

28. Consider the lilies. While the lilies do not toil or spin, they do their work, draw up sustenance from the earth, and drink in the dew, rain and sunbeams. So we are to do our appointed work. If we do this, trusting in God, he will supply all our needs.

29. Even Solomon in all his glory. To the Jew the court of Solomon was the highest representation of human glory. The magnificence of the court is not only celebrated in Jewish writings, but in all Oriental literature, and it is still proverbial throughout the East. Yet he was never arrayed with the taste and beauty of **one of these**. It is probable that both birds and lilies were in sight from where the Lord was sitting.

30. If God so clothe the grass of the field. Wild flowers belong to the herbage that is cut with the grass. In Palestine the forests in many localities disappeared thousands of years ago, and in the scarcity of fuel, dried grass and weeds are often used to heat the oven.

31. Therefore take no thought. Have no anxiety over the question of food and raiment. Do your duty, with a full trust in God that he will see that you do not lack for these things.

32. For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. This worldliness, anxiety, and distrust, might do in heathen, who have no knowledge of a heavenly Father, but you have a heavenly Father, and he knows that ye **need all these things**.

33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. The promise is made that if we seek it first, and its righteousness, all earthly wants will be supplied. The condition demands, 1. That we seek the kingdom *first* in point of time. Some propose to secure a competence, and after they have gained it, they will serve God. 2. We must make it *first* in importance. Everything else must give way before its demands. 3. It must be *first* in our affections, have our whole hearts. We must "love the Lord our God with the whole heart" (Matt. 22:37). **His righteousness.** The righteousness that God bestows upon those who are in the Kingdom, Christ's righteousness, the forgiveness of sins in his name.

34. Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow. Again, it should read, as in the Revision, "Have no anxiety about to-morrow." **The morrow will take thought for itself.** Not "take care of itself," but bring its own cares, anxieties and troubles. We should not foolishly increase our present burden by borrowing trouble about to-morrow.



Chapter VII

The Sermon on the Mount:—Concluded.

Summary —*Motes and Beams. Casting Pearls before Swine. Asking and Receiving. The Golden Rule. The Broad and Strait Gates. Wolves in Sheep's Clothing. The Tree Known by Its Fruits. The Kingdom Entered by Obedience. The Wise and Foolish Builders. The Wonderful Teacher.*

1. Judge not, that you be not judged. The term “judge” is used in more than one sense, but Christ's meaning is plain. 1. He does not prohibit the civil judgment of the courts upon evil doers, for this is approved throughout the whole Bible. 2. He does not prohibit the judgment of the church, through its officers, upon those who walk disorderly, for both he and the apostles have enjoined this. 3. He does not forbid those private judgments that we are compelled to form the wrong-doers, for he himself tells us that we are to judge men by their fruits. (See [verses 15–20](#).) What he designs to prohibit is rash, uncharitable judgments, a fault-finding spirit, a disposition to condemn without examination of charges.

2. With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged. Not by men, but by God. He takes note of the unkind, harsh, censorious spirit, and deals with the man according to his own spirit. There is declared here a great principle that runs through the moral government of God: *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

3. Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye? The Lord uses a figure to show the absurdity of judging severely the faults of others, while we have greater ones. The term translated “mote” means a little splinter, while the beam is something very large.

4, 5. Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye. The man who finds fault with another for sin, while he is more guilty, is a hypocrite. A great many are very zealous to convert the world, who are themselves unconverted.

6. Give not that which is holy unto dogs. The dog was regarded an unclean animal by the Jewish law. They probably represent snarling, scoffing opposers. The characteristic of dogs is brutality. To try to instill holy things into such low, unclean, and sordid brutal minds is useless. **Neither cast pearls before swine.** The swine were also unclean. They would have no use for pearls, and perhaps would rush upon those who scattered the pearls. So, too, there are men so dull, imbruted and senseless, as to reject the pearls of truth. It is our duty to help and to try to save others, but we must use common sense.

7, 8. Ask, ... seek, ... knock. The terms are here used with reference to prayer, and these constitute a climax. *Ask* implies a simple petition. *Seek* indicates an earnest search. *Knock* shows perseverance in spite of hindrances. The three represent earnest prayer. **For every one that asketh receiveth, etc.** Every one of the class concerning whom the Savior speaks.



That class is those who can say, “Our Father in heaven; Hallowed be thy name; Thy will be done.”

9, 10. If his son asks bread, will he give him a stone? The assurance of an answer to prayer is based on the fact that God is our Father. He treats his children as a good and wise earthly parent would. No kind parent would mock his child by answering his cry for bread with stones. Bread and fish were the chief articles of food of the Galilean peasant.

11. If ye, then, being evil. Men who have the natural affection of parents, even though sinful men, will not do such things. Whoever believes that the term Father, as applied to God, is more than a figure of speech, must believe in prayer. **Give good gifts.** [Luke 11:13](#), in the parallel passage, says, instead of “good gifts,” “the Holy Spirit,” as though this is heaven's greatest blessing.

12. Whatsoever ... do ye even so to them. This does not imply that we are always to do to others as they wish, but what we would like to have done to ourselves if we were placed in their condition and they in ours. We might injure them by complying with their foolish wishes. A maxim similar to the Golden Rule is found in the teachings of various sages; Socrates among the Greeks, Buddha and Confucius among the Orientals, and Hillel among the Jews. But the other teachers do not come up to Christ's standard. Their maxim is negative and passive. They say: “Do not do to others what you would not have done to you.” It is a rule of *not* doing, rather than of *doing*.

13. Enter ye in at the strait gate. The leading thought of the whole discourse is the kingdom of heaven and its conditions. Hence, when the Lord says, “Enter ye in,” he means into the kingdom of heaven. Nearly every town in Palestine is surrounded by walls and is entered by gates. The principal ones are wide, with double doors, closed with locks and fastened with iron bars. The “strait gates” are in retired corners, are narrow, and are only opened to those who knock.

14. For strait is the gate. What is it, Augustine asks, that makes this gate so strait to us? It is not that it is *strait*, or narrow, in itself, but that we want to take in our pride, our self-will, our darling sins. **Few there be that find it.** It has been to be sought. The reason that men do not find it is not because it is hard to find, but because they prefer to walk in the broad way.

15. Beware of false prophets. The word prophet, as used in the Scriptures, means any one who teaches authoritatively the will of God. A false prophet is one who is a false teacher. Christ refers to the scribes and Pharisees. **Come to you in sheep's clothing.** While appearing as harmless as sheep they are wolves.

16. Ye shall know them by their fruits. This common figure is wonderfully expressive. Not leaves (professions), or appearance, are the proper tests of the life that is in the tree, but the fruit it bears. We are to test men and every institution by this principle. **Grapes of thorns.** Two of the most highly valued fruits of Palestine are grapes and figs. Nothing is more



common than thorns and thistles. Geike says that it is the land of thorns and thorny plants. Good fruit cannot be expected on such evil stocks.

17, 18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. The Lord points to the uniform law of nature. Every tree bears after its kind. As is the tree, so is the fruit. The same principle holds good in the moral world. A good man will show forth good deeds, while a bad man will bear fruit according to his nature.

19, 20. Every tree, ... is hewn down, and cast into the fire. The test of good and bad trees, good and bad men, good and bad systems, has been presented. Now the figure is carried farther to show their destiny. The Savior states a principle that seems to run through the whole government of God. Whatever is useless and evil shall finally be swept away.

21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom. The Lord has shown that the entrance into the kingdom is through the "strait gate." He now shows more particularly what is needed to enter. Certain ones are described who cannot enter in. "Not every one" implies that some who say, "Lord, Lord," etc., shall enter in. Those enter **who do the will of my Father**. No one can be a citizen of the kingdom who does not obey the King.

22. Many will say to me in that day. The great day of the Lord. Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? The Lord chooses out of the greatest class of non-doers to show that all such will fail of entrance. They have omitted the one thing needful, a faithful obedience.

23. I never knew you. "I never knew you" must be accepted in its deeper signification of "recognizing the disciples." Augustine says that for Christ to say, "I never knew you," is only another way of saying, "You never knew me." **Depart, ... ye that work iniquity.** In spite of all their professions they had been evil doers. Their religion expended itself in professions and prayers. Hence, in "that day" they are commanded to depart. What it is to so depart we may learn from [Matt. 25:41](#). It is evident from this passage that many are self-deceived.

24. Every one that heareth these sayings of mine. The words that he has spoken in this discourse, and all his teachings. **I will liken him unto a wise man.** The wise man, with wise forethought, has built on a firm foundation. In a country with a rainy season and heavy floods this was essential. The man who "hears and does" Christ's words is building upon the rock ([Matt. 16:16](#)).

25. The rain descended ... and it fell not. Palestine is a country of torrents and sands. This verse gives a picture of the sudden violent storms and sweeping floods which are so common during the rainy season. The house founded upon the rock could not be undermined and destroyed, but would stand firm. So, says the Lord, shall it be with those who hear and obey. "They shall stand in the judgment" ([Psa. 1:5](#)).

26. Heareth these sayings ... and doeth them not. The hearer who obeys not is likened to the foolish man who built his house on the sand. Every one knows how transitory and shifting is a sandy foundation. Whole towns on the Missouri or lower Mississippi have been undermined and gone into the vortex because they were built upon the sand. So will fall the disobedient.

27. Great was the fall of it. The Lord describes the thoughtfulness of the builder on the sand, the storm and the utter destruction. There is an awful solemnity about this close to the wonderful sermon.

28. The people were astonished at his doctrine. At his teaching. No wonder they were astonished. The whole world still wonders as it studies this sermon.

29. As having authority. He spoke, not as a man, with human doubts and limitations, but as one who was omniscient. He came from God, and spoke as one divine; not as a human, hesitating, halting, limping expounders like the scribes, the interpreters of the Scriptures.

On what are you building, my brother,
Your hopes of an eternal home?
Is it loose, shifting sand, or the firm, solid rock,
You are trusting for the ages to come?

Hearing and *doing*, we build on the Rock;
Hearing alone, we build on the sand;
Both will be tried by the storm and the flood;
Only the rock the trial will stand.

—H.R. Trickett.



Chapter VIII

Miracles at Capernaum and on the Sea

Summary — *The Leper Healed. The Servant of the Centurion Healed. Great Faith. Sitting in the Kingdom with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Children of the Kingdom Cast Out. Following Christ. The Storm on the Sea. The Disciples in Terror. The Storm Quelled at His Voice. The Gergesene Demoniacs Healed. The Swine Perish in the Sea.*

1, 2. A leper came. Compare [Mark 1:40–45](#); [Luke 5:12–15](#). Leprosy was a dreadful and hopeless disease. It begins as a skin disease, defies medical skill, and is a kind of living death. Dr. Schaff says: “Near the Jaffa gate of Jerusalem I saw, in 1877, these miserable creatures with withered limbs imploring aid, and visited a hospital of incurable lepers.” There are various forms of the disease, but white leprosy seemed most common among the Hebrews. With it the sufferer became white from head to foot. The leper, by the law of Moses, was regarded unclean, was separated from the people, was regarded as death, and the disease was a type of sin. See [Lev. 13:1–12](#); [2 Kings 5:27](#); [Num. 5:2](#). **Lord.** An expression of faith, as well as the words that follow.

3. Touched him ... straitway his leprosy was cleansed. To touch a leper was forbidden, and carried ceremonial defilement, but at the touch of Jesus the source of the defilement fled, and the leper was clean. At the touch of Jesus all impurity flees.

4. Tell no man. This was forbidden until the man was officially declared to be healed. He could not enter society until the priest had so declared. To blaze the story abroad as a miracle of Jesus might prevent such a declaration on account of prejudice. Besides, the Lord often forbade noising abroad his cures, for various reasons, chiefly because the multitude so thronged him. **Offer the gift Moses commanded.** See [Lev. 14:10, 22, 30, 31](#). **For a testimony.** An official proof of the miracle.

5. When Jesus entered Capernaum. See note on [Matt. 4:13](#). His return to the place he made his home after the Sermon on the Mount and healing the leper. Compare [Luke 7:1–10](#). **There came unto him a centurion.** A Roman military officer, corresponding to our captain. All Palestine was under Roman military government at this time, with headquarters at Cæsarea, and soldiers in every leading town. This centurion probably commanded the company stationed at Capernaum. He was, of course, a Gentile. We learn from [Luke 7:3](#), he came to Jesus, not in person, but by Jewish elders, whom he supposed would have more influence with the Lord. These elders interceded more readily because he had built them a synagogue ([Luke 7:5](#)), either to secure favor, or because he was, like Cornelius, a devout man. In the ruins of Tel Hum, supposed to be Capernaum, are yet found the foundations of a synagogue, one known by certain characteristics to have been built in the Herodian



period, and there can hardly be a doubt that it was the one built by the centurion, and in which Christ often preached. See *Edersheim's Jewish Social Life*, page 255.

6. Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy. Luke says his servant “was dear unto him,” and the whole account of Matthew indicates intense solicitude. Paralysis, or palsy, was a common disease in those days. (See [Matt. 4:24](#).) Alford says, “The disease of the text may have been *tetanus*, or lockjaw, which the ancient physicians included under paralysis.” [Luke](#) says that “he was ready to die.”

7. He saith to him. Luke tells us that he started at once, but was interrupted by what follows.

8. The centurion answered. Through friends whom he had sent for this purpose ([Luke 7:6](#)). **I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof.** This humility was partly due to his consciousness that he was a Gentile. Rigid Jews did not hold social intercourse with Gentiles, and the centurion may have supposed that so holy a Jewish teacher as Jesus would hesitate to come under his roof. **Speak the word only.** “Speak only a word” is the idea, and “my servant will be healed.” Not even Martha ([John 11:21](#)) thought that Jesus could have saved her brother Lazarus without going to him. His faith was great.

9. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. The meaning is: “If I, in my subordinate station, am obeyed, how much more thou, who art over all, and whom disease serve as their master.” As he could say, “Go,” to a soldier and was at once obeyed, so Jesus could say, “Go,” to the disease, and it would obey him.

10. When Jesus heard it he marvelled. There are two cases in the Lord's history where he is said to have marvelled; here and in [Mark 6:6](#). In one case he marvels at the faith of a Gentile; in the other at the unbelief of the Jews. **I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.** The greatness of his faith is shown in his lofty conception of the power and dignity of Christ. This great faith was found, not in Israel, but in a Gentile. In one case beside, that of the Syrophenician woman ([Matt. 15:28](#)), also a Gentile, the Lord commends the greatness of faith.

11. Many shall come from the east and west. The terms, “the east and the west,” the extreme points of the compass, are taken to indicate the regions that are far away, the whole world. The Lord means not only those who are geographically far away from Israel, but those who have been far away spiritually, Gentiles as well as Jews. **Shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.** The Jews were accustomed to speak to the delights of the Messiah's kingdom as a feast with the patriarchs. The language implies intimate domestic intercourse and fellowship. **The kingdom of heaven** refers, here, rather to the eternal blessed state than to the church on earth.

12. But the children of the kingdom. The Jews, the natural children of Abraham, the “Father of the faithful,” heirs of the promises made to him. **Cast out.** Because they rejected the Messiah, in whom all the promises center. **Into outer darkness.** The history of the Jews

for 1,800 years has been a fulfillment of this passage. **There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** There is a hint at the wretchedness of a future state of punishment.

13. As thou hast believed. The centurion believed that Jesus could heal his servant by speaking the word. **In that hour.** At the moment these words were spoken the servant was well.

14. Peter's wife's mother. Compare [Mark 1:29–34](#); [Luke 4:38–41](#). Peter, whom the Catholics make the first of the popes, was, therefore, a married man. See also [1 Cor. 9:5](#). Malarious fevers are still common in the vicinity of Capernaum, due probably to the adjacent marshes.

15. Touched her hand. He could heal by a word, or by his touch. At his touch the fever left her. **Ministered.** Was well, and able to prepare a meal for the Lord.

16. They brought many. See also [Mark 1:32](#). **Possessed with devils.** See note on [Matt. 4:24](#). **Healed the sick.** The sick were diseased in body; the demoniacs were spiritually diseased.

17. Spoken by Isaiah. In the beautiful picture of the Messiah in [chapter 53](#).

18. Now when Jesus saw multitudes about him. The multitudes had gathered to listen to his teaching, or to behold his miracles. The sea was only six miles wide, and the Savior often crossed it in order to secure retirement. There is no deep recess in the eastern hills; no towns along its banks corresponding to those in the plain of Gennesareth.

19. A certain scribe said, ... I will follow thee. Compare [Luke 9:57–62](#). Though this scribe belonged to a class which, as a body, rejected Christ, he was disposed to be a disciple (see [verse 21](#)), but had not counted the cost. See note on [Matt. 2:4](#).

20. Jesus saith unto him. He rejects not this man's offer, nor refuses him the liberty to follow him, only he will have him know what he is doing and “count the cost.” **The Son of man.** It is the name by which the Lord ordinarily designates himself as the Messiah—the Son of God *manifested in the flesh of Adam; the second Adam*. **Not where to lay his head.** He, as the “Son of man,” did not possess what the humbler animals claim, a home.

21. Suffer me first to go and bury my father. There are two views. 1. That his father was already dead, and he wished only to attend the funeral and properly observe the last rites. If this view is correct, the Savior meant to teach that the duty to the Lord is higher than any earthly duty, and when one has to yield to the other it must be the lower one. 2. The view is also held that the disciple asked that he might be permitted to remain at home until his father's death and burial, and then follow Christ. That is the more probable view. It was the case of “loving father or mother more than me.”

22. Follow me. The highest of all duties, now discharged by becoming his disciple, obeying him and making his life our example. **Let the dead bury their dead.** Those spiritually dead will attend to the last rites of them who have died naturally.

23. And when he was entered into a ship. Compare [Mark 5:1–21](#); [Luke 8:28–40](#). Boat is a better rendering. It was a small open row boat.



24. There arose a great tempest in the sea. [Mark](#) says, “A great storm;” [Luke](#), “There came down a storm of wind;” the word used by Matthew implies a tornado. The Greek word denotes a sudden and violent gust of wind, such as frequently bursts on the lake. All travelers describe the storms as very sudden and violent, caused by the cold air that rushes down from the mountains into the heated depression of the lake.

25. Lord, save us: we perish. The Lord was awakened out of sleep with these words. Their language is that of extreme terror.

26. O ye of little faith. According to Matthew, he characterizes them as of “*little faith*”; according to [Mark](#) he asked, *How have ye have no faith?* according to [Luke](#), *Where is your faith?* The spirit of the rebuke is the same in all the accounts. **Rebuked the winds and the sea.** [Mark](#) gives the very words of the rebuke: “Peace, be still.”

27. What manner of man? The words express astonishment at this new proof of his control, not only over demons and disease, but also over the winds and waves, which obeyed him at a word.

28. Into the country of the Gergesenes. Compare [Mark 5:1–21](#); [Luke 8:26–40](#). Gergesa has been identified on the east shore of Galilee; the “steep place” and “tombs” are still seen. It was a village in the district of the Gadarenes. The Lord landed here after the storm. The Revision has *Gadarenes* in Matthew, and *Gerasenes* in [Mark and Luke](#). The simple explanation of this difference is, that Gadarenes and Gerasenes are different names for the inhabitants of the same large district, so called from Gadara and Gerasa, two cities of that region; while Gergesenes is the name of the people of a smaller district within the other, and named from the city of Gergesa. **Two demoniacs.** [Mark and Luke](#) mention only one, the fiercer one, who spoke with the Lord. **The tombs.** The tombs were caves, natural or artificial, cut in the rock of the hill side, and, hence, suitable for a shelter. **Fierce.** So violent as to be dangerous ([Mark 5:3–5](#); [Luke 8:29](#)).

29. They cried out. This account shows: (1) That demoniacal possession was not simply bodily or mental disease. (2) That evil spirits actually took possession of and controlled human beings. (3) That these controlled the actions and organs of speech of their poor victims. (4) We learn elsewhere that sin prepared the way for the entrance of the demon. **Thou Son of God.** The demons, like the devil, recognized him. **Torment us before our time.** These words show that they expected the final triumph of Christ.

30. A herd of many swine. According to [Mark](#), 2,000. They were an unclean animal, kept probably by Jews in violation of the spirit of the Mosaic law; or, if by Gentiles, kept in violation of God's law for the land of Israel.

31. Suffer us to go into ... the swine. Why this request we do not know; perhaps it was malicious; perhaps to have an animal habitation.

32. Go. A permission, not a command. **Rushed ... into the sea.** Maddened, the swine rushed down the steep declivity into the sea. If we knew all the facts we would see more fully

the righteousness of the Lord's permission. Perhaps the loss of the swine was a punishment. Perhaps it was to show that evil works its own destruction.

34. The whole city came out to meet Jesus. Filled with wonder and fear by the story. **Besought him that he would depart.** Partly from awe of one with such power; partly, perhaps, from fear of loss of more property. The Lord, bidden to depart, never returned. In this fact is a significant lesson. [Mark](#) tells us that the healed demoniac became a preacher of Christ in his own country.



Chapter IX

The Ministry at Capernaum

Summary —*A Paralytic Healed. The Charge of Blasphemy. Christ's Power to Forgive Sins. Matthew Called. Eating with Publicans. New Cloth on an Old Garment. The Daughter of Jairus. The Woman with Bloody Issue Healed. The Damsel Restored to Life. Two Blind Men Made to See. Preaching in the Synagogues.*

1. He entered into a ship. The last chapter left the Savior in the country of the Gadarenes on the eastern side of the lake. He now returns to Capernaum. **Came into his own city.** Capernaum, so called because, after leaving Nazareth, he made Capernaum his Galilean home.

2. They brought to him a man sick of the palsy. Compare [Mark 2:1–12](#); [Luke 5:17–26](#). A helpless paralytic, unable even to walk, but anxious to be brought to the great Healer. **Seeing their faith.** That of the four bearers of the helpless man, and the man himself. The sick man and his friend showed their faith by overcoming great obstacles in order to come to Christ for help. [Mark](#) informs us that there was such a crowd that the palsied man had to be let down through the roof. **Saith to the sick of the palsy.** *Palsy* is a contraction of the word *paralysis*. A disease which deprives the part affected of sensation or the power of motion, or both. **Thy sins be forgiven thee.** The Revision says, “Thy sins are forgiven.” The Greek is in the past tense. Possibly he had brought his sickness upon himself by means of his sins; but was now penitent.

3. Certain of the scribes said within themselves. They had scented heresy from afar, and came from Jerusalem to pry into the teachings of the Prophet of Galilee, as the people called him, (see [Luke 5:17](#)). **Scribes.** The learned class, the official expounders of the Scriptures, the theologians, the jurists, the legislators, the politicians, and, indeed, the soul of Israel. **This man blasphemeth.** By professing to forgive sins, the prerogative not of man, but of God. If Christ were but a man, as they imagined, the scribes would have been right. And yet, so far, he had not said that *he* forgave the sins, but merely declared them forgiven. This was the beginning of the opposition that ended with the cross. On the same accusation of blasphemy, now first made, the Sanhedrim condemned him to death ([Matt. 26:65](#)).

4. Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? They had said nothing aloud, but he read their hearts.

5. Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee. To say, “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” was easy, for no visible result could test the saying. To say, “Take up thy bed and walk,” was not apparently so easy, for failure would cover with confusion. He said the last, leaving the inference—If I can do the most difficult, then I can do the easier.

6. But that ye may know. By doing that which is capable of being put to the proof, I will vindicate my right and power to do that which in its very nature is incapable of being put to the proof of the senses. **The Son of man** cannot simply mean *a man*, or a mere man, since the powers in question do not to men as such. The true sense is determined by [Daniel 7:13](#), where the phrase is confessedly applied to the Messiah, as a partaker of our nature. **Hath power on earth to forgive sins.** “Authority” is a better rendering than “power,” and it is so given by the American Revision Committee. He had “authority” from the Father who had sent him, and who had committed judgment to his hands on earth. Sins are against God, and therefore only God can forgive them; for in the nature of things only he can forgive against whom the offense has been committed, but Jesus was “God manifest in the flesh.” I can forgive sins committed against myself, but not those committed against my neighbor, much less those against God. Christ's argument here affords a fair test of all priestly claims to absolve from sin. If the priest has power to remit the eternal punishment of sin, he should be able, certainly, to remit the physical and temporal punishment of sin. This Christ did; this the priest does not, and cannot do.

7. And he arose, and departed to his own house. It may be regarded as an enacted parable of sin and redemption. The paralytic typifies the sinner, by his original helplessness ([Isaiah 40:30](#); [John 6:44](#); [15:5](#)); faith was demonstrated by his earnestness to come to Christ in spite of obstacles ([Psa. 25:15](#); [86:2, 7](#)); and the power of divine grace, in the ability to obey Christ's command, received in the very attempt to comply with it ([Phil. 4:13](#)).

8. The multitude ... marvelled. Why should they not? “His name shall be called Wonderful” ([Is. 9](#)).

9. Saw a man named Matthew. Compare [Mark 2:13–17](#); [Luke 5:27–32](#). Such is the modest introduction of himself that Matthew gives. He was also called Levi ([Luke 5:27](#)). **At the receipt of custom.** He was a tax collector, a publican, whose business it was to collect the Roman taxes. **Follow me.** Like Peter, Andrew, James and John, he was called from his business, and left at once. Like them, he was probably a disciple of John, and before this a disciple of Jesus, but now called to apostleship. **Arose and followed.** Thus promptly the call of Jesus ought always to be obeyed.

10. As he sat at meat. At a meal. **In the house.** The house of Matthew. Matthew made a feast ([Mark 2:15](#); [Luke 5:29](#)). **Many publicans and sinners came.** Matthew's old associates. [Luke](#) says they were invited. **Publicans.** Collectors of the Roman tax, usually Jews, but hated because they collected a hateful tax, often, too, grasping and unscrupulous. **Sinners.** Persons excommunicated from the synagogue. An orthodox Jew would not eat with them. When the term *sinner* is applied to a woman, it usually means an outcast.

11. When the Pharisees saw it. They were not at feast, but were on the watch. **Why eateth your Master? etc.** The strict Jews would not eat with Gentiles, and these classes were regarded by them on a level with the heathen ([Acts 11:3](#); [Gal. 2:12](#)).

12. They that are whole need not a physician, etc. In other words: “If these people are as sinful as you allege, they are the very ones who need a Savior.”

13. I will have mercy and not sacrifice. See [Hosea 6:6](#). The Pharisees had never learned the meaning of this passage, which teaches that kind hearts and helpful deeds are more pleasing to God than outward ceremonial. Sacrifice is right, but mercy is first in importance. **I came not to call the righteous, etc.** My mission in the world is to save sinners.

14. Disciples of John. Some who still held aloof from Christ, and really sympathized with the Pharisees ([Luke 5:33](#)). **Why do we and the Pharisees fast often?** The Pharisees fasted twice a week ([Luke 18:12](#)), and these disciples imitated them. They could not understand why he did not require similar austerities.

15. The children of the bride-chamber mourn. The friends of the bridegroom, for the bride was brought to his father's house. Fasting was usually a sign of sorrow. He was himself the Bridegroom, and still with his disciples. **When the bridegroom will be taken from them.** An allusion especially to the crushing sorrow when he was crucified and buried. Real fasting takes place when there is real occasion for it. See [Acts 13:2](#); [14:23](#); [2 Cor. 6:5](#); [11:27](#).

16. No man putteth, etc. Two illustrations follow to show the folly of patching up, or reforming, an old, worn out religion like Judaism. **New cloth.** Cloth that has been shrunk. In shrinking it would tear the old cloth around it, and make a worse rent than before.

17. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles. New wine is unfermented wine. The bottles were not of glass, but of skin, the kind that is still used in Palestine, where nothing changes. Old skin bottles would become tender with age and burst during the fermentation of the wine.

18, 19. There came a certain ruler. One of the rulers of the synagogue (probably of the synagogue of Capernaum). One of the elders and presiding officers, who convened the assembly, preserved order, invited readers and speakers. His name was Jairus ([Mark 5:22](#); [Luke 8:41](#)). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all give this account. From them we learn that the maiden was twelve years old, was dying when the ruler started, was dead when he spoke to Jesus. Compare [Mark 5:22–43](#); [Luke 8:41–56](#).

20. On his way to the house of Jairus another miracle was wrought. **And, behold, a certain woman.** I think the circumstances of the narrative render the inference almost certain that this account was meant for the consolation of those multitudes of stricken women in all ages who seem to be afflicted with sorrows in very unequal measure, compared with the stronger, and generally, also, the more depraved, sex.—*W. H. Thomson, M.D.* **An issue of blood.** A hemorrhage either from the bowels or the womb, probably the latter. **Came behind and touched the hem of his garment.** The ordinary outer Jewish garment was a square or oblong piece of cloth, worn something like an Indian blanket.

21, 22. Touch but his garment. The Jews paid to the fringe a superstitious reverence. Sharing the superstition, this woman touched it in hope of cure. **Thy faith hath made thee**

whole. Literally, *thy faith hath saved thee*. Her faith, of course, had not been the cause of her cure. Christ's power had been that. But her faith was the condition on her part. Hence it might be represented as having "made her whole." The student should observe that hers was not a passive faith, but it led to action. A passive faith is a dead faith.

23. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house. He healed the woman on the way. **Saw the minstrels.** The Jews, like other Orientals, were wont to employ professional mourners, minstrels who made plaintive music, or wailed.

24. Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. The reality of the death is not denied, but only the fact implicitly assumed, that death will be followed by a resurrection, as sleep is by an awakening. **Laughed him to scorn.** The company of mourners was certain that the child was dead and, understanding neither the language nor the power of Jesus, laughed in derision.

25. When the people were put forth. Luke (8:51). says that Peter, James and John, and the father and mother of the maiden were permitted to remain **He took her by the hand.** As we learn from one of the [parallel accounts](#), he said to her, *Talitha cumi*. This is Aramaic, the language generally spoken by the common people in Palestine at the time of Christ. The words mean: "Rise, my child." They were immediately obeyed. She arose, and walked.

26. The fame went abroad. [Mark](#) dwells emphatically upon the astonishment felt by the parents (see [Luke](#)), but shared doubtless by the three apostles.

27. Two blind men followed him. This account is given only by Matthew. Blindness is still very common under the burning sun and among the blinding sands of the East. No sight is more common than blind beggars. The want of attention to the eye when first diseased is one reason why this affliction is so common. **Have mercy on us, thou son of David.** The title, "son of David," applied to Jesus by these blind men, as well as by those healed at Jericho, implied his Messiahship, as it was understood that the Christ was to be the son of David.

28. The blind men came to him. Not until he was come into the house he was seeking. **Believe ye that I am able to do this?** He demands, as condition of the blessing, that there should be an expression of faith.

29. According to your faith be it unto you. Faith is the hand which takes what God offers, the spiritual organ of appropriation.

30, 31. Jesus strictly charged them, etc. Their changed condition would sufficiently tell the story without their indiscreet babbling. They failed to obey, which they should have done, whether they understood the reason of the command or not. Note the three great lessons about our Lord: (1) He is the Life. He not only breaks the bonds of mortal death, but endows the soul with spiritual life. (2) He is the infallible Physician. Diseases of the body, sorrows of the heart, and sins of the soul that no man can heal, disappear at his touch. (3) He is the Light of the world. At his word sightless eyes see. At his word darkened souls are flooded with light.



32, 33. A dumb man, possessed with a devil. Compare [Luke 11:14](#). A complication of physical and spiritual maladies. See note on [Matt. 8:29](#). **It was never so seen in Israel.** Filled with wonder at the cure, the multitude declared that no prophet had ever done such wonders. They were right.

34. The Pharisees said. With their usual perverseness they gave a sinister explanation. **By the prince of the devils.** In other words: He gets power from the devil, instead of God, to cast out demons.

35. Jesus went about all the cities. He began to widen the area of his ministry.

36. When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion. The Lord seldom looked upon a crowd of the poor, lost, human beings without being moved with tender compassion. **Because they fainted, and were ... as sheep having no shepherd.** A figure representing their spiritual condition. They “fainted” under the burdens placed on them by pretended shepherds, Pharisees and scribes. They wandered, as sheep left without care.

37. The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. First the people are represented under the figure of sheep, scattering abroad, without a shepherd's care; next as a ripe and abandoned harvest, ready to be lost unless reapers are sent to gather it.

38. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest. The Lord of the harvest is Christ. When we pray the Lord for anything we must work to fulfill our own prayers. If we pray for laborers, we must be willing to become laborers ourselves, or to send and sustain other laborers.



Chapter X

The Call and Charge to the Apostles

Summary —*The Twelve Apostles. The Charge. To Whom Sent. How to Go. What to Preach. What to Do. How to Act If Received or Rejected. Persecution. Prudence Required. Trials to Be Met. Need Have No Care for a Defense. Fear Not Men, but God. The Father's Care. Not Peace, but a Sword. Loving Christ More Than Father or Mother. No Kind Act Lost.*

1. He called unto him his twelve disciples. Compare [Mark 3:13–19](#) and [Luke 9:1–6](#). The twelve had already been called, and had attended the Lord for some time. They were now commissioned and sent forth as apostles. This must be connected directly with the last three verses of the preceding chapter, which should belong to [Chapter X](#). **And he gave them power.** To do the same kind of works of mercy which Jesus had done, and thus to carry out his mission. Works of mercy and love are inseparable from the true preaching of the gospel.

2–4. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these. Of the twelve apostles there are four lists, found in [Matt. 10:2](#), [Mark 3:16](#), [Luke 6:14](#), and [Acts 1:13](#). They differ in the following particulars: Luke, in the book of Acts, does not insert the name of Judas Iscariot, who was then dead; both in his Gospel and in Acts he entitles the Simon, who, here and in Mark, is called the Canaanite, Simon Zelotes; Matthew gives as the tenth disciple, Lebbeus; Mark calls him Thaddeus; Luke and Acts, *Judas of James, i. e.*, either son or brother of James; and (4) Mark says that James and John were surnamed by Christ, Boanerges, *i. e.*, the sons of thunder. In other respects the four lists are identical. There are three pairs of brothers among them. Andrew and Peter, James and John, James the Less and Judas, or Thaddeus. James and John I believe to have been cousins of our Lord. With the exception of Judas Iscariot, all were Galileans; several of them were by trade fishermen, a laborious and profitable calling; there was neither priest nor scribe among them; all were from the ranks of the common people.

5, 6. Go not into the way of the Gentiles. The Jews called all “Gentiles” who were not Jews. **Samaritans.** The inhabitants of Samaria, a district between Judea and Galilee; descendants of a remnant of the Ten Tribes, mixed with Gentiles colonized there. They accepted the five books of Moses, but worshipped on Mount Gerizim, instead of at Jerusalem. They and the Jews had been for ages bitter enemies. **The lost sheep of the house of Israel.** The lost descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Compare this commission with the one given to the apostles after the death and resurrection of the Lord ([Matt. 28:19](#)). In this commission the apostles are forbidden to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, and are confined to the house of Israel. In the other they are commanded to go into “all the world,” and to “preach the gospel to every creature;” to go “first to Jerusalem, and to Judea, and to Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth.” The first commission is Jewish; the second is world-wide.

Yet both are given by the same Lord; why this wide difference? Because the new dispensation was not ushered in until after the resurrection. The Jewish law, national, exclusive, a wall of partition from Gentiles, was yet in force. Christ, “born under the law,” and the apostles also were under it until it was removed. They could not keep it and yet become missionaries to the Gentiles. But when Christ died the old dispensation, the law, died with him. “The handwriting of ordinances was nailed to the cross.” The old covenant passed away when the new came into force, sealed with the blood of Christ. After the death and resurrection of Christ, the law ceased to be binding upon the apostles. The distinctions of Jew and Gentile were destroyed. Hence, under the new covenant, the world-wide covenant, there was a new commission that would send the gospel to all the world. The old covenant was with the seed of Abraham; the new covenant embraced all nations. See [Heb. 8:13](#).

7. Preach ... The kingdom of heaven is at hand. John the Baptist, and Christ also, had preached, “The kingdom is at hand.” It had not yet been inaugurated. So the apostles were still to preach. It was near, but not in existence. There was no such charge in the second commission. Then “all power in heaven and in earth was in the hands of Christ.” He became King after he suffered, and his kingdom was inaugurated on earth on the day of Pentecost. When he was “lifted up” ([John 3:15](#)), he became King.

8. Heal the sick, etc. Not only in order to do a beneficent work, but to demonstrate that they had the Lord's commission.

9, 10. Provide neither gold, etc. Because “the workman is worthy of his meat,” and those to whom they preached should supply all their wants. Compare [1 Tim. 5:18](#) and [1 Cor. 9:7–14](#). This has always been the law of Christ. **Scrip.** A wallet, or valise. **Nor shoes.** They were allowed to wear sandals ([Mark](#)), such as the common people wore. They should go with simply their ordinary wear. They were required to dress as the people. **Nor staves.** With the staff each one had, but without an extra supply. A staff was always carried in walking over the rugged mountains of Palestine.

11. There abide. With some one noted for hospitality and worth. They were not to board round from house to house.

12. When you come into an house, salute it. Courteously salute the household.

13. Let your peace come upon it. The Oriental salutation is, “Peace be with you.” If the household were hospitable and friendly, let this blessing rest upon them. If they proved unfriendly, leave them to their own course and its result.

14. Shake off the dust of your feet. This was done when there was a positive rejection of the gospel. It was a symbolical act, signifying that all responsibility for the stubborn household or city had ended. Compare [Mark 6:11](#) and [Acts 13:51](#). Nor can the gospel be forced upon an unwilling people in any age.

15. Verily I say unto you. This formula always introduces a very emphatic saying. **More tolerable for the land of Sodom, etc.** The cities of the Jordan valley destroyed for their sins

in the time of Abraham ([Gen. 19:1–28](#)). These cities did not have the opportunity, and hence, not the responsibility, of those to which Christ or his apostles preached.

16. As sheep in the midst of wolves. Defenseless by human means, among the fierce and cruel; among bitter enemies. **Be wise as serpents.** Prudent, discreet. Serpents are very cautious in avoiding danger. **Harmless as doves.** Guileless and innocent as doves. The dove, peaceful, never preying on other birds, has always been a symbol of innocence.

17. Beware of men. The wolves. **To councils.** To the local courts to be tried for heresy and other offenses. **In their synagogues.** The Jewish assemblages corresponding to modern churches. **They will scourge you.** This punishment was inflicted on offenders in the synagogues. See [Acts 22:19](#) and [26:11](#). The Talmud states that scourging was inflicted by the officers of the synagogue.

18. Ye shall be brought before governors. Before the civil tribunals, like criminals. **And kings.** This was literally fulfilled in the case of James, the brother of John ([Acts 12:2](#)), and Paul ([Acts 26:1](#)).

19, 20. Take no thought how or what ye shall speak. They are not told to take no thought what they shall preach, but that the Holy Spirit will give them utterance when they make their defense before civil magistrates. **Your Father.** Not “Our Father.” The Savior never says, “Our Father,” except when he teaches the disciples to pray, but “My Father” and “Your Father.” God was his Father in a different sense from that in which he is our Father.

21. Brother shall deliver up the brother. The rest of the family shall turn upon their own kindred who accept Christ, and become their bitter enemies. This has been fulfilled thousands of times in every age.

22. Ye shall be hated of all men. As they assailed and sought to destroy all evil, and evil is wont to unite against them. Jews and pagans made a common cause against early Christianity. The wicked and perverse hate it still. **He that endureth to the end.** Holds out faithful. Perseverance gives proof of genuine faith, and is sure of reward.

23. Flee ye into another. They were not to rashly expose their lives where it would do no good, but go elsewhere and continue preaching. Life is a sacred possession, and must not be flung away. It may be given up for the sake of Christ. **Till the Son of man is come.** A reference primarily, no doubt, to the Lord coming into his kingdom. See [Matt. 16:28](#). He was thus to come in the life time of some of the apostles. He did thus come in the establishment of his kingdom in power on the day of Pentecost. He also came in judgment on the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem. This event ended Jewish persecution. There is also the final coming to judge the world, but the meaning here does not include that.

24, 25. The disciple is not above his master. The disciples must expect to be treated like the master. **Call the master ... Beelzebub.** The prince of evil, Satan, is meant.

26. Fear them not therefore. Because Christ shall triumph, and all shall be brought to judgment, where every secret shall be made manifest.

27. What I tell you in darkness. In privacy. The Lord had to teach them in private before he could send them forth. **On the house tops.** The flat roofs of eastern houses made a conspicuous pulpit. The Lord directs them to speak in the most public manner. In Syria proclamations are still often made from the house tops.

28. Be not afraid. Of men, who can only destroy the body, but cannot harm the soul. **But rather fear him, etc.** Fear God, who can condemn the soul to banishment. The command is to fear not the displeasure of man, but that of God. **In hell.** See note on [Matt. 5:22](#). The word in the Greek is *Gehenna*, not *hades*.

29. Two sparrows. Among the smallest and least valuable birds, yet under the Divine care. So cheap as to be offered in pairs for an insignificant coin, but God notes the fall of one.

30, 31. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. An assurance of the most special providence over all Christ's disciples. The [next verse](#) shows to whom the blessed assurance applies.

32. Whosoever will confess me before men. To confess Christ does not mean to accept some particular creed, but to publicly acknowledge the Lord, and to live before men as his servant. It implies, 1. A confession of faith in him with the lips, such a confession as Peter made, [Matt. 16:16](#), and the eunuch, [Acts 8:37](#). Paul describes this confession in [Rom. 10:10](#). 2. An acknowledgment of Christ by obedience and by giving the life to his service. Confession is a demonstration of faith, (1) by public acknowledgment, and (2) by an obedient life. A verbal acknowledgment of Christ is not enough if the life is a denial, for then it shows that the acknowledgment was a lie. The two must correspond. **Him will I confess.** Christ sitting on the throne of judgment promises to acknowledge as his own faithful brother every one who has thus acknowledged him before men.

33. But whosoever shall deny me before men. The Jews denied him when they rejected him as Messiah. All who refuse to receive him as their Lord deny him still. The disciple who, through the cares of the world, turns away from Christian life, denies him. **Him will I also deny.** Those who receive him will be received; those who reject him will be rejected; those who confess him will be confessed, and those who deny him, denied.

34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. Christ has to conquer a peace by overcoming the evil that is in the way of peace. Hence, to preach the gospel of purity and peace always arouses the opposition of the evil doer. Evil has to be put down before peace can prevail. Hence, while the great end that Christ proposes is peace, the immediate result of his coming, and of the preaching of the gospel, was opposition and bloodshed. **I come ... but a sword.** The only sword that Christ or his followers use in the conflict is the Sword of the Spirit, but the persecutor has in every age turned upon them the carnal sword. The sword is sent, because persecutors use it upon the church.

35. For I come to set a man at variance with his father. This was not the Savior's object, but the effect. The conversion of individual members of the family would cause variance. In nearly all quarrels, except those about religion, the members of the same family stand together, but in religious feuds the family circle is often broken and its parts arrayed against each other.

36. A man's foes shall be of his own household. This has been verified thousands of times. Many a convert has been turned out of home and banished by kindred, because he had confessed Christ.

37. He that loveth father or mother more than me. The Lord does not require us to love these less, but him more. Love for him must become the dominant principle of life. **Is not worthy of me.** Will not be accepted as worthy.

38. He that taketh not his cross. Luke adds, *daily*; not once, but all the time. The cross is the pain of the *self-denial* required. The cross is the *symbol of doing our duty, even at the cost of the most painful death*. Christ obeyed God, and carried out his work of the salvation of men, though it required him to die upon the cross in order to do it. And ever since, the cross has stood as the emblem, not of suffering, but of suffering for the sake of Christ and his gospel. **And follow me.** To follow Christ is to take him for our master, our teacher, our example; to believe his doctrines, to uphold his cause, to obey his precepts, and to do it though it leads to heaven by the way of the cross.

39. He that findeth his life shall lose it. Whoever counts his life of so much value that he will preserve it by sacrificing his Christian integrity, or will renounce his religion to save his life, will find in the end that he has lost his soul forever for the sake of a few fleeting years; while he who gives up all things, even life itself, will find an abundant reward in the life eternal. *All self-seeking is self-losing*. The Divine law is always to give in order to receive.

40. He that receiveth you, receiveth me. They would go forth in Christ's name, as his servants and ambassadors. They carried his message, and to receive it and them was virtually receiving him.

41. In the name of a prophet. That is, because he is a prophet. The apostles themselves were prophets.

42. Whosoever shall give to drink to these little ones. By the "little ones" are probably meant Christ's disciples. **A cup of cold water only.** The smallest act of kindness. If done "because he was a disciple," or out of regard for Christ, he should never lose his reward. Good deeds are never lost. Note the six things here spoken of as belonging to discipleship of Christ: (1) Confessing, or professing; (2) Fighting; (3) Bearing his standard (the cross); (4) Suffering; (5) Following; (6) Giving up life. These are all the duties of the soldier.



Chapter XI

The Message from John the Baptist

Summary — *John Sends from Prison to Christ. Christ's Answer. The Character of John the Baptist. None Greater Before Him. The Least in the Kingdom. The Criticisms of John and Christ. The Woes of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Wisdom Hid from the Wise, but Given unto Babes. The Sweet Invitation.*

2. When John had heard in the prison. Compare [Mark 6:14–29](#) and [Luke 7:19–28](#). John had now been a year in prison, to which he had been sent by Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, because he had rebuked his adulterous marriage with his brother Philip's wife ([Matt. 14:1–11](#)). Josephus says that Machærus, a strong fortress built by Herod the Great, the father of Antipas, about ten miles east of the Dead Sea, was the prison. **He sent his disciples.** To make the inquiry found in the [next verse](#). The course of Jesus was so different from what John himself, in common with other Jews, expected of the Messiah, that after lying in a dungeon for a year, he began to be uncertain. If Jesus was the Christ, why did he not proclaim himself the Messiah King, destroy the power of the Romans and of Herod, and release John himself from prison? So he reasoned.

3. Art thou he that should come? John the Baptist had predicted the coming One ([Matt. 3:11](#)). Perhaps John, impatient of the long delay, hoped to incite Jesus to proclaim his Messiahship.

4. Jesus answered and said. [Luke](#) states that at that same hour he cured many of their infirmities. After permitting the messengers to see his work, he pointed to it as his answer. **Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see.** To John's question Jesus gives no direct reply. There is something severe in the whole of our Lord's demeanor and language, as if reproving this shaking of John's higher faith in God.

5. Dead are raised. In [Luke](#), the raising of the widow's son at Nain immediately precedes this message; and in [this Gospel](#) we have seen the ruler's daughter raised. **The poor have the gospel preached to them.** It adds to the force of this testimony that the poor had always been overlooked by Pharisees and the Jewish doctors. The ancient philosophers and theologians had no gospel for those who could not pay for it. The climax is preaching the gospel to the poor. Jesus answers John by pointing to his works. They were a more convincing answer than words. What he has done for mankind is still a most convincing demonstration.

6. Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. This is suggested by John's seeming to have stumbled, not fallen, because Christ had not publicly declared his mission. The Lord does not upbraid, but gives in this way a tender rebuke, implying that he knew what to do with reference to his kingdom.



7. What went yet out into the wilderness to see? An allusion to John's ministry in the wilderness, which had been attended by most of Christ's disciples. **A reed shaken with the wind.** The reed of Egypt and Palestine is a very tall cane, growing twelve feet high, and is easily bent by the wind. John was not like the reed. He could not be bent by every breath of applause or displeasure.

8. A man clothed in soft raiment? Were you attracted into the wilderness of Judea to see an effeminate courtier? Had he been a pliant courtier he would have flattered Herod, and would not have been thrown into prison for his rebuke of sin in high places.

9. More than a prophet. He was more than a prophet, because he was a reformer, forerunner and way-preparer, as well as prophet. No other prophet ever had so honored an office.

10. This is he, of whom it is written. Of whom [Malachi](#) and [Isaiah](#) prophesied. See note on [Matt. 3:3](#).

11. Among them that are born of women. Among all of the human race that were before John the Baptist. The world thinks that kings, generals, and statesmen are the greatest of men. But God measures differently. Time, too, measures differently. Herod, now, would hardly be known at all if he had not imprisoned John the Baptist. **He that is least in the kingdom of heaven.** This shows, (1) That John was not in the kingdom of God. (2) That, as none greater than John has been born of women, no one had yet entered the kingdom. (3) That, therefore, it had not yet been set up, but as John himself, Jesus, and the Twelve under the first commission, preached, was "at hand." (4) All in the kingdom, even the humblest, have a superior station to John, because they have superior privileges.

12. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of God suffereth violence. The idea is, that from the time when John began preaching, men of violence were trying to force their way into the kingdom. It is compared to a walled city that men try to storm and enter. They tried a little later to make Jesus a king by force.

13. The prophets and the law prophesied until John. For the meaning we must turn to [Luke 16:16](#), where the same words occur with the addition, "since that time the kingdom of God is preached." Then first began the announcement that John was the way-preparer, the forerunner of the King, that the kingdom was at hand, that the old dispensation was about to close.

14. This is Elias, who was to come. Malachi predicted that Elijah would come to prepare the way for the Lord. Christ explains that this was fulfilled in John. He was not the literal, but a spiritual Elijah. See [Mal. 4:5](#).

15. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. A formula used by Christ to give emphasis to an utterance of especial importance.



16. Whereunto shall I liken this generation? Compare [Luke 7:31–35](#). The Jewish nation is meant. The Lord shows that they were as capricious as children. **Children sitting in the markets.** All ancient towns had an open market place, which was the great place of resort.

17. We piped unto you. One set of children is represented as having invited another set to play, first in a mock wedding, then in a mock funeral, but the dissatisfied children were pleased with neither, and would neither dance nor lament.

18. John came neither eating nor drinking. At feasts. He lived abstemiously and austerely. **He hath a demon.** They accused him of being under the influence of evil spirits; of being a crank, or fanatic.

19. The Son of man came eating. Like other men. He was at the wedding feast of Cana ([John 2:1–11](#)); at Matthew's feast, ([Matt. 9:10](#)), etc. **A wine-bibber.** There was nothing singular about his social habits. Like all the people, he drank the light, harmless wine of Palestine, either free from, or with a very slight percentage of, alcohol. Our modern wines are very different. **A friend of publicans and sinners.** See note on [Matt. 9:12, 13](#). **Wisdom is justified of her children.** Those who are wise will approve both the course of John and his Lord.

20. Then he began to upbraid the cities, etc. Compare [Luke 10:12–15](#). The cities in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee had, thus far, heard and seen the most of the Lord and had the least excuse for rejecting him. In all the reproofs of Jesus there is sadness in the severity. The very denunciations seem to mourn. **Wherein most of his mighty works were done.** We know of a number of miracles which had been wrought in these cities, the healing of the centurion's servant, of the son of the nobleman, of the diseased woman, of two blind men, and the raising of the daughter of Jairus. The Scriptures assure us that these were only a very small part of the mighty works he did. See [Matt. 9:35](#). **Because they repented not.** The great end proposed by the gospel is repentance and a new life.

21. Woe unto thee, Chorazin. Chorazin has long been extinct, and its site is not certainly known. It is named only here and in [Luke 10:13](#). Situated about two miles from the ruins of Tell-Hum, thought to be Capernaum, there are ruins now called Kerazeh, including a synagogue, columns and walls of buildings, supposed to mark the site of Chorazin. **Woe unto thee, Bethsaida.** The word means "House of fish," and the name would imply that it was a fishing town, and it was the home of the fishermen, Peter, Andrew and Philip ([John 1:44](#)). Its locality is in dispute. It was probably situated on both sides of the Jordan, where it emptied into the Sea of Galilee. The ruins of a city lie there, mostly on the east side of the river. **For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon.** These were rich Phoenician trading cities on the east shore of the Mediterranean. Tyre was long the chief commercial city of the world; it still exists as a wretched town. **In sackcloth and ashes.** The symbols of mourning and repentance. See [Jonah 3:5](#), on the repentance of Nineveh. Sackcloth was a kind of coarse cloth, woven of camel's hair.



22. It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment. These solemn words teach: 1. That there will be a day of judgment for all, cities, nations and men. 2. That men will be judged according to their opportunities; that those who have had and neglected opportunities will be held most guilty. 3. That there will be different degrees of future punishment, according to guilt and opportunities; that those whose opportunities have been greatest will receive the greater punishment, if these are neglected. Every man will be judged and punished according to his opportunities and works. The idea of a hell of the same severity for all the unsaved is nowhere taught by Christ.

23. And thou, Capernaum. Capernaum was at that time a city of 30,000 inhabitants. Its site also is disputed. Most locate it on the lake shore, at the ruins called Tell-Hum, but others locate it about three miles north of the ruins of Tell-Hum. It enjoyed signal advantages as being the Galilean home of Christ, who taught in its streets, houses and synagogue, and worked many miracles there. **Art exalted unto heaven.** By the privilege of having Christ as an inhabitant. **Shalt be brought down to hell.** Not hell, but *hades*, the unseen. Capernaum shall disappear from human view. Within less than forty years Capernaum was destroyed by the Romans, and for many centuries has not had an existence. **And remained until this day.** Note the inference: 1. Sodom was destroyed for its sins. 2. Had it not been sinful it would have “remained.” 3. Therefore it is sins that destroy cities and nations. Jerusalem, Babylon, Sodom, Capernaum, and other extinct ancient cities have perished on account of their sins. 4. Modern cities which scoff at God and revel in iniquity will “be brought down to hades” also. Permanent temporal prosperity depends on righteousness.

24. More tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment. Because it had poor opportunities. Sodom had fallen two thousand years before Christ, and had been extinct ever since, yet the Lord speaks of a *future* day of judgment for both Sodom and Capernaum. Therefore, 1. There is a judgment after death. 2. Temporal punishment for wickedness does not satisfy eternal justice. The Sodomites were held to a future judgment. 3. The inhabitants of Sodom had not been annihilated, but were alive, waiting for the judgment.

25. At that time. Immediately after this judgment upon the impenitent cities was denounced. **O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.** Christ addresses God as his Father, not as his Lord. The obedience he yields is that of a Son, not of a subject. Four more times, in deep emotion, Christ thus addresses the Father ([John 11:41](#); [12:28](#); [17:1](#); [Luke 23:34](#)). **That thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent.** From the worldly wise Pharisees and Jews. God had hid these things from this latter class through the natural operation of their own corrupted hearts and perverted minds. **Babes.** The simple and believing.

26. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good, etc. “Even so” is better rendered “Yea.”

27. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father. The Lord speaks, in part, in anticipation. It was the divine purpose, in sending the Son, to deliver “all things,” the gospel, salvation, judgment, the rule of heaven and earth, to him. **No one knoweth the Father but**

the Son. He only is in the secret of the Divine counsels. **And he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him.** Christ is the revelation of God to man. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Those who "know" Christ by humble obedience and docility learn to know the Father also.

28. Come unto me. This is one of the sweetest passages in the New Testament. It shows the willingness of the Lord. The kings and earth and the great are usually difficult of access, while Jesus is not only willing, but invites us, to come to him. Note how gracious is the invitation! 1 It is the Lord who speaks. 2. He invites to come to him. 3. The invitation is to those who labor and are heavy laden. 4. He promises, to all these weary ones who come, rest. The offer is not that of a man, but of the Divine Savior. Millions in all ages since can bear witness that the promise is sure. **Labor and are heavy laden.** Feel heavily the burdens of life, of sin and sorrow. **Rest.** Peace of soul.

29. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. He has first asked us to come, and made a gracious promise. He next shows us how to come. We are to come by taking *his* yoke upon us. Taking on the yoke is a symbol of submission. The two steps by which we come, and secure the promise of "rest unto our souls" are then 1. Submission to Christ. 2. Becoming his disciples.

30. For my yoke is easy. The yoke that sin imposes is heavy, and bearing it brings no rest. So, too, the yoke of false or corrupted religion is burdensome; but Christ's yoke is easy. It is not hard to bear it because it is borne in love. His burden, even if it be the cross, is light, because he helps us to bear it. Note: That one rejecting Christ in the midst of light is worse than a heathen. Christ graciously invites all to come to him. He is the rest of the soul.



Chapter XII

The Pharisees Take Counsel Against and Seek to Destroy Jesus

Summary —*Jesus Accused of Sabbath Breaking. The Son of Man Lord of the Sabbath. Healing the Withered Hand. The Pharisees Take Counsel to Destroy Jesus. The Tenderness of Christ. A Dumb and Blind Demoniac Healed. Accused of Help from the Devil to Cast Out Demons. A Divided Kingdom. Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit. Shall Give Account for Idle Words. The Sign of Jonah. The Queen of the South. His Mother and Brethren. Who Are My Mother and Brethren?*

1. At that time. Compare [Mark 2:23–28](#) and [Luke 6:1](#). About the time when grain begins to ripen in Judea, that is, not far from the first of May. **Walked through the corn fields.** Wheat or barley, for which the general word, “corn,” was used. When maize was discovered by the Europeans in America they called it “Indian corn,” because it was a food grain like wheat, rye and barley. We now apply to it exclusively the designation of “corn.” The paths, the only roads, led and still lead through the grain fields in Palestine. **Began to pluck.** Permitted by Moses ([Deut. 23:25](#)).

2. But the Pharisees saw it. See note on [Matt. 3:7](#). Some of the sect were in attendance on the watch for a ground of accusation. **Not lawful on the sabbath.** They did not object to taking the ears of corn, but to gathering, rubbing out the grains of wheat in the hand, and eating them on the sabbath. To understand their position, it must be noticed that after the Law had said that the Jews were “to do no manner of work” on the Sabbath, the “Tradition of the Elders” had laid down thirty-nine principal prohibitions, which were ascribed to the authority of the Great Synagogue, and which were called *abhoth*, “fathers,” or chief rules. From these were deduced a vast multitude of *toldoth*, “descendants,” or derivative rules. Now, “reaping” and “threshing” on the Sabbath day were forbidden by *abhoth*; and by the *toldoth* it was asserted that plucking corn-ears was *a kind of reaping*, and rubbing them *a kind of threshing*. The vitality of these artificial notions among the Jews is extraordinary. Abarbanel relates that when, in 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain, and were forbidden to enter the city of Fez lest they should cause a famine, they lived on grass; yet even in this state “*religiously avoided the violation of their Sabbath by plucking the grass with their hands.*” To avoid this they took the much more laborious method of groveling on their knees, and cropping it with their teeth. We give one more example of their Sabbath requirements. “If on the Sabbath a Jew put out a lamp from fear of the Gentiles, or robbers, or on account of an evil spirit, he was guiltless; if to save oil, he was guilty.”—*Milman's Jews*, Vol. 2, p. 480.

3. Have ye not read. The Lord answers them by citing the case of David, who, under necessity, took, ate, and gave to his followers the shew bread which it was lawful for priests only to eat. Necessity rose higher than ceremonial. See [1 Sam. 21:1–6](#).

4. Entered into the house of God. The tabernacle at Nob The temple had not been built. **The shew bread.** Twelve loaves placed upon a table in the holy place as a symbol of the communion of the twelve tribes with God, and a type of the Bread of Life to be given to the whole world. They were kept a week, renewed, and the old loaves eaten by the priests. If David could take these under necessity, so could Christ's disciples pluck corn under necessity.

5. The priests ... profane the sabbath. The Sabbath was the busiest day of the week for the priests in the temple service. In this they rightly broke the ordinary Sabbath law, because the temple service set aside the law. Compare [John 7:22, 23](#).

6. But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple. The thought is: If priests in the service of the temple can break the letter of the law and be blameless, how much more can the disciples of him who is the Lord of the temple do so in his service and by his authority?

7. But if ye had known what this meaneth. They ought to have known, for they professed to be interpreters of the law. **I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.** The argument is, that mercy toward these hungering disciples was more acceptable to God than sacrifices at the altar; though sacrifice was the crown of the Jewish rites. The quotation is from [Hosea 6:6](#), and is also quoted in [Matt. 9:13](#). It shows that all our forms, rites and ceremonies are worthless before God unless we have kind and merciful hearts.

8. For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath day. Because the Sabbath is made for humanity, the Lord of humanity is the Lord of the Sabbath. Observe, *is* the Lord of the Sabbath. He does not, then, abolish it, but has the right to make any change in it, in the interest of mankind, that seems to him wise. Neither Moses, nor any other mortal, ever claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath. This is a declaration of Divinity.

9. He went into their synagogue. Evidently he, his disciples and these Pharisees, were on the way to it when the conversation took place. It was probably at Capernaum.

10. A man which had his hand withered. That is, dried up from a deficient absorption of the nutriment. [Luke](#) says his "right hand." The disease here indicated results in a loss both in size and in power of the arm; for it there is no remedy known to man. Compare [Mark 3:1–6](#) and [Luke 6:6–11](#). **And they asked him.** [Luke](#) says it was the scribes and Pharisees. **Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?** In the opinion of the Pharisees, to kindle or extinguish a fire on the Sabbath was a great desecration of the day, nor was even sickness allowed to violate rabbinical rules. It was forbidden to give an emetic on the Sabbath, to set a broken bone, or put back a dislocated joint. Of course, they had added all this to the law of Moses.



That they might accuse him. Not in the conversation merely, but before the local judge, the officers of the synagogue, or the council.

11. And he said, What man ... shall have one sheep? etc. Such an act of mercy to a beast was allowed and usual then.

12. How much then is a man better than a sheep? If sheep can be lifted out of its suffering on the Sabbath, why not much more a man? **Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath days.** If the Sabbath day would preclude one from doing good, then it would be an evil.

13. Stretch forth thine hand. As the cure is wrought only by a word, the Pharisees have no ground of accusation.

14. Then the Pharisees ... held a council ... destroy him. Their real motive was hatred of the Lord, while their pretext was that he had broken the Sabbath. While professing to be very religious, they were really the servants of the evil one.

15. Jesus withdrew from thence. Left Capernaum for the time. He avoided needless danger until his earthly ministry was accomplished, and the bitter opposition of the Pharisees admonished him to temporarily withdraw.

16. Charged not to make him known. Those healed. To noise about his cures now would intensify the hate of his enemies.

17. That it might be fulfilled. Thus it was fulfilled. **Esaias the prophet.** [Isa. 42:1-4](#).

18. Behold my servant. Christ took the form of a servant. **I will put my spirit upon him.** Compare [Matt. 3:17](#). **He shall shew justice to the Gentiles.** Announce himself as judge of the Gentiles. Compare [Mark 3:8](#).

19. He shall not strive nor cry. He shall be modest, retiring, and not a brazen, noisy declaimer.

20. A bruised reed shall he not break. The reed, a hollow cylinder, if bruised has its strength destroyed. It thus becomes the symbol of the bruised spirit. The tender Savior will not break, but heal. **Smoking flax.** The wick of the lamp that had ceased to burn clearly. The violent would put it out and fling it away. The Lord does not use such violence with those disciples who give forth some light, even if it is imperfect. **Till he send forth judgment.** Till he shall sit in power and triumph on the throne of judgment.

21. In his name. In him as the Messiah. **Shall the Gentiles trust.** He shall be the "Christ of the world," and not of the Jews alone. Compare [John 4:42](#). The prophets clearly and many times declare that the Messiah shall be, not a Jewish, but a world's Savior. The Jews strangely overlooked this.

22. Was brought him one possessed with a devil. See note on [Matt. 8:28](#). Compare [Luke 11:14](#).

23. Is not this the Son of David? The promised Messiah King who was to be the Son of David, according to the prophets ([Isa. 11:10](#); [2 Sam. 23:5](#)).



24. The Pharisees hearing it. Compare [Mark 3:22–27](#). Mark says that some of these Pharisees were scribes who had come from Jerusalem. The ecclesiastical authorities at Jerusalem were now keeping their watch on Jesus. **He casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub.** See note on [Matt. 10:25](#). Beelzebub, the prince of devils, meant the same as Satan. The Pharisees assert that the Lord's miraculous power is due to the aid of the devil.

25. Knowing their thoughts. They had not made this charge to Christ, but to the multitudes. **Every kingdom divided against itself.** A general truth is stated. Most states and kingdoms fall, not by the power of foreign enemies, but by the weakness due to divisions.

26. If Satan casteth out Satan. If demons were cast out by the aid of Satan, then Satan was fighting against his own servants. His kingdom was divided against itself.

27. By whom do your sons cast them out? There were Jewish exorcists who professed to cast out demons. Josephus tells of one named Eleazar, whom he says did cast them out. Christ does not say whether they did or not, but argues: "If I, by Satan, cast out demons, by whom do your own exorcists, whom you assert have this power, cast them out"? Compare [Acts 19:13](#).

28. If I by the Spirit of God, etc. If it is the power of God manifest in me, then it demonstrates that I am the expected Messiah King, the Son of David, of whom the multitude spoke. See [verse 23](#).

29. How can ... spoil his goods, etc.? No one can enter a man's house and take his goods unless he has first conquered him. If I am not the Messiah, *stronger than Satan*, how could I spoil him?

30. He that is not for me, etc. The two kingdoms of Satan and of Christ are opposed. No neutrality is possible. He that is not for me is against me.

31. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. Compare [Mark 3:28 and Luke 12:10](#). Much discussion has arisen concerning the nature of sin against the Holy Spirit, and nothing is plainer. [Mark 3:30](#) explains it. It was ascribing Christ's works to demoniac influence. These works were wrought by the power of the Spirit.

32. Whoever speaketh against the Son of man. Personal injuries will be forgiven on repentance. Christ prayed for his persecutors. Every sin can be forgiven but that against the Holy Spirit. **Speak against the Holy Spirit.** Perversely ascribe the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. **Neither in this world nor that to come.** Judgment shall overtake him both here and hereafter. The Jews divided the two worlds, or, rather, *ages* of the world, by the coming of Christ. This would then mean that there is forgiveness to such a sin under neither dispensation. No passage in the Bible affirms more emphatically the doctrine of eternal punishment. There is a sin that hath no forgiveness.

33. Either make the tree good, and the fruit good. The principle is announced in [Matt. 7:20](#) that the tree is known by its fruits. If his own life and works were evil, then he might be evil and aided by Satan, but if good, then his power was from God.

34, 35. Generation of vipers. Poisonous, evil and dangerous, like vipers. **How can ye, etc.?** Their hearts were thoroughly evil, hence they could only speak and do evil, for “out of the good treasure of the heart the mouth speaketh.” On the other hand, the “good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.”

36. Every idle word. If we shall be called on to give account for every idle, rash, inconsiderate word, how much more for such blasphemy as the Pharisees had uttered? How careful, too, should we be to see that our speech is pure!

37. By thy words shalt thou be justified, etc. Acquitted or condemned in the day of judgment. To justify is the opposite of to condemn. Those who confess Christ with the mouth ([Rom. 10:9](#)) shall be saved; those who deny him will be lost. Words have a weighty influence on our eternal destiny.

38. Master, we would see a sign from thee. Compare [Matt. 16:1](#) and [Luke 11:16, 29](#). They had just seen a miracle, but demand another. Jesus never worked miracles to gratify human curiosity, or to secure popular applause.

39. An evil and adulterous generation. We must keep in mind that the Lord is speaking to his enemies. He compares them to a faithless wife. They were faithless to God. **The sign of Jonah.** See [next verse](#).

40. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. See [Jonah 1:17](#). The great fish was probably not a whale, the Greek is “sea monster,” but a white shark, which abounds in the Mediterranean, and is said to swallow a horse whole. The miracle was the preservation of the life of Jonah during his living burial. This was a type of the burial and resurrection of Christ. **So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights.** Jesus says ([Matt. 16:21](#)) that he will “be raised again the third day.” Hence, in Jewish usage *the third day* must mean the same as *three days and three nights*. It was and is customary with the Orientals to make any part of the day stand for the whole twenty-four hours. Compare [Matt. 16:21](#), [Mark 8:31](#), [2 Chron. 10:5](#) and [10:12](#), [Esther 4:16](#), [Gen. 7:4, 12](#), [Exod. 24:18, 34:28](#). A traveler in the East writes: “At length the *tenth* morning arrived—the *tenth* morning because, though we performed nominally ten days quarantine, yet it was, really, only eight days. We landed at nine o'clock in the evening of the first day, and were liberated at six o'clock in the morning of the tenth day, but it was held to be ten days according to the custom of the East.” Christ was buried Friday evening, lay in the grave Saturday, and rose Sunday, parts of three days, rose “on the third day,” and was in the grave the space of time meant in eastern usage by three days and three nights. **In the heart of the earth.** In the sepulcher.

41. The men of Nineveh. The great capital of the Assyrian Empire, situated on the Tigris river, in its day the greatest city in the world, to which Jonah was sent to warn it of judgment for its sins. It has been for many hundred years a ruin. **Shall stand up in judgment.** They repented at the preaching of Jonah, but “this generation” of Jews remained impenitent

under the preaching of “one greater than Jonah.” The example of the Ninevites condemns the Jews.

42. The queen of the south. Of Sheba ([1 Kings 10:1](#)), supposed to be Sabæa in Southern Arabia. **From the ends of the earth.** A great distance. On the extreme southern shores of Asia. **A greater than Solomon is here.** A calm assertion of superhuman majesty and wisdom.

43–45. When the unclean spirit, etc. The application of these three verses is found in “even so it shall be unto this wicked generation,” the Jews. With an occasional tendency to repentance, as under the preaching of John, they became worse and worse until they crucified the Lord and were destroyed. A man with an unclean spirit, a demon, is chosen to represent them. He goeth out (transient repentance), returns with seven other evil spirits worse than himself (a relapse into sin), and the last state is worse than the first, more wicked and more wretched. So generally with those who dally with sin.

46, 47. His mother and his brethren. On the brethren of the Lord, see note on [Matt. 13:55](#). Compare [Mark 3:31–35](#) and [Luke 8:19, 21](#). His brethren did not yet believe in him.

48, 49. Who is my mother, and my brethren? An allusion to his Divine character, which lifted him above the ordinary ties of the flesh. **Behold my mother and my brethren.** His real relatives are those bound to him by spiritual ties.

50. The same is my brother. Not those with fleshly ties, but those who do the will of his Father in heaven. Such become God's spiritual children, and thus become spiritually related to the Son of God. It will be observed that there is no hint of adoration of Mary, his mother, here, or elsewhere in the Scriptures. That she was immaculately born, as the “Queen of Heaven” and the “Mother of God,” is a Catholic fable.



Chapter XIII

Seven Parables of the Kingdom

Summary —*Parable of the Sower. Why He Spoke in Parables. The Parable of the Sower Explained. The Parable of the Tares. The Mustard Seed. The Leaven. The Parable of the Tares Explained. The Hidden Treasure. The Pearl of Great Price. The Fish Net.*

1. The same day. For parable of the Sower compare [Mark 4:1–9](#) and [Luke 8:4–8](#). **By the sea-side.** The sea-shore is that of the Sea of Galilee, probably near Capernaum, at the northwest corner of the lake.

2. And there were gathered unto him great multitudes. Literally, “greatest.” There is every reason to believe that this was one of the greatest. It was the *turning-point in his public teaching*, since the parabolic instruction now begins.

3. And he spake many things to them in parables. Of which only samples are preserved, even by Matthew, and still fewer in the other Gospels. **Parables.** Narratives designed to convey spiritual instruction. The parable differs from the proverb in being a *narrative*, from the fable in being *true to nature*, from the myth in being *undeceptive*, from the allegory in that it *veils the spiritual truth*. **Behold, a sower went forth to sow.** It is *the sower* in the original. There was grain land on every side, and the figure was familiar to every hearer. There are no farm houses in Palestine. All live in towns or villages. Hence, the farmers “go forth” to sow.

4. And when he sowed. The seed-time in Palestine is usually in October, about the time when this parable was spoken. Sowing is always done by hand. **Fell by the wayside.** Where the field and the road join, or, rather, along the narrow, trodden foot-path through the fields, so common in Palestine. **Fowls devoured them.** The birds, because the grains were not covered.

5. Some fell upon stony places. Where the rocks that jut out of the hills into the plain had a very thin covering of earth. Much of Palestine is stony.

6. And when the sun was up they were scorched. It was not rooted in that deep, moist soil which would have enabled it to resist the scorching heat of the sun.

7. And some fell among thorns. More literally, *into the thorns*. The traveler, to-day, finds Palestine literally a land of thorns, of thistles, brambles, and thorny bushes. **Thorns grew up ... choked them.** Or, as Wycliffe renders it, *The thorns sprang up and strangled it*. The thorns suffocated the growing plant.

8. But others fell in good ground. The goodness of this last soil consists in its qualities being precisely the reverse of the other three soils. It was not hard, stony, or weedy. **Some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred.** Thirty-fold is now really a first-rate crop, even for such plains as Esdraelon, just below Nazareth. But in the time of Christ there might be realized,



in favorable circumstances, a hundred-fold. Intelligent gentlemen (in the plain of Esdraelon) maintain that they have themselves reaped more than a hundred-fold.—*Land and Book*.

9. Let him hear. Give heed and seek to understand.

10, 11. Given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom. Truths that the uninstructed multitude are not yet prepared for. Every one knows that the lessons given must be adapted to the state of the pupil. Spiritual preparation is needful to understand the deeper spiritual truths (1 Cor. 2:6, 11).

12. Whosoever hath. Those who have been made some spiritual progress will go on, and have greater knowledge. **Whosoever hath not.** No desire for spiritual knowledge. Such shall become spiritually dwarfed, and lose even their capacity for spiritual things; a truth constantly illustrated. Whoever uses his opportunities will grow; whoever abuses them will lose them.

13. Because, seeing they see not. Do not see in the true light on account of their spiritual ignorance and depravity. The desire to *see* spiritually is essential to clear perceptions of truth.

14, 15, 16. The prophecy of Esaias. [Isaiah 6:9, 10](#). Isaiah describes a spiritual state that existed in the time of Christ, and is often met still, when, on account of hardness of heart and love of the world, men cannot understand the gospel and be converted. It is caused by their own fault. If they would fall out with sin, and come to Christ with a broken and contrite spirit, they would be healed.

17. Desired to see the things which ye see. The prophets and righteous had longed for the coming of Christ. His disciples enjoyed it.

18–23. Hear then the parable of the sower. In order to understand the parable we must listen to the explanation given in [verses 18–23](#). Christ is the great Sower, and all whom he sends forth to preach are sowers under him. The seed sown is his Word, the Gospel of the Kingdom. The soil is human hearts. Four kinds of human hearts are described: 1. The *wayside* hearer; the light, flippant, indifferent hearer upon whom no impression is produced. 2. The *stony* hearer; the heart that exhibits an evanescent feeling at the appeal of the gospel; but upon whom no permanent impression is made. 3. The *thorny soil*; the heart that takes in the Word, but is so full of worldly cares that these presently gain the mastery. This describes the world-serving hearer. 4. The *good soil*; the good and honest heart; the heart that receives and retains the truth. In such a heart the seed will grow and the new life will be manifest. Three things, then, are needful: 1. A Sower. 2. Good Seed, the pure word of God. 3. A good and *honest* heart. A dishonest man cannot be converted until he casts out his dishonesty. He who cavils at and deceitfully entreats the word of God will not be profited.

24. The kingdom of heaven is likened. The object of all parables in this connection is to explain various features and principles of the kingdom of heaven. **Unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.** It is important to note what the kingdom of heaven is likened



to. It is not to the *field* in which the tares and wheat were both sown, nor to the *enemy* who sowed the tares, but to *the man who sowed the good seed*. The kingdom does what the Sower is represented as doing. It sows the good seed. **Good seed.** It is declared in [verse 19](#) that the seed is the “word of the kingdom,” and in [verse 38](#) that the “good seed” are “the children of the kingdom.” These are those in whose hearts the good seed has fallen, and their new lives, as children of the kingdom, are the fruit of the good seed. **In his field.** The controversy has turned upon what the Savior represents by the field. 1. It is not the kingdom, or church, for this is represented by “the man that sowed good seed in his field.” 2. It is the place where the good seed is sown by the Son of man, or through his agency; in other words, the place where the gospel is preached to men. 3. [Verse 38](#) states emphatically that *the field is the world*.

25. But while men slept. During sleep is the time of the tare-sowing. **His enemy came and sowed.** It is by no means uncommon for the malice in the East to show itself in this way. A wicked person may do great injury with little chance of detection. **Tares.** The tare or darnel is, like our chess or cheat, a kind of bastard wheat, looking like wheat.

26, 27. Whence come the tares? When the harvest was near at hand the difference was seen.

28. An enemy hath done this. The great enemy, the prince of the world, who sows evil seed in human hearts. **Wilt thou that we go and gather them up?** It has been assumed by one class of interpreters that this a question whether discipline shall be administered upon recreant church members. If the *field* in which the tares are growing with the wheat is “the world,” then it refers to something quite different.

29. Nay; lest ... ye root up the wheat also with them. The roots of the wheat and tares were often so intertwined that one could not be pulled up without the other.

30. Let both grow together until the harvest. The time of separation will come at last. The righteous shall not always be vexed by the presence and deeds of evil doers. Harvest time will come, and that is the time of separation. The tares, ripened and manifest, can easily be sifted out from the wheat. For the application of the parable see note on verses 36–43 below.

31. Like a grain of mustard seed. Compare [Luke 13:18–21](#). The Jews grew mustard in their gardens. Its round seed was previously spoken of as the smallest thing, as it was the smallest seed planted.

32. Which, indeed, is the least of all seeds. The least of all the field or garden seeds sown in Palestine. **But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs.** All herbs cultivated in the fields or garden of Palestine. Dr. Hooker measured a mustard-plant in the Jordan Valley ten feet high. Thus, the kingdom, from an insignificant beginning, grows to a mighty magnitude.



33. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven. In those days a piece of the leavened dough from an unbaked loaf was put among the new dough to cause fermentation. **Three measures of meal.** The usual amount for one baking, an ephah (see [Gen. 18:6](#); [Judges 6:19](#); [1 Sam. 1:24](#)). The leaven is taken from without and “hid” in the meal, or flour. The hidden leaven, though only a small quantity, imparts its qualities to the large mass, **till all was leavened.** The Parable teaches that the Gospel is the leavening influence of the world.

34, 35. Without a parable spake he not. On that occasion. His whole discourse to the multitude was made up of parables. **Which was spoken by the prophet.** [Psalm 78:2](#).

36–43. Declare unto us the tares of the field. The parable in [verses 24–30](#) above. By a comparison we may learn: 1. The kingdom is likened to a man sowing good seed in his field. 2. The Sower is the Son of man, who sows by means of his kingdom. 3. The good seed is the word of God as seen in its fruits, Christ's followers. 4. The field is the world. It is Christ's field. All power is given to him in heaven and in earth. His kingdom is rightfully the whole earth, but much of it is held still by the enemy, who has to be conquered. He will prevail finally, and the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ. 5. The wheat raised from the good seed is the “children of the kingdom,” the disciples of Christ converted by his word. 6. The tares are not bad church members, but bad men; those who have been under the influence of the wicked one. 7. The righteous and wicked are to remain in the earth together. The righteous are not to exterminate the wicked. The evil and the good will be mixed until judgment day. 8. Then all shall be gathered at the throne of judgment. The righteous shall “inherit the kingdom.” All that are wicked shall be cast out of the kingdom. An eternal separation shall take place.

44. The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hidden in the field. Valuables which, with us, are entrusted to banks, are in the East buried in fields and gardens to save them from robbers and accidents. This parable teaches the immense value, priceless, of the gospel; and that one who finds out that value will give up everything else in order to possess himself of the privileges and hopes of the kingdom.

45. A merchantman seeking goodly pearls. Pearls were then esteemed as the most valuable ornaments, and were sought by merchants on distant shores, the most valuable being brought from the Indian Ocean.

46. Having found one pearl of great price. He was willing to invest everything he had in this pearl of surpassing beauty and worth.

47. The kingdom of heaven is like a net. The Savior's illustrations all come home to his audience. Many were husbandmen; many were women familiar with the culinary art; some were merchants; many were fishermen. A drag net or seine is meant. **Gathered every kind.** Here again, as in the parable of the Tares, it is taught that, at the end of the world, the angels shall sever the wicked from the just.

48. When it was filled. The fishermen cannot stop to sort while they are drawing the net. Nor can the preachers of the gospel always distinguish.

49. So shall it be at the end of the world. Then, not men, but the angels, under the direction of the Son of Man, shall sever the wicked from the just.

50. Shall cast them into the furnace of fire. Here is repeated, word for word, the language of [verse 42](#). The tares, the chaff, the corrupt trees, the barren tree, are all represented as burned, and here also the wicked are cast into a furnace. While I suppose that the language is a figure, it can only be understood as indicating that the sufferings of Gehenna, the abode of the wicked, are intense. See [Matt. 8:12](#).

51, 52. Every scribe instructed unto the kingdom. Such will be able to furnish rich and suitable spiritual food. Scribes were theological teachers.

53, 54. When he was come to his own country. To Nazareth, where he was brought up. Compare [Mark 6:1–6](#) and [Luke 4:14–29](#). **He taught them in the synagogue.** On the Sabbath day ([Mark 6:2](#)). **Whence hath this man this wisdom?** While admitting it, they were offended at it ([verse 58](#)).

55. Is not this the carpenter's son? Joseph. Jesus was a carpenter also ([Mark 6:3](#)). **His mother called Mary?** She is named, Joseph is indicated by his trade. **His brethren, James and Joses, Simon and Judas?** Sons of Joseph and Mary. For a full discussion of their relationship, see note on [John 2:12](#).

57. And they were offended in him. Made to stumble. Led into error. They could not see how one so humble, and of so humble a family, could be so great a teacher. **Jesus said, A prophet, etc.** A proverb that is quoted and applied.

58. Wrought not many mighty works, etc. Faith was the usual condition of his miracles. Where there is persistent, obstinate unbelief, Christ works no mighty moral works now.



Chapter XIV

The Miracles Beyond and Upon the Sea of Galilee

Summary — *Herod's Opinion of Christ. The Death of John the Baptist. Jesus Crosses the Sea. The Vast Multitude That Follows. The Miracle of the Five Loaves and Two Fishes. The Multitude Wishing to Make Jesus a King Is Dismissed. The Disciples Sent Upon the Sea While Jesus Retires to Pray. The Storm on the Sea. Christ on the Waters. The Failure of Peter's Faith.*

1. Herod the tetrarch. Compare [Mark 6:14–29](#) and [Luke 9:7–9](#). Herod Antipas, one of the sons of “Herod the King.” See notes on [Matt. 2:1](#), for information on the Herods. Called the *tetrarch*, or ruler of a fourth part, because he inherited one-fourth of the kingdom of his father. **Heard of the fame of Jesus.** Absent much of the time from Galilee in campaigns against Aretas, king of Arabia, he probably did not hear much until his return home.

2. This is John the Baptist. Herod claimed to be a Sadducee, and hence held that there was no life whatever after death, but under the terrors of a guilty conscience his creed undergoes a change. Hence his first thought when he hears of the deeds of Jesus is that the murdered John has risen from the dead. **Therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.** During his life John wrought no miracles ([John 10:41](#)). Herod supposed that his resurrection had clothed him with new power. This opinion was shared by others ([Matt. 16:14](#); [Mark 8:28](#)).

3. For Herod had laid hold on John. This arrest of John the Baptist had taken place a year previous, shortly before our Lord's second visit to Galilee ([Matt. 4:12](#); [Mark 1:14](#)), the events of which are given by John, [chapter 4](#). The prison was the castle of Machærus. See note on [Matt. 11:2](#). **Herodias' sake.** Antipas had been, while at Rome, the guest of his brother Herod Philip. Here he became entangled by the snares of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; and he repaid the hospitality he had received by carrying her off. He had himself long been married to the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia. This Herodias was the granddaughter of “Herod the King,” and, hence, the niece of both her lawful husband and of Herod Antipas, who now had her.

4. It is not lawful for thee to have her. The marriage was unlawful for these three reasons: (1) The former husband of Herodias (Philip) was still living. (2) The former wife of Antipas was still living. (3) Besides, the Jewish law did not permit a man to marry his niece.

5. He feared the multitude. [Mark](#) says he feared John also. He no doubt feared John's influence with the multitude.

6. When Herod's birthday was kept. In imitation of the Roman emperors, the Herodian princes kept their birthdays with feasting and revelry and magnificent banquets. We learn from [Mark](#) that he made a supper, or banquet feast. **The daughter of Herodias.** Her name,

according to Josephus, was *Salome*, a daughter by Philip, Herod's brother. She was afterwards married to her uncle Philip, the tetrarch of Iturea (Luke 3:1). **Danced.** It was not customary for the ladies of high rank to dance beyond the limit of the harem. The Oriental dance of a libertine character. But her wicked mother induced her own daughter thus to degrade herself in order to accomplish her revengeful purpose.

7. He promised with an oath to give her whatever she would ask. Herod confirms his promise by an oath. It was a common custom to reward a dancer or actor, on a great occasion like this, who pleased, and to ask what they wished. Herod knew that Salome danced because she had a request to make.

8. Give me John the Baptist's head in a charger. Mark tells us that she went to consult her mother before she made her request. That vile woman was prepared with an answer. Indeed, she had manipulated the whole affair so as to secure Herod's consent to the murder of John. **In a charger.** An old English word for a large dish, so called from the load it sustained.

9. The king was sorry. The Greek word thus translated is very strong, and denotes a very great grief, and sorrow. **For the oath's sake, and them which sat with him.** It was not so much his regard for the oath which he had taken, but his shrinking from the taunt of the guests, if they should see him draw back from his plighted word.

10. He sent and beheaded John in the prison. The executioner did his work in the dark dungeon; the wicked Herodias had triumphed.

11. She brought it to her mother. The first Elijah had his Jezebel, who sought his life; the second Elijah had his Jezebel, the not less inhuman Herodias, who obtained his life.

12. His disciples. John's.

13. When Jesus heard of it. When he heard of the fate of John the Baptist and of Herod's conjectures concerning himself. It was a busy time. The twelve had just returned from a highly successful ministry and his own popularity was at its greatest height. The crowds, anxious to see, converse with him, or to be healed, pressed on him so as to give no leisure for reflection, or even to eat (Mark 6:31). It was but natural that he should wish a quiet season on receiving the tidings of the death of one related to him like John. **Into a desert place.** Not a sandy, barren spot, but one uninhabited and lonely. They crossed the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1), and proceeded in the direction of Bethsaida-Julias, as its northeastern corner (Luke 9:10), just above the entrance of the Jordan into it. To the south of it was the green and narrow plain of *El-Batihah*, "with abundant grass, and abundant space for the multitude to have sat down." **They followed him on foot out of the cities.** The multitudes, seeing the course of the boat that bore the Savior and the twelve from Capernaum, rushed along the shore in order to reach its landing place in advance. The country west of the Sea of Galilee was, at that period, according to Josephus, wonderfully populous. Capernaum alone had 30,000 inhabitants, and there were twelve other cities upon or near its shores.

14. And Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude. When he disembarked from the boat, the multitude was waiting. That it was great is shown by the fact that the men numbered 5,000, apart from the women and children. **Was moved with compassion.** He seems, from [John 6:3](#), to have retired to the mountain for a short time, but then, filled with compassion, returned to the multitude. This is the only miracle of which there is an account in each of the four gospels. The parallel accounts are in [Mark 6:30–44](#), [Luke 9:10–17](#), and [John 6:1–14](#).

15. When it was evening. It was the “first evening” which began at the decline of day about three o'clock in the afternoon. The second evening, according to Jewish customs, began at sunset. The day had already been spent in teaching and healing. **This is a desert place.** And hence there would be no hamlets dotting it, in which the multitudes could get provisions for themselves. There are no farm houses in Palestine. The whole population lives in towns or villages, and often the farmers go many miles to their fields.

16. Give ye them to eat. We learn from the [parallel accounts](#) that the disciples did not understand how this could be done, though they cheerfully obeyed.

17. We have here but five loaves and two fishes. It was Andrew ([John 6:8](#)) who spoke. The *loaves* here were of barley meal made into small, thin cakes, baked hard on the side of the oven, so as to be broken.

19. He commanded the multitude to sit down. We learn from [Mark](#) that they sat down in companies. **On the grass.** [John](#) says, “there was much grass there.” It was in the spring season, in Nisan, “the month of flowers,” and the slopes were rich with the spring grass. **Looking up to heaven.** In prayer we should use such outward gestures as may most fitly serve to express the inward disposition and holy affections of our heart and soul. **He blessed.** He either gave thanks or asked the Father's blessing on the food.

20. Twelve baskets full. Baskets were taken by the Jews on journeying, to carry their provisions, etc., that they might not have to depend on Gentiles, and so incur the risk of ceremonial pollution.

21. Five thousand men. Thus there was one loaf to every thousand men. Christ is the bread of life, satisfying the hunger of the soul for love, forgiveness, immortality, usefulness, progress, knowledge. He gives that bread to his disciples and bids them to distribute it to the multitude. Such is its blessed and divine nature that the more they distribute to hungry, famishing souls, the more they have remaining for themselves.

22. Straightway. Immediately; after satisfying to the full the wants of the multitude. Compare [Mark 6:45–56](#), and [John 6:15–21](#). **He constrained his disciples.** They were loath to go without their Master. Yet he wished to be alone. He had come to the “desert place” for retirement; the multitude followed, and sought after the miracle to proclaim him King. His disciples probably sympathized. Hence he sent them, too, away, and stayed to pray and reflect alone. **To go to the other side.** [John](#) says, toward Capernaum.

23. When he had sent the multitudes away. They were in an excited condition; hence, great prudence, perhaps an exercise of some constraining power, was necessary. **Into a mountain apart to pray.** The refuge of Christ in every great crisis was lonely prayer.

24. In the midst of the sea. About twenty-five or thirty furlongs, or three and a half miles from the shore ([John 6:19](#)), about the middle of the lake. **For the wind was contrary.** The wind came rushing down from the mountains, and in attempting to make land at Bethsaida, where the Lord had directed, it was in their faces. Sudden gusts are common on the Sea of Galilee. Thompson says he encountered one of such fury that no rowers could row a boat across the lake. There had now arisen one of those sudden and violent squalls to which all inland waters, surrounded by lofty hills intersected with deep gorges, are liable.

25. In the fourth watch. The Jews, who used to divide the night into three watches, latterly adopted the Roman division into four watches, as here; so that, at the rate of three hours to each, the fourth watch, reckoning from six P.M., would be three o'clock in the morning. **Jesus went to them.** The Lord saw their trouble from his mountain-top, and through the darkness of the night, for his heart was all with them; yet would he not go to their relief till his own time came.

26. A spirit. An apparition, an unreal appearance of a real person. The word is not that unusually rendered "spirit." He would appear to them at first like a dark, moving speck upon the waters, then as a human figure; but in the dark, tempestuous sky, and not dreaming that it could be their Lord, they take it for a spirit ([Luke 24:37](#)). **Cried out.** In fright.

27. It is I; be not afraid. How often has he to speak this word of encouragement, even to his own! almost always when they are brought suddenly, or in an unusual way, face to face with him. See [Gen. 15:1](#); [21:17](#); [Judg. 6:23](#); [Matt. 28:5](#); [Luke 2:10](#). **It is I.** Literally, *I am*. The same language used by Jesus in Jerusalem ([John 8:58](#)), for which the Pharisees would have stoned him, and in the Old Testament to designate Jehovah ([Exod. 3:14](#)). Here I should prefer to give it this meaning: Christ says not merely, "It is I, your Friend and Master;" he says, at least implies, it is the "I AM," who is coming to you, the Almighty One who rules wind and waves, who made them, and whom they obey.

28. Bid me come unto thee. Peter is led by no praiseworthy motives, but rather by vain glory.

29. And he said, Come. I suppose the Lord bade Peter to come in order to teach him a lesson.

30. When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid. He stepped into the water, but the roaring winds and rushing billows were too much for his faith.

31. Jesus ... caught him ... said, O thou of little faith! Peter's act did not exemplify his faith, but his doubts. True faith never attempts wonders merely for the sake of doing them. It is a fact that ought to be noted that the Gospels narrate the failures in miraculous

power on the part of the apostles as well as their success. No book of myths would do this. At the same time it is always made plain why they failed.

32. The wind ceased. They were safe, for the Lord was with them. Under his arms there is always safety.

33. They that were in the ship came and worshipped him. Not only did they approach him with an outward unforbidden gesture of worship, “but they avowed him, for the first time collectively, to be *the Son of God.*”

34. They came into the land of Gennesaret. A small district four miles long and two or three wide, on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, to which it gave one of its names. Josephus describes it as the garden of the whole land, and possessing a fertility and loveliness almost unparalleled.

35. They brought those that were diseased. His fame was so well known in that region that his coming at once caused a commotion. In a country where there are no skilled physicians and little known of sanitary laws, there is great need of a Healer. Geikie, who traveled through this same region with a medical friend, says that crowds would gather with their sick as soon as they knew there was a physician. Hence the importance of medical missions.

36. The hem of his garment. The numbers that pressed upon him seemed almost too large for him to be able to heal them singly by laying his hands upon them, therefore many begged that they might be allowed to touch *if it were but the border of his garment.* Soon after followed the ever-memorable discourse, so strikingly in accordance with the present passover season, in the synagogue of Capernaum, respecting the “Bread of Life” ([John 6:22–65](#)).



Chapter XV

Christ and the Pharisees: The Woman of Canaan

Summary — *Eating with Unwashed Hands. Keeping the Traditions of Men. What Defileth a Man. The Blind Leaders of the Blind. In the Bounds of Tyre and Sidon. The Appeal of the Woman of Canaan. Great Faith and Its Results. Feeding the Four Thousand.*

1. Scribes and Pharisees ... of Jerusalem. Representatives of these bodies, sent, no doubt to counteract the influence of Christ. Compare [Mark 7:1–13](#). These were always bitter opposers of Jesus.

2. Why do thy disciples transgress? Not the law of Moses, but the tradition of the elders, which had as much authority with the Pharisees as the written law. **The tradition of the elders.** Purported to be precepts never written in the Scriptures, but handed down from the times of Moses and the elders by oral means. These precepts were spoken of the “law upon the lip,” and have been embodied in the Talmud. They were additions to the written word. See [Gal. 1:14](#). **For they wash not their hands.** The orthodox Jews insisted on washing the hands before eating, not to remove the filth, but lest they might have touched something ceremonially unclean. This commandment was purely traditional, but so rigidly did they insist upon observing it that the Rabbi Akiba, imprisoned by the Romans and with scarcely water to sustain life, preferred to use all provided for his ceremonial ablutions, and to die of thirst.

3. Why do ye also transgress? The Lord does not deny their charge, but strikes at the evil by showing that their human traditions led them to break God's written law.

4. For God said. [Exod. 21:17](#). He that speaketh evil, etc. The Ten Commandments promised long life to those who honored father and mother. Here the Lord quotes the punishment of dishonoring them. On nothing did Moses insist more than respect for parents.

5. Ye say. Following tradition, you say one thing while God says in the law just the opposite. The scribes taught that a Jew by calling his possessions “Corban” (a gift to God, [Mark 7:11](#)) was absolved from the duty of caring for his parents, even though he did not afterward devote his property to sacred uses. Thus by an artifice the law with respect to parents could be set aside. The Talmud furnishes a curious illustration of this perversion of the command. The Mishna says: “He that curses his father or his mother is not guilty, unless he curses them with an express mention of the name of Jehovah.”

6. Ye have void the word of God by your tradition. Modern Pharisaism does the same. Church tradition leads to dogmas that set aside God's commands. The corruption of the simplicity of early Christianity is due to following human tradition.

7. Ye hypocrites. The word so rendered might mean one self-deceived as well as a deceiver, but was always a rebuke. **Well did Isaiah prophesy of you.** See [Isaiah 29:13](#).

8. This people. The Jews. [Verses 8 and 9](#) are the quotation from [Isaiah](#). **Their heart is far from me.** The essential of true worship is that the heart be wholly given to God. Even the forms commanded by God are worthless unless they are obeyed from the heart.

9. In vain do they worship me. This worship is all idle, empty, and without profit, because they **teach as doctrines the commandments of men.** This rebuke to the Pharisees, who had added to the law of Moses many traditional human precepts, applies equally to all modern religionists who have modified or added to the Christianity of Christ and the apostles. Whatever one cannot find in the New Testament is of such a character; observance of saints' days, of Christmas, of Lent, the removal of the cup in the Lord's Supper from the laity, infant sprinkling, party creeds and party shibboleths, are all of men and not of God. The devout worshiper should go right to the New Testament for his religion, and reject every ordinance or precept that is not to be found there.

10, 11. He called the multitude. In order to show them that the Pharisaical expounders of the law did not understand its real sense. **Not that which goeth into a man defileth.** The Mosaic law forbade Jews to eat what was ceremonially unclean, in order to teach the need of moral purity. The Rabbins added stringent precepts to prevent the slightest contact with ceremonial uncleanness, but were careless about moral purity. Christ shows that a pure heart is far more important than *clean* food, in the ceremonial sense, in the stomach. Pharisees in all ages have paid more attention to the letter than to the spirit, to the symbol than to that which is signified. **That which cometh out of a man.** The impure words that indicate an impure heart. What one eats does not render him defiled before God, but what he says. See [verses 18–23](#).

12. The Pharisees were offended. Found fault. They would insist that he set aside the law, whereas it was tradition that he rejected.

13. Every plant. A general truth, but here refers to the doctrines not of God, like “the tradition of the elders.”

14. Let them alone. The Pharisees. His disciples were troubled by their opposition. **They be blind leaders of the blind.** They pretend to be spiritual guides of the people, while spiritually blind themselves. The blind are unsafe guides of the blind.

15. Declare unto us the parable. The figure was used in [verse 11](#).

16, 17. Is cast out. What is eaten passes through the body and passes away. It does not defile the soul.

18, 19. Out of the heart. The emotional nature; the mind. Evil deeds are begotten of evil thoughts; evil words are the expression of these evil thoughts. These indicate a sinful heart and make a man sinful, or defiled.

21. Jesus ... departed into the coasts. Compare [Mark 7:24–30](#). **Tyre and Sidon.** Tyre and Sidon were the two principal cities of Phoenicia, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Tyre was about twenty miles south of Sidon, and about one hundred miles in a straight line



northwest of Jerusalem. In the days of David and Solomon, Tyre was the leading seaport of the world. It was afterwards taken by the Babylonians, the Persians, and Alexander, but up to the time of Christ it remained a great commercial city. Since then its harbor has been filled with sand, and there remains only a wretched shadow of its former greatness. Both were Gentile cities in a Gentile country. This is the only instance in the Lord's ministry when he went beyond the bounds of Palestine.

22. Behold, a woman of Canaan. The name *Canaan* was the oldest bestowed upon the country, and all the heathen inhabitants were often called Canaanites, whether of the same stock or not. Mark says (7:26) that the woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician; *i. e.*, a Gentile, and a Syro-Phoenician, because she lived in the district of Syria called Phoenicia. **Have mercy on me.** She has a boon to ask for her daughter, or rather indeed for herself, for so entirely had she made her daughter's misery her own. **My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.** More correctly, "a demon." See note on [Matt. 8:28](#). **O Lord, thou son of David.** It is remarkable that two of the brightest examples of faith seen in the ministry of Christ were exhibited by Gentiles, that of the centurion ([Matt. 8:8, 9](#)), and of this woman. The fact that the latter addresses Jesus as "the son of David," shows that she knew of the prophecies concerning the Christ and that he would be the son of David.

23. He answered her not a word. He neither repelled her, nor made a favorable answer. There were reasons for hesitation, given in [verse 24](#), on which see the comment, but there is no doubt that it was his purpose to have mercy. He delayed in order to bring out a great lesson.

24. I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Lord's *personal* mission was to the Jews. Under the first commission his apostles were directed to go only to the Jews ([Matt. 10:6](#)). It would be impossible to evangelize the Gentiles without setting aside the Jewish customs, the law of Moses, and arousing the bitterest prejudice of the Jews. Hence it was the divine plan that the Son should "keep the law blameless" during his ministry. It was only when the Jews crucified him "that the handwriting of ordinances was nailed to the cross," the "wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles broken down, and all prepared for the Great Commission which bade his disciples "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

25. Then came she and worshipped him. Instead of being discouraged by the words of Christ, she only became the more earnest.

26. It is not meet to take the children's bread. She knew that, in comparing the Jews to the children of God's family, and the heathen to the dogs without, he simply used the customary language of a Jew. He would bring out fully the greatness of her faith. The gospel was offered first to the Jews and then to all.

27. Truth, Lord. Observe that she acquiesces heartily in Christ's declaration: it is not fit that the dogs be fed *before* the children. **Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs.** The word for *crumbs* is a diminutive, and means *little crumbs*.

28. Woman, great is thy faith. We can see how greatness of faith is manifested: (1) She came to Christ under difficulties. (2) She persevered when her prayer seemed to be denied. (3) She still pleaded when obstacles were presented. (4) She waited at the feet of the Lord until he had mercy. Such faith always prevails. **Her daughter was made whole.** [Mark](#), who adds some features omitted by Matthew, follows the woman home, where she found her daughter no longer raving, or in convulsions, but lying quiet on the bed, healed in consequence of her mother's faith and prayers.

29. And Jesus departed from thence. How long Jesus staid in these parts is unknown.

30. There came to him great multitudes. Where he had retired for rest and solitude to a mountain ([verse 29](#)).

31. Glorified the God of Israel. They were Jews, but living on the border, somewhat under heathen ideas. The miracles of Christ led them to praise and reverence Jehovah.

32. I have compassion on the multitude. Because while seeking him in his mountain solitude many of them had been for three days without regular food.

33. Whence should we have so many loaves? This was not said in ignorance of the Lord's creative power, but probably to suggest the need of its exercise. They could not have forgotten the events narrated in [Matt. 14:15-21](#).

35. He commanded ... to sit down on the ground. Not on the grass, as in [Matt. 14:19](#), for they were in a bare, desolate, grassless region, such as the greater part of Judea is to-day.

38. Four thousand. Instead of 5,000, as in the former miracle.

39. Came into the coasts of Magdala. He took the boat to escape the multitude. Magdala was on the western shore of the lake, three miles north of Tiberias. The Revision says *Magadan*, supposed to have been a village near Magdala. [Mark](#) says *Dalmanutha*. The meaning is that he came into the vicinity of all three of these places, which were near each other.



Chapter XVI

The Foundation of the Church

Summary — *A Sign Demanded. The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. At Cæsarea Philippi. The Elias Who Should Come. The Confession of Peter. The Rock on Which the Church Should Be Founded. The Keys. Christ's Death at Jerusalem Foretold. The Rebuke of Peter. Losing Life and Finding It. The Coming of the Son of Man.*

1. The Pharisees and Sadducees. Compare [Mark 8:10–13](#). For description of these two sects, see note on [Matt. 3:7](#). It is the first time the latter party is mentioned as opposed to Christ. **A sign from heaven.** Some mighty, visible miracle. See [Matt. 12:38](#). Still in Paul's time “the Jews required a sign” ([1 Cor. 1:22](#)).

2, 3. Ye cannot discern the signs of the times. They could read the weather, but were blind to the events (signs of the times) that showed the fulfillment of prophecy, the end of the Jewish dispensation, and the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom.

4. No sign shall be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonah. See note on [Matt. 12:40](#).

5. The disciples were come to the other side. They crossed over the sea to the eastern shore. **Had forgotten to take bread.** They had started on a journey to Cæsarea Philippi, partly through a wilderness country, and would need a supply. Mark says that they had one loaf. Compare [Mark 8:14–21](#).

6. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, etc. The teaching and influence which spreads like leaven. See [verse 12](#). The figure of the leaven was suggested by their need of bread. [Mark](#), instead of Sadducees, says, “of Herod.” Herod and his followers were Sadducees.

7, 8, 9, 10, 11. It is because we took no bread. The thoughts of the disciples were so fixed upon their failure to supply bread that they thought the remark about leaven contained a rebuke. The Lord reminds them of his creative power, and how it has been put forth.

13. When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi. Compare [Mark 8:27–38](#); [Luke 9:18–22](#). This city was located near the base of Mt. Hermon, at a source of the Jordan, and in the northeast extremity of Palestine. It was called *Cæsarea Philippi* by Herod Philip, who rebuilt it in honor of Tiberius *Cæsar*, and added *Philippi* after his own name, to distinguish it from *Cæsarea* on the Mediterranean coast. It has now about fifty houses, many ruins of columns, towers, temples, a bridge, and a remarkable castle. **Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?** The original Greek is more specific, and means, “Who do the common people say that I am?” He does not ask for the opinion of the scribes, Pharisees, or priests, but of the people.

14. Some say that thou art John the Baptist. Who had been killed by Herod a few months before. That was one popular notion regarding him, circulating, no doubt, chiefly

among those who had never seen him. Herod Antipas entertained it ([chap. 14:1](#)). **Elias**. It was very generally expected that Elijah was to return to the earth in connection with the Messiah's advent ([Mal. 4:5](#)). **One of the prophets**. The Jews believed that at the coming of the Messiah the prophets were to rise again.

15. But whom say ye that I am? This is the great and smaller catechism, the one great and essential question. Christ is the one object of the Christian's faith. We say we believe in him; but in whom do we believe? The hour had not come for the settlement of what should constitute the Christian confession.

16. And Peter answered. With the impetuosity and impulsiveness that were ever manifest in him, Peter replied at once and expressed the faith of all the apostolic band. **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God**. This confession not only sees in Jesus the promised Messiah, but in the Messiah recognizes the divine nature. The confession of Peter is the one Christian confession of the New Testament and of the apostolic age, and the very foundation of the church, into which all saints are built as living stones of the temple.

17. Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona. Happy are all lips that make this confession, for such shall be confessed before the Father in heaven. **For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father**. This holy and blessed confession no one can make from the heart unless he is moved by the Spirit. See [1 John 4:1, 2](#).

18. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. This is the first time Jesus speaks of his *church*, and here, as not yet founded. Three terms are to be noted: (1) Peter, in the Greek, *Petros*, meaning a single stone; (2) *Rock*, in the Greek, *Petra*, which means the solid, immovable bed-rock, a great mass like a cliff, and (3) *church*, Greek, *ecclesia*, those "called out," the fellowship of believers, the organized society of Christ, the kingdom of heaven on earth. There is probably no passage in the word of God that has called forth more discussion. The Papal church insists that Peter is the rock upon which Christ founded his church. The Catholic position is based upon the fact that Peter means a stone (see [John 1:42](#)), and the Savior's language might be rendered, "Thou art a stone, and upon this rock I will build my church." The Catholic view is untenable, for 1. The Savior does not say, "Thou art a stone, and upon thee I will build," etc., or "Thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will build." He changes the word in the Greek from *Petros* (Peter, a stone) to *Petra*, a rock, or ledge of rock—a solid bed-rock. 2. Every saint is a stone (see [1 Pet. 2:5](#)). The Lord declares that Peter is one these living stones, made such by his confession of faith, and ready to be built into the church, the spiritual temple, formed of living stones, and built upon the rock. So is every confessor of Christ. In order to settle what the Savior does mean by the *rock*, we must consider the [18th and 19th verses](#) together, and keep in mind the entire figure. This figure portrays (1) a Builder, Christ; (2) a temple to be built, composed of lively stones, the church; (3) a foundation for that temple, the rock; (4) the gates of an unfriendly city or power which shall seek its destruction, hell, or more correctly,

Hades, the unseen abode of the dead, the grave; (5) a door-keeper of the church, or spiritual temple, with his keys, Peter. Peter's place in the figure is not that of the foundation, but that of the key-holder, or turnkey. The only difficulty is in settling what the Lord means by the *rock*. Since this rock is the foundation of the church, the central principle, the fundamental idea, we are aided to a correct decision by the teachings of the Word elsewhere. We learn from [1 Cor. 3:11](#), "That other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This excludes Peter or any human platform. Christ is often called a stone: "the stone that the builders rejected," "the chief corner stone," "the stone that is the head of the corner," "the spiritual rock which is Christ." Faith in Christ held in the heart, and confessed with the lips is the very foundation of the spiritual life and of the church. This constituted the fundamental difference in apostolic days between Christians and unbelievers, the church and the world. It does still. It is the essence of the teaching of the New Testament that the platform or foundation of the Christian society, the church, is this belief that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*. It is then Peter's grand confession, faith in the Spiritual Rock, the faith that lays hold of Christ, belief that he is the Anointed of God, the Divine Savior, that the Lord pronounces the rock upon which he will found his church. That this view is correct is shown by a correct understanding of the declaration, **The gates of hades shall not prevail against it**. From the gates of the city always marched forth its armies. The powers of *hades* are represented by its gates. *Hades* is not hell (*Gehenna*), but the unseen abode of the dead that holds the departed within its gates. Just after these words the Lord talks of his death, or entering *hades*. Six months later the Sanhedrim sent him to death for making the same confession Peter had just made. See [Matt. 26:64–67](#). They expected to demonstrate that the confession of his divinity which he had made was false by sending him to *hades*, which they supposed would hold him and prevail against the confession of the Rock. He was sent there from the cross, but the gates of *hades* did not prevail, for they could not hold him, and the living Savior, rising triumphant from the tomb, was the unanswerable argument that his own and Peter's confession was a rock that could never be moved. His resurrection demonstrated that he is the Rock. *Hades* did not prevail.

19. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of the heaven. That is, of the church. The office of the keys is to open the doors, or close them. On Pentecost, Peter first opened the doors and declared the conditions of which men could have their sins forgiven, be bound or loosed, and thus enter into the church. Seven years later at Cæsarea he declared the same conditions to the Gentiles. While Peter took the lead the keys were given to all the apostles, and to no other mortal. See [Matt. 18:18](#), and [John 20:19–28](#). All that is here said to Peter is said to all the apostles.

21. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples. They were not strong enough to bear this teaching until they were convinced of his divinity. **And suffer many**

things. In this strange way carrying out the true idea of the Messiah ([Isa. 53](#)). **Of the elders and chief priests and scribes.** The three constituents of the Sanhedrim.

22. Peter began to rebuke him. He could not bear the thought of the crucifixion, and still expected Christ to become a worldly king.

23. Get thee behind me, Satan. Christ saw in the words of Peter a suggestion not so much of his as of Satan's. It was a temptation to shrink from the work for which he came. It was the same temptation that called out from him the same rebuke once before ([Matt. 4:10](#)).

24. If any man will come after me. Compare [Mark 8:34–38](#), and [Luke 9:23–27](#). The conditions of discipleship are presented. **Let him deny himself.** Let him be prepared to say “no” to many of the strongest cravings of his nature, in the direction more particularly of earthly ease, comfort, dignity, and glory. **Take up his cross.** [Luke](#) adds, *daily*; not once, but all the time. The cross is the pain of the self-denial required in the preceding words. The cross is the symbol of doing our duty, even at the cost of the most painful death. **And follow me.** To follow Christ is to take him for our master, our teacher, our example; to believe his doctrines, to uphold his cause, to obey his precepts, and to do it though it leads to heaven by the way of the cross.

25. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it. He who refuses to deny himself, and makes saving and ministering to his present life his chief object, shall lose his life eternally.

26. What is a man profited? etc. All the wealth, glory, pleasure and power of earth are worthless to the dying man. If he should gain them all and lose his own soul, he has lost all. **What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?** What would a man not give? What is there that he *can* give, if in life he has not followed Christ?

27. For the Son of man shall come. Then all shall receive their deserts; those who lose their lives shall gain life; those who choose the world shall lose all. As Christ begins to teach of dying on the cross, he begins to give prominence to his coming again.

28. Shall not taste death, till they see the Son of man. The reference is not to his final coming to judge the world, but to his spiritual coming to establish his kingdom. This was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. [Mark \(9:1\)](#) shows the meaning by substituting, “Till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.” The “coming of the Son of man in his kingdom” means, therefore, the same as “the kingdom of God come with power.” Compare [Acts 1:8](#), and [Luke 24:49](#). The kingdom came with power on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:1](#)).

Chapter XVII

The Transfiguration

Summary —*The Transfigured Lord. Moses and Elias. The Voice from the Cloud. The Lunatic Healed. The Son of Man to Be Betrayed. Slain and Raised the Third Day. The Tribute Money.*

1. And after six days. Compare [Mark 9:2–8](#); [Luke 9:28–36](#); [John 1:14](#), and [2 Peter 1:18](#). Six days after the conversation recorded in the last chapter. [Luke](#) says, “about an eight days.” *About*, not exactly. [Luke's eight](#) days include the fractional days at the beginning and end of the day of the conversation and the day of transfiguration. [Matthew's six](#) days are the six complete days intervening between them. **Jesus taketh Peter, James and John.** The three apostles who were chosen to be nearest to the Lord. **Into a high mountain.** Not Mt. Tabor, as tradition holds, but probably Mt. Hermon. It could not have been Mt. Tabor, for, as we learn from [Josephus](#), who lived in that time, the top of Mt. Tabor was then occupied by a town and fortress. On the other hand, the Lord was in the vicinity of Mt. Hermon ([Matt. 16:13](#), note); Hermon was a “high mountain,” ten thousand feet high, visible over most of Palestine.

2. And was transfigured before them. That is, transformed, changed in form. The great object was to reveal to the disciples his Divine glory before they beheld his humiliation upon the cross, in order to sustain their faith in the hour of trial. **His face did shine as the sun.** Thus [John](#) describes the glorified Savior when he beheld him on Patmos: “His face as the sun when he shineth in his strength.” **His raiment was white as the light.** [Mark](#) says, “white as snow.” The comparison may have been suggested by the snow of Hermon. It was a vision of supernatural splendor.

3. There appeared unto them Moses and Elias. (1) Among all the prophets and saints of the Old Testament these were the two, of which one had not died ([2 Kings 2:11](#)), and the other had no sooner tasted of death than his body was withdrawn from under the dominion of death and of him that had the power of death ([Deut. 34:6](#); [Jude 9](#)). Both, therefore, came from *hades*, but from *hades* conquered. (2) Again, these two were the acknowledged heads and representatives, the one of the law, the other of the prophets (compare [Matt. 7:12](#)). **And they were talking with Jesus.** The subject of their conversation is given in [Luke 9:31](#). It was *the decease* (exodus, departure, referring to his death and ascension) *which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*. In this brief interview between the greatest worthies of the old dispensation and the Founder of the new dispensation their conversation would be confined to the most important theme of earth and heaven. That was the Savior's death.

4. Peter answered. The words were spoken as they departed ([Luke 9:33](#)). **Lord, it is good for us to be here.** It is too brief a converse, too transient a glimpse and foretaste of the

heavenly glory. He would fain detain these august visitors. **Let us make three tabernacles.** Three booths of boughs, like those of the Feast of the Tabernacles. It seemed to him that the hour for the long-looked-for reign had come.

5. A bright cloud overshadowed them. Christ, Moses and Elijah are represented as in the cloud which separated them from the disciples' sight; and out of this cloud the voice spoke to the disciples. By the disciples such a luminous cloud would be instantly accepted as a symbol of Divine presence. A bright cloud, the Shekinah, is throughout the Old Testament dispensation employed as a symbol of God's presence, being very generally entitled "the glory," or "the glory of the Lord." **This is my beloved Son.** The same voice which had once before been heard at the baptism. Such a confirmation of the great confession of Peter was never to be forgotten. Almost a generation later, when he wrote his [second epistle](#), the remembrance of this night was as vivid as ever: "For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory." **Hear ye him.** The Divine voice that spoke at Sinai and the baptism is heard, declaring Christ's superiority to Moses and Elias, in that he is "the beloved Son," and commanding all to Hear Him. Henceforth, not Moses, or Elias, are the lawgivers of the people of God, but Christ. The saints are bidden to turn from every human teacher, even those as revered as Moses and Elias, to listen to our Lord. To *hear Him* will lead from error and sin into truth, righteousness and fitness for heaven.

6. They were sore afraid. Like the children of Israel at Sinai, they were filled with awe at the Divine voice.

7. Arise, be not afraid. So the Lord ever speaks to his disciples in danger or fear.

8. They saw no man, save Jesus only. When they rose from their prostration the glorious vision was gone.

9. Jesus charged them, ... Tell the vision to no man. Even they themselves did not yet understand what they had seen. Still less could they, in present circumstances, make others understand. All was plainer after Christ had died, risen, and had ascended to glory. The time had not come to proclaim the mystery of the Sonship to the world.

10. Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? They knew that the scribes, in their capacity as interpreters of prophecy, were wont to say that Elijah must come before the Messiah could appear. They said this on the strength of [Mal. 3:1](#), and [4:5](#). If Peter, James and John were of those who asked this question, they were probably seeking to ascertain if the vision they had seen was the coming of Elias and why he did not remain.

11, 12. Elias (Elijah) is come already. John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah ([Mark 1:2-8](#); [Luke 1:17](#)). **Have done unto him whatsoever they listed.** *List* and *lust* were originally one word, meaning to *desire* or *wish*. The account of his martyrdom is given in [Matt. 14:6-12](#); [Mark 6:21-29](#). See notes there. **The Son of man suffer of them.**

Henceforth he keeps the lesson of his suffering constantly before their minds. After all, his disciples were not prepared for it when the hour came.

14. When they were come to the multitude. Come down out of the mountain. Compare [Mark 9:14–29](#) and [Luke 9:37–42](#). [Luke](#) says this miracle occurred the next day.

15. My son; for he is a lunatic. Epileptic, in the Revision. The symptoms are those of epilepsy, in this case caused by demoniac possession. The son was a child ([Luke 9:38](#)). He was dumb as well as epileptic ([Mark](#)).

16. Thy disciples. The nine apostles who had been left below when the Lord with three ascended the mountain.

17. O faithless and perverse generation. Intended especially for the disciples who had failed in the cure from weakness of faith. **How long shall I suffer you?** Bear with your shortcomings. **Bring him hither to me.** The emphasis is upon *me*. This act of mercy could have been done by his disciples had they been devout, prayerful and believing.

18. And the demon went out. Compare [Mark](#) and [Luke](#).

19, 20. Why could not we cast him out? The answer is, Lack of faith. **This mountain.** Lofty Hermon, in plain sight. **Nothing shall be impossible to you.** Upon the condition of perfect faith. Compare [Heb. chap. 11](#). Faith in Christ, faith exercised in fasting and prayer, are the conditions of power.

21. But this kind ... but by prayer and fasting. Compare [Mark 9:29](#). Only by devout waiting before the Lord for strength. Such strength is always needful to the victories of faith. Often, too, we have demons, envy, pride, covetousness, a revengeful spirit, that must be cast out by prayer.

22. While they abode in Galilee. [Mark 9:30](#), says: Departing thence (from the vicinity of Mt. Hermon), they passed through Galilee. Compare also, [Luke 9:43–45](#).

23. They were exceeding sorry. Because he said that he must be put to death. There is only grief now, but no remonstrance.

24. When they had come to Capernaum. They had now returned from the journey north. **Doth not your master pay tribute?** Not tribute, which would be a tax due an alien, but the *half shekel*, an annual tax demanded of every male Jew above twenty years for the support of the temple. It would be from twenty-five to thirty-five cents, as the shekel is variously estimated from fifty to seventy cents. The collectors were not publicans, but Jewish authorities.

25. He saith, Yea. Peter, as usual, answered before he reflected, and then came to Jesus with the matter. **Jesus prevented.** Peter came into the house to speak about it, but Christ knew his thoughts and spoke first. **Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom?** Not of their own children, but from subjects. Hence, Christ, the King's Son, for whom the temple was built, was not subject to tax for the benefit of the temple. The Son of the King would



not pay tribute to the King. For the origin of this temple tax, see [Exod. 30:12](#), and [2 Chron. 24:5](#).

27. Lest we offend them. While not compelled to pay it as a due, he would pay it as a matter of expediency. Sometimes things are expedient for which there is not the letter of the law. **Go to the sea.** Of Galilee, close at hand. **Cast a hook.** Peter was a fisherman. **Take up the fish that first cometh.** A miracle. The Lord by his power would draw the fish that had sought to swallow the coin to Peter's hook. **A piece of money.** Greek, a stater, corresponding to a shekel, enough for two. The Lord would pay the tax, but in a manner in accord with the Divine dignity.



Chapter XVIII

The Greatest in the Kingdom

Summary — *Who Shall Be Greatest? Becoming As Little Children. Causing the Little Ones to Stumble. Despising the Little Ones. How to Deal with an Offending Brother. Forgiving Those Who Injure Us. Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.*

1. At the same came the disciples unto Jesus. Compare [Mark 9:33–50](#); [Luke 9:46–50](#), and also [Matt. 19:13–15](#). [Mark](#) says the conversation occurred at Capernaum. **At that time.** As Peter returned from paying the tribute money. **Who is the greatest in the kingdom?** The disciples had disputed in the way ([Mark](#)) as to which of them should be chief ministers in the earthly kingdom that they still supposed Christ would establish. [Mark](#) also says that before calling the child, Jesus said: “He that would be greatest among you, let him become the servant of all,” the rule of true greatness.

2. And Jesus called a little child unto him. In order to enforce the words that [Mark](#) reports, he uses a striking object lesson. This method was a prominent feature of Oriental teaching. Thus it was that Christ washed the disciples' feet ([John 13](#)) and Agabus bound his hands and feet with Paul's girdle ([Acts 21:11](#)).

3. Except ye be converted. The Revision translates, “Except ye turn,” which is correct. The Greek word translated in the Common Version “be converted,” is found in the New Testament in the active voice in every instance but one, and means *to turn*. It means something that the subject is to *do*, not something that is to be done for him. **Become as little children.** Humble, teachable and free from selfish ambition, like little children. **Shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.** Instead of discussing who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, they had better inquire whether they were going to get in at all.

4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child. This explains the great feature in which they must become as the child. Greatness in the kingdom is not secured by seeking to be greatest. There is a lesson here for Christians, and especially preachers who are ambitious of distinction.

5. Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name. *Receiving in my name* is serving with Christian love, and as belonging to Christ. **Receiveth me.** Observe that the true way to receive Christ is to receive into our heart, for Christ's sake, those who need our sympathies.

6. Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me. The Revision makes this plainer by rendering it “cause to stumble,” or to go astray. The term “little ones” not only embraces children who have learned to believe in Christ, but all lowly and humble disciples. **Better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck.** Better that a man should lose his life in so terrible a way than to destroy the souls of others. **Drowned in the**



depth of the sea. Which was within sight. This method of capital punishment was practiced by the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, and possibly occasionally by the Jews. It is still practiced by the Turks.

7. Woe unto the world because of offences! There will continue to be temptations and causes of stumbling in the world which will lead thousands astray and cause much sorrow.

8, 9. If thy hand or thy foot offend thee. Cause you to sin or stumble; ensnare you into evil. The meaning is, if an object dear as the right eye, and useful as the right hand, lead you into sin, that object however dear, you are to part with. See [Matt. 5:29](#). **Into life halt or maimed.** The meaning is, not that a man hath no better way to avoid sin and hell, but if he had no better, he should choose this. **Into hell fire.** “Into the Gehenna of fire.” This phrase, in [verse 9](#), is synonymous with “everlasting fire,” in [verse 8](#). See note on [Matt. 5:22](#), for Gehenna.

10. Despise not one of these little ones. Not merely one of the children, but those saints whom the world regards as insignificant and unimportant. “To despise” is, literally, “to look down upon,” and hence, to neglect. This forbids all caste in the church. **In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father.** The doctrine of guardian angels is emphatically taught in the Scriptures. See [2 Kings 19:31](#); [Ps. 91:11](#); [Heb. 1:13](#); [Acts 27:23](#). Who can afford to despise the children who have representatives right at the throne of God?

11. This verse does not occur in the Revision, and is not found in the most reliable Greek manuscripts, such as the Sinaitic and Vatican.

12, 13. How think ye? This illustration of the anxiety of the shepherd for a lost sheep is used to show the deep interest that God feels in any one of the straying “little ones.” **If a man have an hundred sheep.** The man having a hundred sheep is plainly the Son of God—the Good Shepherd.

14. Even so it is not the will of your Father, etc. As the shepherd feels a deep and anxious interest in the straying sheep, and seeks to hunt and to save it, so the Father above seeks the salvation of all the humble ones in his kingdom.

15. If thy brother. Compare [Mark 9:38](#), and [Luke 9:49](#). Brother in the church. **Sin against thee.** Personally. Injure you or do you wrong. **Shew him his fault.** Go to him privately and have a kind, brotherly talk over the matter, and try to show him his fault. **Gained thy brother.** For thyself, by restoring good feeling; for God, by leading him to a sense of sin and repentance.

16. Take with thee one or two more. If the private interview is of no avail, take other brethren as witnesses and intercessors. These witnesses, hearing the matter talked over, can report the facts.

17. Tell it to the church. If neither effort is of avail, then report it to the church for action. This is the second instance in the New Testament of the use of the word “church.” The first is in [Matt. 16:18](#). **If he refuse to hear the church.** The admonition and entreaty of the church

through its elders. The church has power to admonish and to exclude. **Let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican.** Have no religious fellowship with him, more than you would have with a heathen, or a publican. The publicans were usually apostate Jews. The orthodox Jews had no social intercourse with heathen or publicans.

18. What things soever ye shall bind. What was said to Peter ([Matt. 16:19](#)) is addressed to all the apostles. It is spoken to all a second time ([John 20:23](#)). All had the keys as well as Peter. The apostles were, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to establish the rules of the church discipline, as well as to announce the conditions of salvation by the gospel. These rules and conditions, found in Acts and the Epistles, bind and loose men. As they were to speak and write as moved by the Holy Spirit, what they announced would be ratified in heaven.

19, 20. If two of you shall agree. Two shall constitute a Christian fellowship. The united prayers of this fellowship for any legitimate object shall be heard. The assurance of this is found in the fact that Christ will be present wherever two or three are gathered in his name. Their united prayers will ascend, made mighty by the intercession of the Son of God. By his presence it becomes his prayer. **In my name.** As followers of Christ.

21. Then came Peter to him. The Lord had just spoken of the duty of seeking reconciliation with those who trespassed against us ([vs. 15-17](#)), and there seems to have been some doubt in the mind of Peter how far this principle should be carried. **Till seven times?** It is stated that the Jewish Rabbins held that forgiveness must be extended to one who confessed his fault, but this was limited to three repetitions of the offence. Peter had an idea that the Savior's rule would insist on still greater forbearance.

22. Until seventy times seven. That is, there should be no limit at which it shall be refused if it is asked in the spirit of sincere penitence. By reference to [Luke 17:4](#), one can see the condition of forgiveness. It is that the offender professes *repentance*. We are to forgive men their trespasses on the same condition that God forgives us ours, and he does not forgive the impenitent. Our mercy must be just as unlimited as that of God.

23. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened. The Lord next enforces the great doctrine of forgiveness to our fellow-man in a parable. **To a certain king, which would take account of his servants.** The king is the Lord, the servants those who profess to serve him as King; the kingdom is his church on earth, but reaching beyond the earth.

24. One was brought unto him. Observe that he had to be *brought*. A defaulter does not willingly come to settle his accounts, any more than a sinner would seek the bar of judgment. **Which owed him ten thousand talents.** An immense sum. The talent was a weight, not a coin, and its value would depend on the purity of the precious metal used in the coinage. If the Greek silver talent is meant, the ten thousand talents would amount to about \$7,500,000. What is meant is that the sum was beyond human ability to pay.

25. But forasmuch as he had not to pay. He had used his king's money and was not able to settle his accounts. He represents the sinner, who has no way to settle the debt of his sins. See [Luke 7:42](#). **His lord commanded him to be sold.** An absolute king is represented, who could do according to his will with his servants. It was common, even until modern times, for persons to be sold for debt. In many nations the wife and children were involved in the hapless fate of the debtor.

26. Fell down, and worshipped him. In Oriental countries, almost all who approach monarchs prostrate themselves and offer homage. This is especially true of those who urge a petition. See [Esther 8:3](#). **Have patience, ... I will pay thee all.** This promise was one that could not possibly be fulfilled, though the servant might think it possible.

27. The lord ... forgave him the debt. He is represented as so moved by compassion that he did far more than was asked and forgave the entire debt.

28. But the same servant went out. His own exhibition of brutality was immediately after the great mercy he had received. What follows shows that he had only been frightened, not converted. **An hundred pence.** The denarius, or penny, was a silver coin equal to from sixteen to eighteen cents. The whole debt would therefore be from sixteen to eighteen dollars. Its smallness compared with his debt to his lord is intended to show that our neighbors' sins against us are insignificant when contrasted with ours towards God. We need such boundless mercy that we ought to be prepared to give mercy freely. **Took him by the throat.** The great defaulter, who had been treated with such mercy, had no mercy.

29. Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. It will be noticed that this unfortunate debtor makes exactly the same appeal as his exacting creditor had made to his lord.

30. And he would not. He would not even grant delay, whereas he had been forgiven. **Cast him into prison.** To cast into prison for debt was once the custom in all countries.

31. His fellow-servants ... were very sorry. Unmerciful treatment of the unfortunate is always wont to excite compassion. The servants were not only sorry for their wretched comrade, but they carried the case to their lord. It is always proper to carry the wrongs of fellow-beings which we cannot redress to our Heavenly Father.

32, 33. O thou wicked servant. The sin of which the servant was guilty and charged is not that *needing mercy* he refused to show it, but that *having received mercy* he remained unmerciful still.

34. His lord ... delivered him to the tormenters. This language is to be interpreted by customs that still prevail in the East, where torture is still used to compel debtors to confess where they have hidden treasures that they are suspected of having concealed. In both Greece and Rome torture was used on prisoners to compel confession, and until within a century or two it was still employed in Great Britain and Europe. **Till he should pay all.** As, however, he never could pay, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment.

35. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, etc. Observe Christ says, “My heavenly Father,” not your. God will not be their heavenly Father unless they emulate his spirit of mercy, and are as ready to forgive others their trespasses as he is to forgive their own. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” “As ye mete to others it shall be measured to you.” “Forgive us our trespasses even as we forgive those who trespass against us.” “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” If we are hard and unforgiving to our fellow-men, we can never expect our heavenly Father to overlook our own sins. It is a vital doctrine that we, by our own mind towards others, determine what shall be the mind of God towards us.



Chapter XIX

Marriage and Divorce; The Rich Ruler

Summary — *The Last Departure from Galilee. The Question of the Pharisees about Divorce. Christ's Law of Divorce. Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake. Blessing the Little Children. The Rich Young Ruler. Eternal Life. Rich Men and the Kingdom of God. Leaving All for Christ's Sake.*

1, 2. He departed from Galilee. Compare [Mark 10:1–12](#), and [Luke 16:18](#). This is the final departure from Galilee before the Savior's death. **The borders of Judea beyond Jordan.** From Galilee he followed the route on the east of the Jordan to Jerusalem. The region where the conversation on divorce occurred is called Perea, which means “the land beyond,” or east of the Jordan. **Great multitudes.** Because his fame was now well known over all Palestine.

3. Pharisees came. As usual, ready to oppose. **Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?** Hillel, the greatest of the Jewish Rabbins whom Jews have sought to compare with Christ, taught that almost any ground of displeasure on the part of a husband would justify divorce. He even specifies scorching the bread as sufficient cause. Josephus, the historian, says he “divorced his wife because he was not pleased with her manners.”

4, 5. Made them male and female. In the creation, God made man male and female and united the two by an indissoluble bond in the marriage of one man to one woman. **For this cause.** The bond of husband and wife is stronger than that between children and parents. **Be one flesh.** Two lives joined into one.

6. What God hath joined together. If God hath so joined them that the twain are *one*, no human ordinance has the right to separate them.

7, 8. Why then did Moses command? Deut. 24:1–4. They insinuate that he contradicts Moses. **Moses, for your hardness of heart.** Moses “suffered” some things that were not right on account of “the hardness of your heart,” a low state of morals. A people cannot be lifted from moral depravity to a high standard at once. Hence the law permitted some things that were below the perfect standard of Christ. **In the beginning.** In the beginning there was no divorce and no polygamy. The first polygamist was the race of Cain ([Gen. 4:19](#)).

9. I say unto you. We have here Christ's law of divorce in contrast with that of Moses. **Except for fornication.** There is only one sufficient cause of divorce; that is, unfaithfulness to the marriage relation. **Committeth adultery.** Because he is married still to his former wife, who is still his wife in spite of the divorce; so, too, if any man marries the divorced woman, he marries another man's wife.

10. It is expedient not to marry. Such a rigid marriage law was too high for their loose Jewish ideas. It seemed to them as if it would be impossible to live up to so high an ideal. If a man could not get rid of his wife, if he tired of her, it were better not to marry.

11. To whom it is given. Only those can receive and live up to this rule who are enlightened by Christianity. The less Christianity, the lower the ideal of marriage. This is the rule everywhere.

12. There are eunuchs. The classes are named who need not marry: (1) Those born physically incompetent; (2) those made eunuchs by mutilation, once a very common practice in the East, and (3) those who abstain from marriage to devote themselves, free from worldly cares, to Christ's work. [Paul](#) was an example.

13. They brought unto him little children. Compare [Mark 10:13–16](#); [Luke 18:15–17](#). It was the Jewish custom to bring children to the synagogue on their first birthday for the Rabbi to bless them. So these persons came to one whom they regarded the greatest of all Rabbins. **The disciples rebuked them.** They thought it an interruption.

14. Suffer little children. Do not hinder them, either by word, or by a bad example. **To come unto me.** Whatever mortal, young or old, wishes to come to Christ should be encouraged. **For of such is the kingdom of heaven.** Those who have the loving simplicity, humility, and trust of children. See [@Matt. 18:1–14](#). These words show, (1) that children are not, as some have taught, totally depraved; (2) that the earlier they come to Christ the better; (3) that they should not be hindered from coming by injudicious teaching; (4) that parents should bring them to the Savior.

15. Laid his hands on them. And blessed them.

16. Behold, one came and said. Compare [Mark 10:17–27](#), and [Luke 18:18–30](#). We learn from [verse 20](#) that he was a young man; from [Luke 18:18](#), that he was a ruler, probably of a synagogue, although these were usually elderly; from [verse 22](#) (Matthew) that he was rich, which probably accounts for his holding office, at an unusual age; and from [Mark 10:17](#), that he came running to Jesus and kneeled to him. **Good Master, what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?** Whether he had before heard Christ or not, he had learned that eternal life belonged to heirs, the heirs of God, his children, and had to be inherited.

17. Why callest thou me good? none good but one, God. The Revision, following the Sinaitic, Vatican, and some other manuscripts, leaves off “good” before Master in [verse 16](#), and changes this to, “Why asketh thou me concerning good?” Still, [Mark and Luke](#) give the question in the form of the Common Version as here; hence we are justified in adhering to the text as above. Some have seen in these words of Christ an affirmation that he was not divine. To these, Stier replies: “Either there is none good but God, Christ is good, therefore Christ is God; or, there is none good but God, Christ is not God, therefore Christ is not good.” There is no answer to these syllogisms but to deny the sinlessness of Christ. **If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.** The Lord had evidently asked his first

question to prepare the way for this direction. He has, in saying that no man is absolutely good, said that no man can keep the commandments perfectly.

18, 19. Which? Thou shalt not kill. The Lord passes over the first four of the ten commandments, throws the young man back to his relations with his fellow-men, compels him to give an account of his moral goodness, and after keeping the letter of the moral commands, still to confess his sense of a lack.

20. All these have I kept from my youth up. There was, no doubt, great ignorance in this reply. **What lack I yet?** He was sensible of the fact that there was a lack. His soul had not found rest in outward duties.

21. If thou wilt be perfect. To be *good* he must be perfect. **Sell what thou hast.** The injunction of the Lord is manifestly intended to bring out the fact that the young man had made an idol of his riches.

22. He went away sorrowful. He would like to be a disciple of Christ, and an heir of life, but was not ready to pay such a price. The Lord had struck his difficulty, his besetting sin, his ruling passion. This man was required to use his wealth for God and for man; so are we to use ours. There is just one difference; he was commanded to sell and give away; we are required to *turn all over* to Christ and to hold it as his stewards.

23. A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. The Lord does not say that a rich man shall not enter, but that he shall enter with great difficulty. **Mark** says that when Christ uttered these words the disciples were astonished, and then Jesus explained by the words, "How hard it is for them *that trust in riches* to enter into the kingdom of God," which shows the sense in which he spoke the words of this verse. A man may *trust* in riches who has \$100, as well as one who has \$100,000.

24. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man (*i. e.*, as already explained, one who trusts in riches) to enter into the kingdom of God. In other words, one whose trust is in wealth cannot enter at all.

25, 26. With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. This means that human efforts alone cannot save a man. The young man was zealous in keeping the commandments, but there was a great lack. The grace of God only can save. It can break down the trust in wealth, take away the love of wealth, and fill the heart with the love of Christ. It is the *love* of money, not money, that is the root of all evil. A pauper may love money as much as a millionaire.

27. Lo, we have left all. Compare **Mark 10:28, 29, and Luke 18:28–30**. The apostles had left all they had for Christ. The case of the rich young man suggested Peter's question.

28. Ye. The apostles. **In the regeneration.** At the coming of the Lord the second time. **When the Son of man shall sit, etc.** In his final triumph over all evil. **Shall sit on twelve thrones.** Christ shall sit on the throne of his glory and the apostles also shall have thrones.



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The twelve tribes of Israel. The reference is probably spiritual, rather than literal. The inspired preaching of the apostles presented the conditions of pardon under the New Covenant. Thus they “bind” and “loose,” or “judge.” In judgment, salvation will turn on whether the Jews, or the true Israel ([Gal. 3:29](#)), have obeyed the “apostles' doctrine.” The apostles even now judge the church.

29. Every one. Not only apostles, but every one who leaves all for Christ shall receive a hundred fold. **A hundred fold.** [Mark](#) says, “Now in this time.” They shall be taken care of in this world, and have earthly peace and joy, such as no sinner can have, and above all, “eternal life.”

30. Many shall be last, etc. There will be reversals; those rich on earth, but poor hereafter; those high in station, degraded hereafter; and the lowly on earth, exalted hereafter. The right man to follow any cause, be it what it will, is he who loves it well enough to fling to it everything he has in the world, and then think that not enough, and so fling himself after it. This last item often weighs down the scales in heaven, and the man gets what he gave himself for.



Chapter XX

The Laborers in the Vineyard; The Ambitious Mother

Summary — *The Householder and the Laborers. Those Hired at the Eleventh Hour. The Recompense to All. The Lord's Sufferings at Jerusalem Portrayed. The Ambition of the Mother of Zebedee's Sons. The Baptism of Suffering. Two Blind Men Healed at Jericho.*

1. For the kingdom of heaven. This parable is added to illustrate what was said just before, in the last chapter. **A man that is a householder.** The householder represents God, the vineyard is the kingdom of Christ, the laborers his disciples. **Went out early in the morning to hire.** Said to be a common custom in the East. Unemployed laborers gather in the market place of the villages, waiting for an employer.

2. Agreed with the labourers for a penny a day. A denarius, about sixteen cents, the usual full price of a day's labor at that time. It would buy then more than a dollar will now.

3, 4. About the third hour. Nine o'clock. The hours were counted from six o'clock.

5, 6. Went about the sixth and ninth hour. Twelve and three o'clock. **About the eleventh hour.** Five o'clock.

7. Because no man hath hired us. These persons were idle, because they had no opportunity to work. This point must not be lost sight of. There is no promise here for willful idleness.

8. Saith unto his steward. The steward, to whom the duty of paying the laborers is assigned, probably represents Christ.

9. They received every man a penny. More than most of them expected. God does not measure our reward by the length, but by the faithfulness of service.

10, 11, 12. They murmured. Those who had worked all day. Like the elder brother ([Luke 15:28–30](#)).

13, 14. Go thy way. The householder gave these all he had agreed. They had no ground of complaint but envy.

15. Is thine eye evil? Envious.

16. So, etc. A special lesson, first, to the Jews. They had been called first by God, but the Gentiles who heard the call should soon enjoy special privileges. They would even be first in the kingdom, because of their greater readiness to receive the gospel. Our duty in the vineyard is to go to work as soon as the Lord calls us, and to do what he tells us.

17. Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve apart. For six months, ever since the confession at Cæsarea Philippi, the Lord had been trying to prepare the twelve for his death. Compare [Mark 10:32–52](#); [Luke 18:31–43](#). He was now east of the Jordan, on his way.

18. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem. They had gone to Jerusalem oftentimes before, but never on such a mournful errand. **Shall be betrayed.** By Judas, who would lead the band



sent by the Jewish rulers to seek him in the night. **Chief priests and unto the scribes.** The Jewish Sanhedrim. It included both the leaders of the priesthood, the leading scribes, or doctors of the law, and others. The great council of the nation condemned Jesus to die. See [Matt. 26:59–66](#).

19. Shall deliver him to the Gentiles. The Sanhedrim could condemn, but had no power to inflict capital punishment, because the government had passed into the hands of the Romans—a Gentile race. **To mock and to scourge.** For comment on these words, see [Matt. 27:26–31](#). **The third day.** This expression, which occurs often, shows the sense in which the Jews understood the corresponding phrase, “three days and three nights.”

20. Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children. Salome, the mother of the apostles James and John, and supposed by many to be the sister of the mother of Jesus. Compare [Mark 10:32–45](#); [Luke 18:31–34](#).

21. What wilt thou? We learn from [Mark](#) that they asked him to grant what they wished before they stated it, after the manner of Herod to the daughter of Herodias, but he forced them to state their ambitious desire. The mother speaks for them. **Sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.** They still believed that he would be an earthly monarch, notwithstanding that he had just told them of his speedy death.

22. Ye know not what ye ask. An illustration, this of ignorant prayer. Within a month they saw the places on his right hand and left occupied by the two thieves in the crucifixion. **Are ye able to drink of the cup?** The *cup* is an Old Testament image of a man's lot, or portion, as holding what of life God pours out for him. **Be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?** Baptism is the necessary condition by which one can enjoy the privileges of the church. The *cup* signifies suffering voluntarily taken, or “drunk,” and the baptism what is endured at the hands of others. **We are able.** They no doubt thought they were. They loved their Lord, as well as pre-eminence, and felt that they were willing to go with him through suffering. They, however, overestimated their strength.

23. Ye shall drink indeed of my cup. They cannot do it now, but in due time they shall follow him; they shall rise to their calling, and bravely meet all its risks and hardships. See [Acts 12:1, 2](#). **Is not mine to give.** The highest honors of his kingdom were not now to be disposed of by him to gratify the worldly ambition of any one. **For whom it is prepared.** The Father had a plan in reference to the honors of the kingdom. The lowliest would be the loftiest. They who gave up most would get most.

24. The ten ... were moved with indignation. The indignation of the “ten” displayed the same spirit and motive as the request of the sons of Zebedee. It is very common that in the very act of condemning our brethren we are guilty of the same or worse faults than those we condemn.

25. Jesus called them to him. Evidently their indignation had been outspoken, but not in the immediate presence of the Lord. **The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion.** In



order to present the contrast between the kingdom as it would be and as they expected it, he pointed out the nature of Gentile rule. The princes “lorded over” the people.

26. It shall not be so among you. No such lordship, no such authority, can be tolerated in your fraternity. The case is a rebuke of unhallowed ambition. Men prominent in the church should be the first to heed the admonition. Such priestly despotism as the absolute rule of the Catholic, Greek, and of some Protestant churches is at variance with this principle. **Whosoever will be great ... let him be your minister.** Your *deacon, servant*. Greatness in the kingdom of heaven consists in *doing*, rather than in *being*, and in doing for others, rather than for self. Greatness is to be found in service. Only those men are truly great who are the servants of their race, helpers of mankind.

27. Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. In the church, the greatest one is he who serves most and best.

28. Give his life as a ransom. Our Lord came to serve. He even gave his life. He became our ransom; that is, he redeemed us by his blood.

29. As they departed from Jericho. He had now crossed the Jordan. At Jericho he saved Zaccheus. Compare [Mark 10:46–52](#), and [Luke 18:35–43](#). Jericho stood a few miles from the southern ford of the Jordan, on the road to Jerusalem, which was about eighteen miles distant. He left Jericho for Jerusalem on Friday, just a week before his crucifixion.

30. Two blind men. [Mark and Luke](#) name only one, blind Bartimæus, probably well known and hence named.

31. Have mercy on us, thou Son of David. This was virtually acknowledging Jesus as the Christ, who was to be the Son of David.

32. Jesus stood still. He does not object now to this title. Compare [Matt. 9:27](#). He is now about to proclaim himself the Messiah.

34. Jesus ... touched their eyes. The faith of the blind men had saved them. Compare [Mark and Luke](#). Faith saved. The blind Bartimæus (1) asked about Jesus as he passed; (2) cried to him as the Son of David, the Messiah; (3) asked for mercy; (4) kept on crying when they tried to stop him; (5) when permitted, sprang up and hurried to Jesus; (6) asked of him to receive his sight. This is faith in action.



Chapter XXI

Christ Entering Jerusalem

Summary — *The Lord Leaves Bethany to Enter Jerusalem. The Charge to the Two Disciples. The Fulfillment of Prophecy. The Great Multitude Who Prepare the Way. Hosanna to the Son of David. Jesus Enters the Temple. The Money-Changers Cast Out. The Barren Fig Tree. The Controversy with the Rulers. John's Baptism. The Parable of the Two Sons. The Parable of the Vineyard and the Husbandmen. The Stone That the Builders Rejected.*

1. When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem. Jesus passed through Jericho, where he bestowed sight on Bartimæus and salvation on Zaccheus, came up the mountain pass from Jericho to Jerusalem, stopping over the Sabbath in the congenial home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, in Bethany, and so on Sunday morning made his entry into Jerusalem. Compare [Mark 11:1–11](#); [Luke 19:29–44](#), and [John 12:12–19](#). As they drew nigh to Jerusalem they ascended the Mount of Olives. There were three paths over the Mount of Olives: (1) on the north, in the hollow between the two crests of the hill; (2) over the summit; and (3) on the south, between the Mount of Olives and the Hill of Offence—still the most frequented and the best. Along this Jesus advanced. **To Bethphage.** Bethphage and Bethany were suburban villages near to one another, and lying on the direct line of road that led to Jerusalem from the east. **Mount of Olives.** A hill just east of Jerusalem, so called from the olive trees upon it. It was about a mile from the city. It was their open ground—for pleasure, for worship; the “Park” of Jerusalem; the thoroughfare of any going or coming in the direction of the great Jordan valley.

2. Into the village over against you. Bethphage is in view, over against them, perhaps separated from them by a valley. **Ye shall find an ass tied.** In the East the ass is in high esteem. Every Jew expected, from the words of one of the prophets ([Zech. 9:9](#)), that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem riding on an ass.

3. The Lord hath need of them. It is probable that the owner was a disciple.

4, 5. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. See [Isa. 62:11](#), and [Zech. 9:9](#). The prophet here describes him as riding upon one of the humblest of animals, and in the fulfillment we find, (1) that the animal was borrowed; (2) that he rode without a saddle on borrowed garments; (3) that it was a colt on which no man had ever before rode. Only animals hitherto unused were regarded fit for sacred uses. See [Num. 19:2](#); [Deut. 21:3](#); [1 Sam. 6:7](#). This is the only instance reported in which the Lord ever rode on any animal.

7. They set him thereon. Hitherto he had entered the holy city on foot; this day he would enter as David and the judges of Israel were wont—riding on the ass.

8. And a very great multitude spread their garments. Vast multitudes were gathered at Jerusalem at the Passover. The law required the assembling of the Jewish nation. Josephus

says that several millions were wont to gather. Among these were thousands of Galileans who had heard of Jesus, seen his miracles, and believed in him as their Messiah King. When the people of Bethlehem, during the war between Turkey and Egypt in 1836, sought the protection of the British consul, they “spread their garments in the way” of his horses, in order to do him honor. **Cut down branches from the trees.** John (12:13) says that these were the branches of palm trees; rather, the wide, spreading, branch-like leaves of the palm tree, well fitted to form a soft, level carpet. The only branches of the palm tree are its leafy crown.

9. Hosanna. A Greek modification of the Hebrew words rendered, “Save now, I beseech thee,” in Ps. 118:25, the [next verse](#) of which formed part of their song, “Blessed,” etc. It is used as an expression of praise, like hallelujah. **That cometh in the name of the Lord.** The words are taken in part from Ps. 118:25, 26, a hymn which belonged to the great hallelujah chanted at the end of the Paschal Supper and the Feast of Tabernacles. The people were accustomed to apply it to the Messiah.

10. All the city was moved. The procession burst into full view of Jerusalem as it appeared on the Mount of Olives, two hundred feet higher than the temple mount. There, as the city appeared in all its splendor, according to [Luke](#), he stopped and wept over its coming sorrows. As the procession descended, it was in plain view of all Jerusalem, and its magnitude, shouts and songs excited the wonder of the whole city.

11. Jesus the prophet of Nazareth. The inquiry arose everywhere, “Who is this?” to which the Galileans who composed so large a part of the procession, responded: “It is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, of Galilee.” Of this they were sure; of his real character none but his own disciples knew, and they imperfectly. The Galileans regarded him the prophet named by Moses in [Deut. 18:18](#).

12. And Jesus went into the temple. According to [Mark](#), on this day, after the triumphal entry, he entered the temple, looked around, perhaps to note the abuses, and then at eventide went out to Bethany. The next day, returning, he again entered the temple, and wrought the cleansing that is here recorded. He went into the temple, not as a worshiper, but as its Lord. **Cast out all them.** This casting of the traders out of the temple is not to be confounded with that recorded in [John 2:13–17](#), at the commencement of Christ's ministry. See notes there. **Them that sold and bought in the temple.** A market was held there for the sale of animals and those things necessary for the temple service. Not the less a desecration because so great a convenience. The part of the temple occupied by the traders was not in the temple proper, but the Court of the Gentiles. In the accompanying plan of the temple, the open space next to the outer walls is this court.

Tables of the moneychangers. Money would be required, (1) to purchase materials for the offerings; (2) to present as free-offerings to the temple treasury ([Mark 12:41](#); [Luke 21:1](#)); (3) to pay the yearly temple tax of half a shekel due from every Jew, however poor. All this

had to be paid in native coin called the temple shekel, which was not generally current. Strangers, therefore, had to change their Roman, Greek, or Eastern money, at the stalls of the money-changers, to obtain the coin required. This trade gave ready means for fraud, which was only too common. Christ's act was a defiance to those who sought his death. **Of them that sold doves.** Required for poor women coming for purification ([Lev. 12:6, 8](#); [Luke 2:24](#)) from all parts of the country, and for other offerings.

13. It is written. In [Isa. 56:7](#). **A house of prayer.** A place of sacred worship. **A den of thieves.** A cave or den of robbers. The language indicates that it was a corrupt and fraudulent traffic, which a corrupt and fraudulent priesthood had permitted to encroach on the worship of God. It is a desecration of religious institutions to use them for worldly gain.

15. The chief priests and scribes ... were sore displeased. These inveterate enemies were displeased, not only at the authority he had assumed over the temple, but at the acclamations of approval, the cries of the children, and the evident favor of the people.

16. Hearest thou what these say? Christ's answer to the priests is a rebuke to all who would check religious enthusiasm on the part of children. The quotation is from [Ps. 8:2](#). The praise of the innocent child is the perfection of praise.

17. Went to Bethany. Two miles east of Jerusalem. During the eventful week, he seems to have passed his nights, until Thursday, at the congenial home of Lazarus.

18. Now in the morning. Compare [Mark 11:12–19](#), and [Luke 19:45–48](#). This was Monday.

19. Seeing a fig tree. On the route from Bethany to the city. The fig is common in Palestine. **Found nothing thereon, but leaves.** [Mark](#) adds that “the time of figs was not yet;” that is, of ripe figs. The green figs ought to have appeared among the leaves in April, though the fruit began ripening in June. **Let there be no more fruit from thee.** Peter calls this a cursing ([Mark 11:21](#)). It was doomed to death and withered. On the next morning (Tuesday) it “was dried up from the roots” ([Mark 11:20](#)). It was a parable in action, illustrating how the fruitless Jewish nation should wither away. It had leaves, but no fruit.

21, 22. If ye have faith. See note on [Matt. 17:20](#).

23. When he was come into the temple. Compare [Mark 11:27](#), and [Luke 20:1](#). This was on Tuesday, after the discourse on the fig tree, which occurred the morning after the curse was pronounced. **The chief priests and the elders.** [Mark](#) and [Luke](#) add “the scribes.” These three classes made up the Sanhedrim, and this was probably a deputation from that body. **By what authority doest thou these things?** Such acts as driving the money-changers and traders out of the temple, done the day before.

24. I also will ask you one question. A malicious question is often best answered by a question which will expose the questioners.

25, 26. The baptism of John. Though the people generally had obeyed John, they had rejected his baptism. Yet they dared not say it was of men, for fear of the people; nor that it was of heaven, because they had disobeyed it. They therefore say,

27. We cannot tell. Hence the Lord refuses to answer their question, but immediately addresses them in a parable. As his death approaches, his parables are unusually solemn.

28–31. A man had two sons. The two sons represent (verse 31) the priests, elders and scribes on the one hand, and the publicans and harlots, “the sinners,” on the other. Both classes were bidden to work in the Lord’s vineyard. The publicans and sinners had refused, but repented at the preaching of John. The others professed to obey, but did not. The design of the parable is to show that the publicans and harlots, whom they so much despised, were morally superior to his questioners.

32. Repented not afterward. The Greek word here translated “repent,” is not the one which is used in all commands as, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” “Repent and be baptized,” “Repent and be converted,” etc. This term means, rather, *regret* or sorrow; the word in the other passages means “change your minds” or “hearts.” The regret, or sorrow, for sin leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10). The scribes and Pharisees did not regret their course, when they saw sinners repenting, so that they could come into a penitent belief.

33. Hear another parable. Compare Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19. The second parable is also a rebuke of the ruling classes that were seeking his death. **There was a certain householder.** The head of a family is here selected to represent God. In what follows is portrayed the blessings he had bestowed and the care he had taken of Israel. **Which planted a vineyard.** Our Lord draws, as was his wont, his illustration from common life and familiar objects. Palestine was emphatically a vine-growing country. **And hedged it round about.** God in his care not only planted Israel, but *hedged* the nation around by the law which separated it from the Gentiles. **Dugged a wine-press in it.** The wine-press consisted of two parts: (1) the press, or trough, above, in which the grapes were placed and there trodden by the feet; (2) a smaller trough, into which the expressed juice flowed through a hole. Here the smaller trough, which was “dugged” out of the earth or rock and then lined with masonry, is put for the whole apparatus, and is called a *wine* FAT. **Built a tower.** Towers were erected in vineyards for the accommodation of keepers, who defended the vineyards from thieves and from troublesome animals. The hedge and wine-press and tower represent the various advantages conferred by God upon the Jewish people (Rom. 9:4). **Let it out to husbandmen.** Representing the rulers of the Jews, and also the people as a whole, a nation, are included. **Went into a far country.** Better, “into another country,” as in the Revised. “For a long while” (or time), adds Luke. It means that God left Israel to itself to see what use it would make of the favors he had bestowed.

34. When the time of the fruit drew near. Probably no definite time, but whenever any special duty was to be done, or special call to repentance made, as by the prophets. **He**

sent his servants. The prophets. **That they might receive the fruits of it.** The householder's share. The rent was to be paid in a stipulated portion of the produce. The fruits were obedience, love, righteous living, teaching the true God to the nations, etc.

35. And the husbandmen took his servants. According to the obvious design of the whole parable, this is a lively figure for the undutiful and violent reception often given to the prophets or other divine messengers, and the refusal to obey their message. See [Matt. 23:29–31,34,37](#); [Luke 11:47–50](#); [13:33, 34](#). Compare [1 Thess. 2:15](#); [Rev. 16:6](#); [18:24](#). **Killed another.** Some of the prophets were not merely maltreated, but actually put to death.

37. Last of all he sent unto them his son. This was the last and crowning effort of divine mercy; after which, on the one side, all the resources, even of heavenly love, are exhausted; on the other, the measure of sins is perfectly filled up.

38. This is the heir. He for whom the inheritance is meant, and to whom it will in due course rightfully arrive. Christ is “heir of all things” ([Heb. 1:2](#)). **Come, let us kill him.** The very words of Genesis ([37:20](#)), where Joseph's brethren express a similar resolution. This resolution had actually been taken ([John 11:53](#)). **Let us seize on his inheritance.** If Christ prevailed, Judaism must fall; if they could destroy Christ they could maintain their hold on the vineyard; or, in other words, seize the inheritance. Such was their hope.

39. Cast him out of the vineyard. This may involve an allusion to Christ suffering “without the gate” ([Heb. 13:12, 13](#); [John 19:17](#)). **Slew him.** This is a prophecy of his own death at the hands of the men whom he was addressing.

40. When the lord ... cometh, what will he do? This question is addressed to the Jews, who seem to have been so carried away by the vivid description that they answered without seeing that they pronounced their own sentence (see [verse 41](#)).

41. They say unto him ... and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen. Their answer is not only their own decree of judgment upon themselves, but an unconscious prediction. The nation was nearly destroyed in the Roman war; 1,100,000 perished in the siege of Jerusalem; the Jewish polity was destroyed, and “another people,” the Church of Christ, mostly Gentile aliens before, received the inheritance and the kingdom.

42. The stone which the builders rejected. “The Scripture” that speaks of this stone is [Psalm 118:22, 23](#)—a psalm which the Jews applied to the Messiah. Peter twice applied it to him ([Acts 4:11](#); [1 Peter 2:7](#)). The figure represents a stone rejected by the builders as worthless, and then found to be the chief corner-stone of the building. The stone is Christ, rejected by the Jewish nation, but “the chief corner-stone,” for this is what is meant by the “head of the corner.” The “corner-stone” joined two walls. Alford thinks this is a reference to the union of Jews and Gentiles in the church. **Marvellous.** That the rejected stone should become the “chief corner-stone, elect and precious,” on which the whole structure of the spiritual temple rests.



43. Given to a nation bringing forth the fruits. The kingdom was taken from the Jews and given to the “chosen nation” (1 Peter 2:9); not any particular nation, but those chosen out of the nations to be a “peculiar people.”

44. Whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken. Two fates are named for opposers in this verse; those who fall on the stone shall be broken; those on whom the stone shall fall shall be ground to powder. While the principle is general, the special application is to the Jewish opposers. Their *falling upon* the Stone (Christ) was the ruin of their nation. When the Stone *fell upon them*, in the judgment he had predicted because they rejected him, they were ground to powder in the awful desolation that occurred about thirty-seven years later.

45. When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard, etc. When the application of the parable was made, they perceived that they were meant and that they had condemned themselves.

46. When they sought to lay hands on him. Jerusalem was filled with people, and the demonstration, two days before, on Sunday, showed that thousands of Galileans, at least, regarded him a prophet. Hence, they find some darker and safer way than an open assault in the day. None can oppose Christ without injury. Even the silent opposition of indifference will cause us to be “broken” unless repented of. To continue our opposition until the day of grace is over will result in irretrievable ruin. Those who are “ground to powder” are beyond hope.



Chapter XXII

The Marriage of the King's Son; Attempts to Entrap the Savior

Summary — *The Marriage Feast. The Invited Guests. The Invitation Rejected. Their Fate. Those in the Highway and Hedges Called. The Man with No Wedding Garment. The Pharisees and Herodians. Paying Tribute to Cæsar. The Sadducees and the Resurrection. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lawyer's Question. The Great Commandment. What Think Ye of Christ?*

1. Jesus answered and spoke unto them again. Compare [13:15–24](#). Mark states ([12:12](#)) that after the parable of the wicked husbandmen, the rulers “left him and went their way;” hence this parable (peculiar to Matthew) was not spoken directly to the rulers.

2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king. Its relation to the Jews and Gentiles is likened unto a king who **made a marriage for his son**. Rendered “marriage feast” in the Revision. The scenery of this parable is drawn from the Oriental marriage feast, which assumed a much more important place in the ceremony of marriage than it does in our times. See the wedding feast at Cana, in [John, chap. 2](#). The betrothal usually took place many months before, but the marriage rite was consummated by bringing the bride to the home of the bridegroom, and the occasion was celebrated by a feast, to which many were invited. In the parable the King is God, the Son our Lord, the bride is his church, those first invited are the Jews, those invited later are all mankind, the marriage feast is when the Lamb's Bride is taken home to the Father's house, the day named in [Rev. 19:7–9](#), the day of judgment and reward.

3. Sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding. It was the custom among the ancients for the guests to be twice invited; or rather first invited, that they might prepare themselves, and then summoned a short time before the banquet, that they might be there at the proper time. The *first* invitation to the Jews was given by the prophets, down to John the Baptist; the *second* afterwards by the apostles and other disciples in succession.

4. Again, he sent forth other servants. This is a second invitation to those who had previously been invited and “would not come.” The Jews were invited first of all, by the Savior and his apostles under the first commission before all things were ready, but they refused the invitation and rejected Christ. Then, after all was made ready by the death and resurrection of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom, they were again invited before the apostles turned to the Gentiles. For seven years from Pentecost, the gospel was preached to Jews alone. **My oxen and my fatlings are killed.** A description drawn from an ancient feast, where the substantial portion of the repast was flesh.



5. But they made light of it. There were two classes that refused to heed the invitation. This is the first class, those who are indifferent.

6. And the remnant took his servants and ... slew them. The indifference of the previous class was proof of disloyalty, but the second class resort to open rebellion. This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the apostles and early church stirred by the Jews. See [Acts 4:3; 5:18, 40; 7:58; 8:3; 12:3; 14:5, 19; 16:23; 17:5; 21:30; 23:2](#); also the Epistles here and there.

7. And when the king heard thereof he was wroth. He who insults or assails a king's heralds assails the king's majesty. **Destroyed those murderers and burned their city.** Strikingly fulfilled in the fate of the Jews. The Roman armies were chosen to inflict the retribution upon the Jewish nation.

8. The wedding is ready, but the bidden were not worthy. Those who reject the gospel invitation show that they are not worthy. Compare Paul, [Acts 13:46](#).

9. Go ye therefore into the highways. All are now to be invited, not one race or class alone, but the command is, "As many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." This was fulfilled when the gospel was offered to the Gentiles as well as Jews.

10. So those servants ... gathered all ... both good and bad. The *bad* are invited, not to remain bad, but in order that they might become good. No one can truly come without a determination to quit sinning.

11. Saw there a man who had not a wedding garment. It is said to be a custom in the East, even at the present day, for the host to present his guests with robes of honor. Every saint is robed, not in his own righteousness, but in the white robes of Christ's righteousness. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" ([Gal. 3:27](#)). Abbott, on this passage says: "The garments we put on when we put on the Lord Jesus Christ by faith in baptism ([Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:26-27](#)).... To be without the wedding garments, offered freely to him, implied that the man thought his usual attire good enough. He therefore represents one who, while professing to be for Christ, thought his own righteousness would save him without a trustful obedience to the Savior."

12. How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? The fact that he had not was proof that he had no right to be there. All invited might be very different before, good and bad, but they must be clothed alike when the guests of the Lord.

13. Then said the king, ... Bind him hand and foot. It is the king's right to exclude all unfit, even at the door of the feast.

14. For many are called, but few are chosen. "The many called" embrace all who hear the gospel; the whole Jewish nation, and the Gentiles of every land where the gospel is preached. The chosen are those who choose to accept.

15. Then went the Pharisees. They were the chief element in the Sanhedrim delegation which assailed him. See [last chapter](#). Compare [Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:19-26](#).

16. Sent to him their disciples, with the Herodians. The “disciples” were Pharisees, but young, unknown, and less likely to be suspected. The Herodians were a Jewish political party that favored the Herodian and Roman rule. **Master.** They came with flatteries in order the better to deceive.

17. Is it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, or not? To the Roman emperor, who had subjected Judea. If he had said “no,” they expected to denounce him to the Roman governor as teaching sedition. If he had said “yes,” they expected it would destroy his influence, as the people hated the Romans and the tribute.

18. Perceived their wickedness. Their deceit.

19, 20. Shew me the tribute money. The Roman coin was used to pay the poll-tax. **A penny.** The Roman denarius, a silver coin worth sixteen cents. It had on it the image and name of Tiberius Cæsar.

21. Render to Cæsar. The use of Cæsar's coin as the current money was an acknowledgment of Cæsar. Let them return his coin when demanded. **Unto God the things that are God's.** Obedience in moral and spiritual things. Faith, love, obedience and liberal giving for God's work. We are to obey the human government over us, and to obey God. When the first requires us to disobey God, we are to obey him, whatever may be the peril. [Acts 5:29](#).

23. The same day came the Sadducees. See note on [Matt. 3:7](#). They were materialists. **Who say there is no resurrection.** They denied the immortality of the soul. See [Acts 23:8](#).

24. Moses said. [Deut. 25:5](#).

25–28. Whose wife shall she be of the seven? They state a fictitious case that they suppose will make the doctrine of the resurrection ridiculous.

29. Ye do err. “Not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”

30. Are as the angels of God. The physical relations of earthly marriage do not belong to spiritual beings. The saints when raised are like the angels. This does not deny personal intercourse or spiritual relationships, but the existence of fleshly ties.

31. As touching the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees doubted some of the prophetic books, but accepted Moses; hence, the Lord appeals to Moses to show that he taught future existence, or *the resurrection*, which is the sense in which the latter phrase is used.

32. I am the God of Abraham. [Exod. 3:6](#). God does not say, “I was,” but “I *am* the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob.” The present tense shows that he is still the God of the departed patriarchs, and that they are still in existence. Queen Victoria is not the queen of Bacon, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, but only of her living subjects. The Savior teaches that the soul is resurrected when it leaves the body, and that there is no unconscious state between death and the final resurrection of the body.

34. The Pharisees ... gathered. Compare [Mark 12:28–34](#); [Luke 10:25–28](#)



35. A lawyer. An expounder of the law of Moses. A scribe (see [Mark](#)). **Tempting him.** Trying him.

36. Which is the great commandment? This was a question which, with some others, divided the Jewish teachers into rival schools, and was a constant bone of contention—one of “those strivings about the law,” against which Paul warns Titus ([Titus 3:9](#)). The Jews divided their commandments into greater and lesser, but were not agreed in particulars. Some pronounced the law of circumcision the greater; others, that of sacrifices, or ablutions, or phylacteries. The Talmud reckoned the positive laws of Moses at 248, the negative at 365, in all 613. To keep so many laws, said the Jews, is an angel's work. So they had much question which was the great commandment, so that they might keep it in lieu of keeping the whole.

37, 38. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, etc. Freely quoted from [Deut. 6:5](#). A demand for supreme love for God. **This is the first and great.** Great, because it embraces all others; first, in that it precedes the second that he is about to name. He who loves God supremely cannot live in disobedience to him.

39. The second is like. The first command sums up what man owes to God; the second, what he owes to his fellow-man. **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** [Lev. 19:18](#). One who loves God supremely, will not live in disobedience; one who loves his neighbor as himself, will seek the welfare of those around him.

41. While the Pharisees were gathered. Compare [Mark 12:35–37](#); [Luke 20:21–44](#).

42. What think ye of Christ? The great question still. **Whose son?** They reply, the “Son of David,” a correct but incomplete answer, as he shows by their own Scriptures.

43. Call him Lord. David then, by inspiration, calls his own Son his Lord, which shows that he is more than David's Son.

44. The Lord. Jehovah. **Said to my Lord.** The Christ. Found in [Psalm 110:1](#). This psalm is quoted also in [Acts 2:34, 35](#); [1 Cor. 15:25](#); [Heb. 1:13](#); [5:6](#); [7:17, 21](#); [10:13](#).

45. How is he his son? The answer is not given here, but plain. Christ, the Son of David, according to earthly descent, is the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh.

46. No man was able, etc. Henceforth the Pharisees argued no more, but only sought his death.



Chapter XXIII

The Last Appeal to Israel

Summary — *The Scribes and Pharisees in Moses' Seat. The Burdens They Imposed. Their Eagerness for the Praise of Men. Religious Titles. Religious Masters. The Hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. Straining Out the Gnat and Swallowing the Camel. Whited Sepulchres. Building the Tombs of the Murdered Prophets. The Lamentation Over Jerusalem.*

1. Jesus spake to the multitudes and to his disciples. This discourse, delivered in the courts of the temple on the Tuesday before the Lord was crucified, has never been surpassed in indignant rebuke, withering denunciation, and tearful sorrow over the coming fate of sinner who would not be saved. It contains Christ's last words to the Jewish nation. The contest had been growing fiercer, the opposition of his enemies was more bitter, their plots against his life were working, their utter perverseness was fully manifested, the time for tender appeal has passed by, and the Lord turns upon the "whited sepulchres," the "generation of vipers," the hypocritical pretenders, in a philippic that we believe has never been equaled. But even in the midst of it, like a rift of blue sky in the fearful storm-cloud, his love and pity shine forth with wonderful beauty in the pathetic exclamation of [verse 37](#). Only a part of the discourse is found in [Mark 12:38–40](#); some similar sayings occur in [Luke 11:39–52](#), and a reference to its occurs in [Luke 20:45–47](#).

2. The scribes and the Pharisees. Associated because almost all the scribes were of the sect of Pharisees. The scribes, the Jewish scholars, the theologians and lawyers, would naturally be of the religious sect. **Sit in the Moses' seat.** Are the expounders of the law of Moses.

3. Whatsoever they bid you, that observe and do. While in Moses' seat, presenting the law of Moses. He has elsewhere taught that the traditions they added were to be rejected ([Matt. chap. 15](#)). **Do not after their works.** Do not follow their examples. The law of Moses was still in force, for the Christian dispensation was not ushered in until Christ died, and hence was still to be obeyed, but the wicked example of its teachers was to be rejected.

4. They bind heavy burdens. By the traditions they had added to the laws. The law itself was a heavy yoke ([Acts 15:10](#)), but the traditions so strenuously insisted on added to this yoke. See notes on [Matt. 15:1–6](#).

5. To be seen of men. Instead of touching the burdens with their little finger, by an effort to keep the law in its spirit, their whole object was to appear holy before men. **Make broad their phylacteries.** A band was drawn over the forehead, or around the arm, and to this was attached a small calfskin box, in which were placed passages of Scripture. For this they quoted [Exod. 13:16](#). The passages worn so ostentatiously were [Exod. 12:2–10; 13:11–21; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:18–21](#). To make them "broad" was to enlarge the case containing the Scripture, so as to make it more conspicuous. **Enlarge the borders.** The fringes worn as

enjoined in [Num. 15:38](#), to remind them “of doing all the commandments.” To enlarge these would make them more conspicuous.

6. Love the uppermost rooms at feasts. Rather, “seats.” The highest seats at a feast were the places of honor. **Chief seats in the synagogues.** The places where the elders sat with their faces to the congregation. They loved the pre-eminence.

7. And salutations in the markets. Being greeted by titles of honor in the public resorts. **To be called Rabbi.** A term which meant the same as Doctor of Divinity now. There were three degrees, Rab, Rabbi, and Rabboni. The last is the greatest, and means, literally, “My great teacher.”

8. Be ye not called Rabbi. This prohibits all similar religious titles now. It certainly forbids such as the corresponding title of D.D. **For one is your teacher.** Christ is the common teacher of all, and all others are disciples on the same level. The spirit of this command forbids all ecclesiastical titles of honor.

9, 10. Call no man father. Another honorary title. The scribes delighted to be called *Abba*, father. So the priests of the Roman Catholic Church. So do all who welcome such honorary titles as *Rev.*, *Right Rev.*, *Lord Bishop*, etc. These are all forbidden. No apostle was ever so called. **Master.** Also an honorary title. All such are to be avoided in the church.

11. He that is greatest. Instead of seeking chief seats at feasts or in the synagogues, and titles that will exalt him above others, let him seek to become the servant of all. Compare [Matt. 20:26](#).

12. Whosoever shall exalt himself, etc. A universal rule in the kingdom of God. Humility is an essential element of progress in it.

13. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees. Eight woes are given. They have been contrasted with the nine Beatitudes of [chapter 5](#). **Hypocrites.** Literally, an actor. **Shut the kingdom of heaven.** By false teaching that prevents men from accepting Christ. Both their example and false teaching shut the door.

14. Devour widows' houses. Devour their property under holy pretences.

15. Ye compass sea and land. Spare no effort. **To make a proselyte.** Induce Gentiles to become circumcised and to keep the Jewish religion. This is the sense in which “proselyte” was then always used. **Twofold more a child of hell.** Usually the proselytes of such teachers went to even more foolish sectarian extremes than their teachers.

16, 17. Ye blind guides. Blind, because they closed their eyes, yet professing to be leaders. **By the temple.** A common oath among the Jews. **By the gold of the temple.** In their foolish distinctions they regarded this as a binding oath. If the gold had any sacredness it was because the temple, God's house, made it so.

18–20. The altar. That of the temple, the only altar known in Israel. **The gift.** The offering placed on the altar.



21, 22. By the temple. Oaths that did they not call binding, Jesus traces to God himself. Compare [Matt. 5:35](#). The meaning is that all oaths are by God. There are no distinctions.

23. Ye pay tithes of mint, anise and cummin. Insignificant garden herbs. The Jews were bidden to pay tithes of the fruits of the field and of trees ([Lev. 27:30](#)). The Pharisees were scrupulous in paying tithes of garden herbs that were almost valueless, but neglected much more important duties.

24. Ye strain at a gnat. “Strain out a gnat,” as in the Revision. A forcible image of those who are very conscientious over small, and careless of great, matters.

25, 26. Ye make clean the outside, etc. The figure is plain. Its application rebukes scrupulous care of outside forms, while neglecting to have the heart pure.

27. For ye are like unto whited sepulchres. It is stated that on the 15th of the month of Adair, before the Passover, the Jews whitewashed all the spots where graves were situated. This was done both to beautify them and to mark the spots as to prevent any one from passing over them, which would occasion Levitical defilement. For this practice, [Num. 19:16](#) and [Ezek. 39:15](#) were cited. This custom gave the basis for the Savior's figure. In plain view of the Savior and his hearers, as they stood in the temple court, could be seen the whitened tombs along the western slope of Olivet, some of which are still seen to this day. **Beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones.** A powerful figure to show forth the contrast between the sanctimonious professions of the Pharisees and their unholy lives.

28. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous. It was only in appearance and profession.

29, 30. Ye build the tombs of the prophets, etc. They honored the prophets and saints by building monuments to them, instead of following their teaching, or imitating their lives. Even Herod the Great, a monster of wickedness, rebuilt the tomb of David.

31. Wherefore ye be witnesses ... children of them which killed the prophets. They demonstrated by their hostility to Christ, by their plots and false charges, and would soon show by their murder of the Lord, that they had just the same spirit as their fathers who slew Isaiah, persecuted Jeremiah, and shed the blood of Zacharias between the altar and the temple. They were therefore their spiritual children as well as their descendants. It adds to the vividness of this denunciation that from the temple area where they were standing the crest of Olivet rose distinctly at the distance of half a mile, and upon it were clearly visible the white sepulchres of the prophets which they had rebuilt, among them the tomb of Zacharias, who is named just below as slain between “the temple and the altar.”

32. Fill ye up the measure of your fathers. The language of prophecy as well as irony and invective; as if he had said: Fill the measure of the guilt of your fathers to the brim. Crucify the Holy One and thus fill up the cup of iniquity.



33. Ye generations of vipers, how can ye escape? etc. Brood of vipers, full of venom, deadly as serpents, treacherous as the lurking serpent. So John had called them nearly four years before ([Matt. 3:7](#)).

34. Wherefore, I send unto you prophets and wise men. In [Luke 11:49](#), is a passage much like this. The men sent were inspired apostles and evangelists. By giving the Jews still further opportunities after the sin of the cross, the guilt of those continued to reject the crucified Lord was aggravated. **Prophets.** Inspired teachers, like the apostles, Philip, Stephen, etc. **Wise men.** Faithful, devout and learned, but uninspired preachers. **Scribes.** Usually, those who copy and teach the wisdom of others, but I suppose also embracing those who wrote the New Testament Scriptures. **Some of them ye shall kill and crucify.** Literally fulfilled in the next few years.

35. That upon you may come all the righteous blood. Thus would they fill the measure full and become guilty of all the righteous blood shed by the whole army of martyrs. **Unto the blood of Zacharias.** The reference is probably to [2 Chron. 24:20](#). He was slain in the court of the house of the Lord by the people, and died exclaiming, “The Lord look upon this and require it.” He was the son of Jehoiada. The Siniatic manuscript omits Barachias in this place, and the error is supposed to have crept in from the mistake of some early copyist who confused this Zacharias with Zechariah the prophet, who was the son of Barachias.

36. Verily, I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. As the Amorites were spared until “their iniquity was full” ([Gen. 15:16](#)), so the iniquity of Israel was allowed to accumulate from age to age, till in that generation it came to the full, and the collected vengeance of justice broke at once upon it. So it is often in the destruction of a nation. The French Revolution of 1793 is another example.

37. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets. The intense feeling that spoke in this utterance comes out first in the redoubling of the word Jerusalem; next in the picture of the sins of the city which he draws—a city so wicked that it was not content with rejecting the messengers of God, but even slew them. I know of nothing more touching than this apostrophe. **How often would I have gathered thy children together.** Not only had the city been warned again and again by the prophets, but the Lord had visited it at least six or seven times, and had for months taught in its streets. Nor did his solicitude end with the cross. His long suffering, patience and love are shown by his charge in the commission to the apostles: “To preach repentance and remission in his name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem.*” **Ye would not.** “Would not” explains the cause of the rejection of the gospel. It is not because God in Christ is not ready: he *would gather* them. It is not because men cannot come, but because they will not come. Christ wished the salvation of Jerusalem; his will was for them to be saved: he sought to influence their wills to make a choice of salvation, but they *would not*. So God still “is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” ([2 Peter 3:9](#)), but there are many “who will not come to Christ that

they might have life” ([John 5:40](#)). While God wills the salvation of men, he does not destroy free agency by coercing the human will, but says: “Whosoever will, let him come.”

38. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. This was the consequence of refusing to come to Christ. The temple is the house meant. God will abandon it and leave it desolate. He will no longer accept its worship.

39. Ye shall not see me henceforth. This seems to imply that the temple shall be deserted when he leaves it. With his departure the presence of God departs. He was the Lord of the temple. **Till ye shall say.** These were his last words in the temple precincts, but they do not shut out all hope. Even yet when the Jews shall join in the hosannahs of those who, on the Sunday before, had sung his praises, and cry, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” they may be permitted to behold their Messiah. Many have seen in this passage a promise of the final conversion of Israel. [Zech. 12:10](#); [Rom. 11:26](#); [2 Cor. 3:15](#) seem to favor the same view. When Christ abandoned the temple in Jerusalem, it was only fit for the destroyer. If we should drive him out of his spiritual temple, the church, it would be left as dead as the body without the spirit.



Chapter XXIV

The Judgments on the Jewish Nation

Summary — *The Temple to Be Utterly Destroyed. The Questions Asked on the Mount of Olives. Wars and Rumors of Wars Predicted. False Prophets and Christs. The Sign for Flight from Jerusalem. The Great Tribulation. How the Son of Man Shall Come. The Sun Darkened. The Coming of the Son of Man. This Generation. The Time of Christ's Coming Unknown. Injunction to Be Always in Readiness.*

1. And Jesus went out the temple. Immediately after the discourse in which he pronounced the woes upon the scribes and Pharisees, upon the temple and Jerusalem. This remarkable chapter is not one upon which commentators are agreed, and the conclusions that I have reached on the points of difference will not be found identical with those of any other writer. I believe, however, that they will be found harmonious with the Scripture. Compare [Mark and Luke](#). **His disciples ... shew him the buildings of the temple.** He had just foreshadowed its destruction. With this in mind they point out its splendor, especially the amazing stones used in its construction. Compare [Mark and Luke](#). The temple had been rebuilt in great splendor by Herod, and was not fully completed until about thirty years after the Savior's crucifixion.

2. Not one stone upon another, etc. Other great temples are in ruins, but their ruins indicate their former splendor. The Parthenon, the Acropolis, the temples of Karnak, Luxor, and Baalbec are examples; but to find even the foundations of the Jewish temple it is necessary to dig beneath the modern city. It has entirely disappeared from the face of the earth, and a Mahometan mosque stands on the spot where it stood.

3. As he sat on the mount of Olives. Passing out of the city, over the valley of Jehoshaphat, he and his disciples climbed the mount and sat down on its crest overlooking the city and temple bathed in the sunset. **Tell us.** The disciples, still thinking of what the Lord had said, ask three questions: (1) When shall these things be? That is, the overthrow of the temple. (2) What shall be the sign of the coming? And (3) of the end of the world? They supposed these events would be simultaneous—a mistake. To understand what follows we must keep in mind that he has three questions to answer, nor are the answers blended.

4, 5. Take heed that no man deceive you. By pretending to be Christ. As they yet believed that Christ would surely return to reign at Jerusalem, this admonition was needed. **Come in my name.** As the Messiah. We learn from Josephus that enthusiasts did come about the time of the end of Jerusalem, claiming to be sent of God. Bar-cocheba, “the son of the star,” appeared in a.d. 120. From time to time other deceivers have appeared.

6, 7. Ye shall hear of wars. The Jewish war began in a.d. 66, and ended five years after. During this period all the Roman empire was filled with commotion. Nero, the emperor,

was overthrown by Galba; six months after, Galba was overthrown by Otho; a few months after, Otho was overthrown by Vitellius; a little later, he was overthrown by Vespasian. All of these but the last, who ascended the throne shortly before Jerusalem was destroyed, died violent deaths. **Famines.** The natural result of civil wars. Tacitus, the Roman historian, says of this period: "It was full of calamities, horrible with battles, rent with seditions, savage in peace itself."

8, 9. Shall deliver you up to tribulation. To persecution. Soon literally fulfilled in the Jewish persecutions. The awful persecution of Nero also soon followed. **Ye shall be hated.** Tacitus, describing Nero's persecution begun in a.d. 64, says "the Christians were haters of mankind."

10. Then shall many be offended. Shall stumble and fall, rather than suffer for Christ. The half-hearted always do.

11. Many false prophets. False teachers. Compare [Gal. 1:7](#); [1 John 2:12, 18](#); [4:1](#); [2 Peter 2:1](#); [1 Tim. 4:1](#). See also Josephus, Book VI. 5, sec. 3.

12. Because iniquity shall abound, etc. Immorality eats out the heart of religion.

13. He that endures to the end, etc. The Christian Jews who endured to the end were saved by flight to Pella, beyond the Jordan, at the signal pointed out by the Lord. The principle is generally applicable.

14. This gospel of the kingdom, etc. The gospel was preached throughout the Roman empire, "the world" of the New Testament, before a.d. 70. **Then the end shall come.** Of the Jewish state.

15–20. When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation. This is the sign when Christians should flee from Jerusalem. See [Dan. 9:27](#); [11:31](#); [12:11](#). Luke says, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies" ([21:20](#)). This was, therefore, Christ's explanation of the abomination of desolation. The Roman army, heathen, with heathen images and standards, ready to sacrifice to idols on the temple altar, working the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple, is what is meant. **In the holy place.** [Mark](#) says, "Where it ought not;" around "the holy city." **Let them in Judea flee.** For refuge. **Let him on the housetop.** The flat roofs were sleeping places. All must be done without a moment's delay. **Woe to them with child.** Because not fit for flight and the hardships that must be endured. **Not in the winter.** Because the streams were then impassable torrents from the heavy rains and the weather cold and wet, hard on homeless people. **Nor on the sabbath.** Because then the gates of the city were closed, preventing departure. History tells us that the army of Cestius Gallus enclosed Jerusalem in a.d. 67, then deterred by its strength, retired to Cæsarea. This was the signal for which the church waited, and it then fled beyond the Jordan.

21. Great tribulation. The account given by Josephus, the Jewish historian who witnessed and recorded the war, is almost an echo of the predictions of Christ. Women ate their own children from starvation; the Jews within the city fought each other as well as the Roman

army; on August 10, a.d. 70, the city was stormed and there was a universal massacre; 1,100,00 persons perished, and 100,000 survivors were sold into slavery.

22. No flesh would be saved. If such awful work should continue, it would exterminate the human race. **For the elect's sake.** On their account, because there is salt to save the earth, and end shall be put to the awful work of death. The *elect* are the believers in Christ ([Rom. 11:5-7](#)).

23-26. Then. During this period of tribulation, give no heed to false prophets, false Christs, or to those who say Christ is here or there.

27. For as the lightning. There will be no doubt about Christ's coming when he does come, no discussion, no need that any one shall tell it. It will be manifest as the flash of lightning across the sky. There can be no mistake. Such language shows how much those err who claim that his coming was at the destruction of Jerusalem.

28. The carcase is, there will be the eagles. The term "carcase" well represents the utterly corrupted Jewish state; the "eagles" is a fit symbol of the Roman army, every legion of which bore the eagle as its standard.

29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days. The first question, When shall these things be? has now been answered. Here begins the answer to the second, concerning the coming of the Lord. For other passages on the second coming, see [1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8, 9; 1 Cor. 15:23; Jas. 5:7; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:12; 1 John 2:28](#). "Immediately" after the destruction of Jerusalem (the tribulation) the series of events begins that leads to the coming of Christ. **The sun shall be darkened.** I take what follows to be symbolical, as is usual for prophecy, rather than literal. Christ is "the Sun of Righteousness." After the destruction of Jerusalem, the causes began to work that led to the great apostasy of the church and produced "the Dark Ages" of the church. **The moon shall not give her light.** The moon shines by reflected light of the sun and if it is darkened so will be the moon. So, too, the church shines by the light of Christ. When Christ's light was darkened by taking the Bible from the people the church give forth little light during the long night of the Middle Ages. **The stars shall fall.** Stars represent great teachers of the church, apostles and evangelists. See [Rev. 1:20](#). When the apostles were dethroned by the Romish apostasy, "the stars fell from heaven," figuratively. Other stars, great church lights who apostatized, fell from heaven in another sense.

30. Then. After the long period of apostasy. **Shall appear the sign of the Son of man.** Some sign of his coming that every one will recognize when it is manifested. **All the tribes of the earth mourn.** Because of their sins. **They shall see the Son of man coming.** It will be visible to every eye and will be in splendor.

31. With a great sound of a trumpet. Compare [1 Thess. 4:16](#). **Shall gather his elect.** Before the judgment on the world. The believers will be in all countries, mingled with the population of earth, and then shall be separated. **Four winds.** The four quarters of the earth.

32, 33. Learn a parable from the fig tree. The putting forth of the leaves is the sign that summer is near. It puts forth leaves usually in April. So “all these things” show when the Lord is at hand.

34, 35. This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Some hold that “all these things,” in [verse 33 and 34](#), refer only to what was said of the fall of Jerusalem, ending with [verse 28](#). Others have contended that the phrase includes the second coming, but refers directly to the end of Jerusalem, which was a type of the end of the world. I believe, rather, that “all these things” embraces all thus far predicted, and that “this generation” means the Jewish race, instead of only those then living. The Greek word so rendered is used in the sense of race in the Greek classics, and as examples of such use in the New Testament, Alford points to [Matt. 12:45](#), and [Luke 16:8](#), as examples of such use in the New Testament. Christ has described the awful end of the Jewish state; after such a destruction and scattering of the remnant to the ends of the earth, all the examples of history would declare that the Jewish race would become extinct. Christ, however, declares that, contrary to all probability, it shall not pass away until he comes. They still exist, 1850 years after the prediction, distinct, but without a country.

36. Of that day and hour knoweth no one. How foolish then to be figuring out the time of the Lord's coming.

37–41. As were the days of Noah. As the deluge surprised the world, so will the Lord's coming. **Two women shall be grinding at the mill.** The hand-mills still used in the East. The grinding is done by women, usually two, as the work is hard for one. It will be the time of separation of the evil from the good.

42. Watch therefore. Because the coming will be unexpected. [Mark](#) adds, “pray.”

43. If the master of the house. The lesson of the illustration is a constant state of preparation. Elsewhere in the New Testament Christ's coming is compared to that of a thief in the night ([1 Thess. 5:1–10](#); [Rev. 3:3](#); [16:15](#)).

44. Be ye also ready. The duty enjoined is not to watch for Christ, but to watch ourselves to see that we are ready.

45. Who then is a faithful and wise servant? In [Luke 12:42–46](#), is given a similar parable in answer to a question of Peter. There the Lord speaks of “the faithful and wise steward;” here he describes a steward, but speaks of him as a servant. **Ruler.** Preachers, elders, deacons, Sunday-school superintendents, teachers. **Household.** All under their religious charge.

46, 47. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord ... shall find so doing. The blessedness applies equally to those who are faithful unto death and those who are so found at the Lord's coming. This blessedness is in the reward the Lord will give. **He shall make him ruler over all his goods.** The parables of the talents and the pounds show that those who have been faithful to the trusts given them here shall receive additional trusts in the Savior's eternal kingdom.

48. My lord delayeth his coming. The worst enemy of Christ is the professed servant of the Lord who practices are evil, and who supposes he can evade punishment for his crimes.

49. And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants. There is no sin more common among those who are clothed with authority than oppression. There have been no worse oppressors than priests. **And to eat and drink with the drunken.** What first disgusted Luther with the faith in which he had been reared was the profligacy of the priests and monks. It has often been the case that the Vatican was the very hot-bed of scandal.

50. The lord of that servant shall come. He will certainly come, and come when the servant is unprepared for him. The majority of the wicked who die in their sins have expected to be better prepared for the end of life.

51. And shall cut him asunder. An ancient method of punishment which was practiced among the Israelites. See [1 Sam. 15:33](#), and [2 Sam. 12:31](#). The idea here is that very severe punishment shall be inflicted upon him, while *weeping and gnashing of teeth* would indicate a life of intense suffering. Indeed both these expressions must be regarded as metaphors, indicating nothing more clearly than a terrible and certain punishment.



Chapter XXV

The End of the World

Summary —*The Ten Virgins. The Foolish Who Took No Oil. The Bridegroom Comes. The Doors Shut on the Foolish Virgins. Watch Therefore. The Parable of the Talents. The Manner of Using. The Reckoning When the Lord Comes. The Day of Judgment Portrayed. The Gathering of the Nations. The Great Separation. The Blessedness of Those on the Right Hand. The Awful Fate of Those on the Left. The Ground of the Separation. The Everlasting Punishment and Life Eternal.*

1. The kingdom of heaven shall be likened. The third question asked by the disciples, [Matt. 24:3](#), was about the end of the world. This whole chapter is an answer. The future tense is used. In most of the parables of the kingdom the present is used, because they describe its earthly features. This, however, portrays the closing events, the judgment, the closing of the heavenly gates. **Unto ten virgins.** No significance attaches to the number, nor to the fact that they are virgins. The bridesmaids of a maiden at marriage are maidens. **Who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.** The whole imagery of the parable is drawn from Eastern marriage customs. The betrothal, which took place some time before the marriage, was a kind of solemn marriage contract, but preliminary to its final consummation. When the time for the celebration of the marriage came, the bridegroom came to the house of the bride and brought her by night to his own house. The virgin bridesmaids awaited his coming and attended the bride to the marriage feast.

2. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. The quality that made the difference between them was prudent forethought on the part of the wise. Compare [Matt. 7:21–27](#).

3. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them. The Jewish lamp was a shallow vessel filled with oil, on which the wick floated. These virgins had oil in their lamps when they started, but had no oil to replenish them. They started out, apparently, all right, but did not hold out.

4. But the wise took oil in their vessels. In this their wisdom was displayed. They not only “let their light shine,” but at the same time kept the grace renewed that was essential to the continuance of their light.

5. While the bridegroom tarried. This suggests that the heavenly Bridegroom will not return as soon as the church expects him. We have a hint of the same kind in [Matt. 24:48](#). **They all slumbered and slept.** Literally, “nodded and fell asleep.” The thought is that the Bridegroom came at an unexpected moment.

6. And at midnight there was a cry made. Midnight is the hour of slumber and silence when an outcry is always startling and unexpected. The implication is that the cry of the

coming of the Bridegroom, the trump of the archangel, will be sudden and unexpected. Compare [Matt. 24:27](#) and [1 Thess. 5:23](#).

7. All ... arose, and trimmed their lamps. The object of trimming would be to secure a brighter light. It would involve the trimming of the wick and replenishing the oil if needed. When the cry does arise there will be a wonderful lamp-trimming.

8. Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The Revision says, more correctly, "Our lamps are going out," They had kept up a flickering light to this time. Their apparent piety, though it satisfied them before, was not sufficient now. Shams disappear in the presence of death or judgment.

9. Lest there be not enough for us and you. The wise virgins had sufficient for themselves, but none to spare, hence could be of no help. No one has a fund of surplus piety that he can turn over to someone else. **Go ye, ... buy for yourselves.** The advice is the best possible. Every one had to procure for himself the needful grace and piety.

10. And while they went going to buy, the bridegroom came. They were now seeking to obtain the oil in the only legitimate way, and all would have been well if they had attended to it at the proper time, but it was now too late. There is no encouragement to death-bed repentance. **The door was shut.** The door of the marriage feast chamber. The door of the kingdom stands open now, in life, to every mortal, but it will not always be so. The day of opportunity for everything passes.

11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. As Augustine says: "They came looking for mercy when it was time for judgment." [Luke 13:25](#) also teaches that the doors finally will be shut. The shutting of the doors teaches that the day of salvation may pass by.

12. I know you not. This means, I do not recognize you as persons entitled to enter. The claims that they might have had once had been forfeited.

13. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, etc. The whole parable is an illustration of this solemn admonition.

Application. —The Bridegroom is the Son of man; the time of the *marriage* is the coming to judgment; the *tarrying* is the long and unknown period between his ascension and his return; the *virgins* represent the waiting church; the *wise* virgins represent those church members who are always ready and whose lights are shining; the oil in their vessels is the means by which their light is supplied; the *foolish* virgins are church members who have become cold and lifeless; the *midnight cry* is the summons of death, or the trump of judgment; the *cry for oil* is death-bed repentance, or an attempt at preparation in the face of judgment; the *shut door* is a declaration that such repentance is too late to be of avail; the great lesson is to be always in a state of readiness.

14. For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country. Compare [Mark 13:34–36](#); [Luke 19:11–27](#). Christ's departure from the earth to heaven is referred to.

Called his own servants. The church members or disciples. **Delivered unto them his goods.** This applies to the trust of the entire interests of the kingdom of our Savior to his servants on the earth.

15. Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. The talent was not a coin, but a weight, and was especially applied to the weighing of the precious metals. The Hebrew talent is variously estimated to be equivalent to a weight of silver ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,500. **To every man according to his own several ability.** The sums entrusted to the servants were graded by their capacity. The trust of the Lord to each servant is measured according to his mental ability, wealth, position, or influence.

16. Then he that had received five ... traded ... and made them other five. Whoever diligently uses the powers and means of grace the Lord has given is such a servant. The result is gain to himself.

18. He that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. Before the days of banks of deposit, and still in countries where they are not established, it is a common thing to hide treasure in the earth. The servant's only care was to hold on to what he had.

19. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh. There is certainly a hint here that a long period would pass before the Lord's return. **And reckoneth with them.** When our race meets the Lord, every mortal, saint, and sinner, good and bad, will be called on for a reckoning. Every one's opportunities, as well as the character of his life and works, will be considered.

20. He that had received five talents, etc. He had doubled what he had received, and in acknowledgment that all was due to his lord who had given all and whose he was, he brought all to lay at his feet.

21. I will make thee ruler over many things. (1) Observe here that it is God's talents that have made the ten talents. The fruitfulness of our work depends on what God has given us. (2) In God's government, promotion depends on fidelity. This is in a measure true, here and how; fulfillment of duty in a lower and lesser station is rewarded by the providence which bids us to go up higher. (3) Present duties are trials of character; God gives the talents that he may test and see who is worthy of a trust. (4) The trusts given here below, by our use of which we are to show ourselves capable of receiving the crown above, Jesus calls *a few things*. This is in contrast with the trusts we will enjoy in the heavenly kingdom.

22, 23. He also that had received two talents, etc. His fidelity and reward are indicated, acknowledged and rewarded in exactly the same terms as in the case of the first servant. The final reward depends on *faithfulness*, not greatness.

24. I knew thee that thou art a hard man. The charge against the lord is insulting. The term *hard*, and the charge in the next clause, "of reaping where thou hast not sown," affirm that the lord was harsh, unfeeling, grasping, and unscrupulous about his methods of acquis-



ition. It states the position of many of our fellow-men. Many refuse to employ their talents in Christ's service because they think it a hard, exacting service, making unreasonable demands of self-denial, self-control and self-sacrifice.

26. Thou wicked and slothful servant. The wickedness of the servant is demonstrated, not only his unfaithfulness, but by his false and slanderous excuses.

27. Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers. To the bankers. If the lord was so exacting as he supposed, he ought at least to have put his money to use with the money brokers that it might have earned something. **Usury.** Interest. The Jews were forbidden to take it from their brethren, but were allowed to take it from aliens.

28. Take therefore the talent from him. He had shown himself unworthy of the trust. He had enjoyed opportunity to serve the lord, but had utterly neglected it; therefore the opportunity was taken away. The application is easy. **Give it to him which hath ten.** Because he has shown himself worthy of great trusts.

29. To every one that hath shall be given. Every attainment of honor, wealth, knowledge, or spiritual grace helps to render further attainment more easy and more assured; while it is spiritually as well as materially true that "the destruction of the poor is their poverty" ([Prov. 10:15](#)). **Shall be taken away even that which he hath.** For every *hath* there is a richer *hath*; and in every *hath not* a deeper, poorer *hath not*.

30. Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. A state of banishment from the presence of the Lord. Have you a trust from the Lord? Are you useful to him according to your ability?

31. When the Son of man shall come in his glory. Compare [1 Thess. 4:14–18](#); [Rev. 20:11–15](#). The glorious coming at the end of the world is meant. See [Matt. 24:30](#). **The throne of his glory.** See [Rev. 20:11](#), for an account of the great white throne upon which sat the divine Judge from whose face heaven and earth fled away. An earthly judge was wont, in pronouncing judgment, to take his place on the "judgment seat," a kind of judicial throne ([John 19:13](#)).

32. Before him shall be gathered all nations. It will be the day of the final account of all the world. **He shall separate them.** Now for the first time the separation takes place. The two classes have been mingled on the earth; every nation, country, town and city has had its wicked as well as righteous; nay, even into the church the bad have crept, but now they are separated forever.

33. He shall set the sheep at his right hand. The sheep, who represent the righteous, are placed at the right hand, the place of honor. See [Heb. 12:2](#).

34. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand. The King is Christ. This is the only time, save in parabolic language, that he applies the title to himself, though he speaks of his kingdom and declares he came into the world to be a king. At judgment his kingly majesty will be acknowledged by all the universe. **Come, ye blessed of my Father.** Observe

that his invitation on earth to mortals is to *come*: “Come ye to the waters and drink;” “Let him that is athirst come and partake of the waters of life freely.” To all who have heeded his earthly invitation he gives a heavenly invitation. **Inherit the kingdom prepared for you.** The blessed are now to enter on an inheritance. On earth they were heirs and joint-heirs with Christ.

35, 36. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat. The reason why those on the right hand are given the kingdom is now shown. They had ministered unto the Savior. The deeds of loving kindness that the truly benevolent do his needy disciples are named as having been done to Christ. It should be noted (1) that the duties named are such duties as every one can perform. Chrysostom says: “He said not I was sick and ye healed me; or in prison and ye set me free; but *ye visited me and came unto me.*” (2) A real, personal service of Christ is implied, one involving some sacrifice of ease, time and property.

37, 38, 39. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee, etc. The saints in all ages, in lands unknown when Christ was on earth, saints who had never seen him when he was in the flesh, he commends for feeding, visiting and entertaining him whom they had never seen in person. What more natural than for them to exclaim: “When saw we thee? When did we entertain thee?” etc.

40. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. The righteous understood well that they had often, in the name and from the love of Christ, ministered to his brethren, the poor and suffering saints, but they had never understood that their Lord accepted this as a personal service to himself. It should be distinctly noted, (1) that the saved are the *righteous*, or those whose sins have been washed away by Christ; (2) they are those who have lived and acted in the name of Christ, or have been obedient to his will; (3) they have been full of the love of Christ and have faithfully ministered to the distressed, especially to those of the household of faith. The love of Christ implies love of the brethren, and of all mankind.

41. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. Those that have sought the Lord on earth shall be with him forever ([1 Thess. 4:17](#)). Those who have turned away from him shall be turned away from him forever. The punishment is everlasting banishment from his presence ([2 Thess. 1:9](#)). **Ye cursed.** Under the Jewish law, anything irretrievably condemned and devoted to death was called “accursed” ([Deut. 13:17](#)). The same term applied to the wicked is a sentence of eternal death. **Into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.** Fire is probably used, as in many other places in the Scripture, as symbol of the bitter punishment of the wicked. Note, (1) it is everlasting; (2) prepared, not for man, but for the devil and his angels. Those who choose his service will have his portion.

42, 43. For I was an hungered, etc. The reasons of this awful fate are given. The judgment of the wicked is pronounced, not for what they have done, but what they neglected to do.

44. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee? etc. These, too, inquire if this is possible. If they had seen him in his splendor they certainly would have denied him nothing.

45. Then shall he answer them. The answer is exactly the same as that given to the righteous, save that it introduces *not*.

46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. We shall not enter into the discussions that have arisen over this controverted passage. These things are certain: (1) A separation between the righteous and the wicked takes place at judgment. (2) The righteous inherit the kingdom; the wicked “depart into everlasting fire.” (3) The state of the righteous is “life eternal;” the state of the wicked is “everlasting punishment.” (4) The duration of these two states is the same, exactly the same Greek word being used in each case (*aionios*). Then if the state of punishment has an end, so has the life.



Chapter XXVI

The Preparation for the Lord's Death

Summary — *The Declaration to the Disciples That the Time Was at Hand. The Wicked Counsel of the Rulers. The Anointing at Bethany. The Alabaster Box. Judas Sells His Lord. The Feast of the Passover. The Traitor Revealed. The Lord's Supper. The Agony in the Garden. The Seizure of Jesus. The Trial Before Caiaphas.*

1. Had finished all these words. The discourses recorded in the three preceding chapters. The time was Tuesday night, after the Jewish Wednesday began; that is, after sunset. Compare [Mark 14:1–11](#); [Luke 22:1–6](#); [John 12:1–8](#).

2. After two days. After Wednesday and Thursday. The day indicated is Friday. **The passover cometh.** For the origin of this feast, see [Exod. 12:1–14](#). It was really the Jewish emancipation day, the greatest of their feasts, and the paschal lamb was a type of the slain Christ.

3. Then were gathered together. An official meeting of the Sanhedrim. With **the chief priests**, that is, the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas, and the heads of the twenty-four courses. **And the elders of the people.** That is, the heads of the great families, the princes of Judah. **Into the court of the high priest.** The palace of Caiaphas. The body now about to assemble, the Sanhedrim, was the supreme court of Israel. According to Jewish accounts, it was composed of seventy-one members, the high priest being president. The “chief priests,” or heads of the twenty-four courses, distinguished representatives of the “scribes,” and “elders of the people,” the heads of the great families, constituted the membership. It could try and condemn to death, but could not carry out capital punishment without the consent of the Roman authorities at this time. It was mostly composed of bitter, bigoted enemies of Jesus, determined at any cost to secure his death. In the trial the Jewish law was constantly violated. **Caiaphas.** The reigning high priest, the son-in-law of Annas, who had been high priest, but was deposed by the Romans, but was still called a high priest. Both were Sadducees.

4. Take Jesus by subtilty. They were afraid of the people and wished to seize Jesus secretly and deliver him to the Romans to be crucified before the people knew of their designs. See [Luke 21:38](#).

5. Not during the feast. During the passover there were millions of Jews in Jerusalem. Josephus says that in a.d. 65, three million were present. There were often tumults at the passover, and it was feared that the arrest of Jesus would arouse one. On such occasions the Romans suppressed the disturbance without mercy.

6. Now when Jesus was at Bethany. On the Saturday before. Matthew goes back to an event that occurred at Bethany before the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, because he is about to relate the treachery of Judas, and it was brought to a crisis by that event. **In**

the house of Simon the leper. Supposed to have been healed by Christ, and a relative of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Compare the [parallel accounts](#). It is not known certainly who he was.

7. There came a woman. Mary, the sister of Lazarus. See [John 12:3](#). **An alabaster box.** A vase. **Of precious ointment.** Of spikenard, very costly and precious. It was worth 300 pence, or denarii, equivalent, when we consider the change in money values, to \$300 now. **Poured it on his head.** She broke the vase and emptied it. See [Mark](#).

8. They had indignation. [John](#) shows that it was Judas who voiced the indignation. **Why this waste?** Judas thought that 300 pence had been squandered. Sordid men still often think what is spent for the Savior is wasted.

9. This ointment might have been sold for much. [Mark and John](#) say, "three hundred denarii." Pliny says a pound, the amount in the vase, was worth 400 denarii. **Given to the poor.** A pretence. Judas wanted to get the money into his bag.

10. Why trouble ye the woman? By your murmurs, as if she had done a sinful thing. **She hath wrought a good work.** What is done for Christ from love of Christ is always a good work.

11. Ye have the poor always. Always opportunities to do good to them, but what was done for Christ in the flesh must be done at once.

12. To prepare me for burial. It was customary to anoint the dead and lay the body in spices. See [John 19:40](#); [Luke 23:56](#); [2 Chron. 16:14](#). Mary was probably impelled only by her love of the Lord and desire to do him honor; but Jesus, about to die and be buried, declares the anointing a fit preparation.

13. Wheresoever this gospel. The gospel of a crucified Savior. **In all the world.** A prophecy that its preaching will be world-wide. **A memorial of her.** Mary's loving deed has never been forgotten, but is to-day told in every quarter of the earth.

14. Then ... Judas Iscariot went. A comparison of all the accounts will show that when his avarice was thus disappointed, he went, at the first opportunity, to the priests. His Master was about to be crucified, he had not been permitted to enrich himself, there was now no probability that he would become the treasurer of Christ as an earthly king.

15. What are ye willing to give me? He had deliberately decided. He probably knew of their wish to seize Jesus secretly, and that they would pay for a guide that would lead them where he rested at night. **Thirty pieces of silver.** The price was agreed upon and paid. The pieces were silver shekels, temple money. The whole would contain about the amount of silver in twenty dollars, perhaps equal in value to \$120 now. It was a fulfillment of [Zech. 11:12](#). Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver ([Gen. 37:28](#)).

16. From that time. The time of the bargain with the priests. No one can tell certainly what day the bargain was completed.

17. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. Strictly speaking, the 15th of Nisan (part of our March and April), after the paschal lamb was killed, but here the 14th day (Thursday). See [Exod. 12:16](#). This suggests one of the most difficult questions of Scripture chronology, whether the Lord ate the passover one day before the regular Jewish passover, or at the usual time. Pressense, Milman, Ellicott, Townsend, Alford, Neander, Farrar, and many other great authorities, hold that he ate it the day preceding, and died on the day and about the time the Jewish passover lambs were slain. The statements of [John 19:14](#), that the supper was eaten, the Lord betrayed and condemned before the passover, seem positive. **Where wilt thou that we prepare the passover?** According to the directions given in [Deut. 16:1-15](#), the passover must be eaten in the place where the Lord's name was recorded, or where the tabernacle or temple was located.

18, 19. Go into the city to such a man. The disciples are directed ([Mark 14:13](#)) to determine the place in the city by a certain sign. They do so and make ready in the guest chamber thus secured.

20. Now when the even was come. The lamb was slain "between two evenings," that is, between three and five o'clock (see [Exod. 12:6](#), margin). The supper followed on the same night. It was probably dark before the Savior and the twelve came to the guest chamber. The band that "sat down" to this supper and this occasion have furnished the subject of one of the greatest paintings ever created.

21. One of you shall betray me. The meal, opened with "blessing," seems to have proceeded with solemn silence after it began, until the silence was broken by these startling words.

22. Lord, is it I? Not one of them ventures to question the truth of the Lord's prophecy; and each asks the personal question, "Is it I?" No one accuses, even by implication, his neighbor.

23. He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish shall betray me. In Oriental meals, instead of plates being used, each one helps himself with his fingers from the dish as he needs. From [John 13:23-26](#), we learn that these words were spoken to the disciple that leaned on the Savior's bosom and were unheard by Judas and the rest.

24. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him. [Luke](#), "As it was determined," in prophecy. **Good for that man.** A declaration of the awful judgment that would befall the traitor.

25. Thou hast said. In other words, "Thou art the traitor." [John](#) says that Jesus then said to Judas, "What thou doest, do quickly" and that he "immediately went out, and it was night." Judas, therefore, left before the Lord's Supper was instituted.

26. As they were eating. Before they had arisen from the paschal feast. **Jesus took bread.** That is, one of the unleavened cakes that had been placed before him as the celebrant or proclaimer of the feast. **And blessed.** As was the custom. **Luke and Paul** say, “gave thanks,” which is the same thing. **This is my body.** Not literally, as the Catholics and Luther contend, but “represents my body.” We interpret it as we do his other sayings: “The seed is the word,” “The field is the world,” “The reapers are the angels,” “The harvest is the end of the world,” “I am the door,” “I am the vine.” So, too, at this very feast, the Jew was wont to say of the paschal lamb, “This is the body of the lamb which our fathers ate in Egypt.” Not the *same*, but this is meant to represent and commemorate that. He could not have meant that the bread was his real body, because his body was present at the table breaking the loaf, and he was speaking and acting in person among them. The doctrine of the “Real Presence” is every way unreasonable.

27. He then took the cup, and gave thanks. The cup was provided for the celebration of the paschal feast, and was at hand as well as the bread. **Drink ye all of it.** Observe that he simply said of the bread, “Take, eat;” but of the wine, “*Drink ye all,*” as if he intended to uproot the Catholic innovation of denying the cup to the laity.

28. This is my blood. A sign or emblem of my blood. **New testament.** Or, covenant. Covenant is the preferable sense here, as in most passages where the word occurs in the New Testament; the new covenant is contrasted with “the covenant which God made with our fathers” (**Acts 3:25**). **Shed for many.** Shed, in one sense, for all, for the benefits of the blood are offered to all; but “many” accept it and are saved.

29. I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine. He is done with earthly rites, and at this sad moment points them to a future reunion at the marriage supper of the Lamb. *Do this in remembrance of me* (**Luke 22:19**) points to a permanent institution, to be observed until the Lord comes the second time. The command is therefore binding on all who believe in Christ; and disobedience to it is sin, for the unbelief that keeps men away is one of the worst of sins. The subsequent practice of the apostles (**Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7**), and still more the fact that directions for the Lord's Supper were made a matter of special revelation to Paul (**1 Cor. 11:23**), seem to make it clear that Christ intended the ordinance for a perpetual one, and that his apostles so understood it.

30. When they had sung a hymn. It was customary to conclude the passover by singing the **Psalms from 115th to 118th.** **To the mount of Olives.** To the garden of Gethsemane, which was on the slope of the mount. This journey over the Kedron to Gethsemane was made in the darkness of the night. The Lord's Supper, a memorial of his death, has a still more tender interest, from the fact that it was established only two or three hours before he was betrayed and seized.

31. Shall be offended. Compare **Mark 14:26–31; Luke 22:31–34; John 13:37, 38.** **It is written.** **Zech. 13:7.** **The Shepherd.** Christ. **The sheep.** His disciples.

32. I will go before you into Galilee. The first announcement of the great Galilean meeting of the risen Lord with his disciples. See [Matt. 28:16](#); [John 21](#); [1 Cor. 15:6](#).

33. Peter answered. With his usual rashness.

34, 35. Thou shalt deny me thrice. The first cock crow was about twelve at night. The second about three o'clock. Before this the three-fold denial would occur. Peter and the disciples were sincere, but knew not their own weakness.

36. To a place called Gethsemane. The word means "oil-press," and would indicate that a press for making oil out of the olives, which grew in abundance on the mountain, stood there. It was on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. **Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.** He speaks to the eight who were to remain. These eight would form, as it were, a watch against premature surprise. **While I go and pray.** The great crisis was at hand, and it was casting its dark shadow before on the spirit of our Lord. In this hour of the power of darkness he felt that he must throw himself upon his Father's bosom.

37. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. The eight were left at the entrance of the garden, while the three, who had always been a kind of inner circle, who had been witnesses of his transfiguration, and of one of his greatest miracles ([Mark 5:37](#)), were taken within. **Began to be sorrowful and very heavy.** The shadow of the cross had fallen upon him. It was not fear of the agony, or fear of death, for he bore all, when the moment came, so sublimely that a heathen officer exclaimed, "Surely he must be the son of a god." I doubt whether it is possible for a mortal to comprehend the mystery of his suffering, but I think the key is found in the declaration, "He was made sin for us."

38. My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. The weight of woe was literally crushing out the Savior's life. **Tarry ye here, and watch.** He had wished his chosen disciples to be near him in his woe; and yet, as it advanced, he felt that he must retire even from them, and be alone with himself and his Father.

39. And he went a little farther. "About a stone's cast" ([Luke](#)). **If it be possible.** If it were possible to save men, and carry out the divine work of redeeming them. **Let this cup pass from me.** *This cup* is the betrayal, the trial, the mocking, the scourging, the cross, and all besides which our thoughts cannot reach. **But as thou wilt.** This is an example of perfect faith—the faith by which alone answers to prayer can be obtained. He that insists on his will, when it is contrary to the will of God, fails in faith.

40. Findeth them asleep. Peter, James and John, soldiers placed on duty in an hour of dreadful peril and bidden to *watch*. [Luke](#) says they were sleeping from sorrow. Great sorrow stupefies. Dr. Rush says that criminals usually sleep soundly the night before execution.

41. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Our Lord does not direct them to pray to God that no temptation might befall them, but that they might not be *overcome* by the temptations in which they must be involved. The need of such prayer was shown by Peter's denial.

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42. He went away again the second time and prayed. “More earnestly,” says Luke, who adds the account of the bloody sweat ([Luke 22:44](#)). His agony returned on him. The continuance of the trial he accepts as God's answer to the petition, “Let this cup pass from me.” Now he asks only, “Thy will be done.”

43. He came and found them asleep again. The motive of this return we may reverently believe to have been, as before, the craving for human sympathy in that hour of awful agony. Our Savior, we must not forget, was human as well as divine.

44. He prayed the third time, saying the same words. The fact is suggestive as indicating that there is a repetition in prayer which indicates not formalism, but intensity of feeling.

45. Sleep on now, and take your rest. I look upon these words as reproachful. The hour when he needed their watchfulness and sympathy was past. They had failed to guard in the hour when he wished to be alone with God. Now the moment is at hand; the soldiers are approaching.

46. Rise, let us be going. It was no time for repose. Let them rouse, and go with him at once to confront the traitor and the band of enemies.

Was Christ's Prayer Answered?—The Epistle to the Hebrews ([5:7](#)) says it was. An angel came and strengthened him ([Luke 22:43](#)). There are two ways of answering a prayer for the removal of a burden. In one, the burden is taken away, and we remain the same; in the other, we are made so strong that the burden is no longer a burden to us; as what would crush a child, is but sport to a man.

47. Judas, one of the twelve, came. Judas knew the place where the Lord would go to pass the night ([John 18:2](#)). Compare [Mark 14:43–50](#); [Luke 22:47–53](#); [John 18:3–12](#). **A great multitude.** Roman soldiers ([John 18:3, 12](#)), the temple guard, “the captains of the temple,” and possibly some priests and scribes. **With swords,** in the hands of the soldiers. **Staves.** Clubs. The rabble with the soldiers carried these. **From the chief priests and elders.** The Sanhedrim.

48, 49. Gave them a sign. A kiss; a common method of salutation among intimate friends. A sign was needful to point Jesus out to the soldiers. Such a traitorous kiss was the depth of depravity—enmity under the guise of friendship.

50. They laid hands on Jesus. And bound him ([John 18:12](#)).

51. One ... drew his sword. Peter ([John 18:26](#)). **Smote the servant of the high priest.** As we learn from [John](#), his name was Malchus. The Lord healed his wound. Peter asked, “Shall we fight?” and without waiting for an answer, struck the blow.

52. They that take the sword shall perish with the sword. A general law. The violent usually die violent deaths.

53, 54. Or thinkest thou not? etc. The Lord needed no human defenders, had it been the Divine purpose that he should not die. **More than twelve legions of angels?** A Roman legion contained from six thousand men upwards. The idea here is a mighty host. He and

his eleven faithful apostles are twelve. There is more than a legion for each one of them. He could have evaded the enemies had he chosen; the angels would have come to his rescue, if he had willed it, but he gave himself unto death.

55, 56. Are ye come out as against a robber? Not a thief, but a robber, a brigand. Among all the indignities heaped upon Jesus by his enemies, the only one that he complains of is that he should be bound like a robber. **Then all his disciples ... fled.** The eleven apostles who a little while before thought they never could forsake the Lord. As soon as the Lord was seized they fled into the darkness.

57. Led him away to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. He was first examined by Annas, the former high priest, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, probably while the Sanhedrim was assembling in the darkness of the night ([John 18:13](#)). For the trial of Christ, compare [Mark 14:53–64](#); [Luke 22:54–71](#); [John 18:13–18](#). **Scribes and elders were gathered.** Mark says the “chief priests” also. It was a gathering of the Sanhedrim. Those who were favorable to Jesus, like Joseph and Nicodemus, were probably not called.

58. Peter followed ... unto the court of the high priest. The enclosed area, open to the sky, around which the palace was constructed, was called the court. The building extended all around this.

59, 60. The whole council. The Sanhedrim. **Sought false witness.** No one could be condemned legally without at least two witnesses who agreed ([Deut. 17:6; 19:15](#)). “One witness,” it was said, “was no witness.” As there was no true testimony to a charge that could be punished with death, they sought false witness. **They found it not.** That is, witnesses who would testify to a capital offence and agree in their testimony. **Afterward came two.** These two gave a perverted version of what Christ had said concerning his death and the resurrection of his own body under the figure of a temple. See [John 2:19](#). But even their testimony disagreed ([Mark 14:59](#)).

62, 63. Answerest thou nothing? Under the false charges Jesus maintained an impressive silence. “As a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” **I adjure thee, etc.** This was the formula for an oath. The High Priest, contrary to the principle of law which forbids that a prisoner shall be compelled to criminate himself, called on Jesus to be a witness against himself. To answer yes, or no, to such a question, was to answer under oath.

64. Thou hast said. That is, thou hast said the truth in thy question. The Lord only breaks the silence to affirm his divinity under oath. It insured his death at their hands, for he was immediately condemned for the declaration. “At the very crisis of his history, when denial would have saved his life, he asserts his claim to the Divine Sonship and to a Godlike power.

65. Then the high priest rent his garments. A sign of mourning or indignation ([Acts 14:14](#)). It was a form that was always used when about to pronounce a judgment. **He hath**

spoken blasphemy. He did, if not Divine; he did not, if Divine. Either he spoke the truth, or the wicked Caiaphas spoke the truth and Jesus was false. If he spoke falsehood, the purest lips that ever formed human words spoke falsehood on the eve of death, when he knew that the falsehood would send him to death. Such an affirmation, from such a prisoner, at such an hour, can only be reconciled with a consciousness of divinity.

66. He is worthy of death. This is the formal decision of the Sanhedrim to condemn the Lord to death for blasphemy. This was the second trial, the first examination being informal before Annas, and is mentioned only by [John](#). There was a third, named only by Luke, at the dawn of day, because a decision by the Sanhedrim in the night was illegal. See [Luke 22:66](#). This meeting only confirmed the decision reached in the night before three o'clock. It is also referred to in [Matt. 27:1](#).

67. Then did they spit in his face. The maltreatment recorded occurred between this meeting and the one called to meet at daybreak. Spitting was considered among the Jews an expression of the greatest contempt ([Deut. 25:9](#); [Num. 12:14](#)). Even to spit before another was regarded as an offense, and treated as such by heathen also. **Buffeted him.** Struck him with their fists.

68. Prophecy unto us, ... Who is he that smote thee? We learn from [Mark](#) that his face was covered, as a mark that he was a condemned man. The age was a cruel one, and Jewish bigots could not be too rough to the condemned prisoner.

69. Now Peter sat without in the palace. While the preliminary examinations were being held before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrim, Peter and John entered the court of the palace. This court was an open square, enclosed by the palace which was built in a quadrangle all around it. From it doors and windows opened into the rooms built around it, so that Peter was "without the palace," yet *in* the interior court, where he could see and hear through the open door the proceedings in the hall. Oriental houses are still built with this interior court. **And a damsel came to him, saying.** [John](#) speaks of her as the damsel that kept the door of the porch, or passage into the court. We are not told why she suspected him. He was at this time in the interior court, and is said by [Luke](#) to have been standing "among them" by the fire that had been kindled in the courtyard on account of the chilliness of the night.

70. But he denied before them all. Denied that he "was with Jesus of Galilee." But a few hours before Peter had asserted that though all others deserted the Lord he would not, and that he would die with him, and when Judas led the band into Gethsemane, Peter, refusing to consider the odds, flung himself upon them, valiant as a lion, struck and wounded Malchus, and would probably have slain him had he not swerved. He was a brave as a hero

then—now is timid as a deer. The explanation is that his faith had failed when he saw his Master apparently helpless in the hands of his enemies. See [Heb. 11:32–35](#).

71. When he was gone out into the porch. Alarmed by the accusation, he withdrew into the porch, an arched passage that led from without into the inner court. **This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.** It is another maid that follows him and makes the charge. In both cases the charges were based on conjecture.

72. He denied with an oath, I do not know the man. Peter's second denial. He even denied knowing him, and that, too, with an oath. He had entered upon the downward road, and each step called for a deeper one. So it is always with sin.

73. Thou art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. [Matthew](#) says, "After awhile;" [Luke](#) says, "About an hour after." [John](#) says that the third charge was made by a kinsman of Malchus, who asserted that he saw Peter in the garden [Mark](#) says that they accused him of having a Galilean brogue. As most of the disciples of Jesus were Galileans, this draws attention to Peter. Different districts had their dialects, as in England, or the United States.

74. He began to curse and to swear. Peter's *third* denial. He not only, with an oath, repeats what he had said in the second, but he affirms it with imprecations of divine wrath on himself if he spake not the truth. The gradations of guilt in the denials of Peter: (1) Ambiguous evasion; (2) distinct denial with a false oath; (3) awful abjuration with solemn imprecations on himself. **Immediately the cock crew.** This was at the opening of the fourth or morning watch, at about three o'clock. The cock often crows about midnight, or not long after; and again always about the third hour after midnight, or three o'clock. This shows that the second trial of Jesus took place before the dawn.

75. Peter remembered the word of Jesus. It was at this point that the Lord turned and looked at Peter ([Luke 22:61](#)). The hall where Jesus was being tried was probably open toward the court, and Jesus may easily have heard all the denials of Peter. Now he turns and looks at Peter, and brings to his mind what he had few hours before foretold. **He went out and wept bitterly.** The look of Christ broke his heart. As the cock crew, his own confident assertions and the word of the Lord, "Before the cock crow twice (before the second cock crowing) thou shalt thrice deny me," rushed upon him. He rushed out into the darkness of the night to weep. Judas sinned, betrayed and sold the Lord from covetousness. Afterward he was sorry, but it was the sorrow of this world that worketh death. It was remorse, not repentance, and he went and hanged himself. Peter's repentance was attested (1) by the bitterness of his tears; (2) by his humble submission to his Lord's subsequent rebuke ([John 21:15–17](#)); (3) by his subsequent courage in confessing Christ in the face of threatening danger ([Acts 4:8–12, 19](#)).

The Order of Events, after the prayer at Gethsemane, for this night were as follows: After the arrest, and its incidents, (1) Jesus was taken first to the house of Annas, ex-high priest ([John 18:13](#)). (2) Next, to the palace of Caiaphas, Peter and John following ([John 18:15](#)). (3)



Here was a preliminary examination before Caiaphas ([John 18:19–24](#)). (4) The trial before the council illegal, because held at night—before three o'clock, the cock-crowing ([Matt. 26:59–65](#); [Mark 14:55–64](#)). (5) Peter's three denials during the trial ([Matt. 26:69–75](#); [Mark 14:66–72](#)). (6) After the Sanhedrim had pronounced him guilty it suspends its session till break of day. (7) During this interval Jesus is exposed to the insults of his enemies ([Matt. 26:67, 68](#); [Luke 22:63–65](#)). (8) At the dawn of day the Sanhedrim re-assembles ([Matt. 27:1](#); [Mark 15:1](#); [Luke 22:66](#)). (9) After hearing Christ's confession again, he is formally condemned to death for blasphemy ([Luke 22:66–71](#)). (10) He is bound and sent to Pilate ([Mark 15:1](#)). *On the Illegal Conviction of Christ*, Prof. Greenleaf, a distinguished jurist, says: "Throughout the whole course of the trial, the rules of the Jewish law of procedure were grossly violated, and the accused was deprived of rights belonging even to the meanest citizen. He was arrested in the night, bound as a malefactor, beaten before his arraignment, and struck in open court during the trial. He was tried on a feast-day, and before sunrise. He was compelled to criminate himself, and this under an oath of solemn judicial adjuration; and he was sentenced on the same day of conviction. In all these particulars the law was wholly disregarded."



Chapter XXVII

Jesus Crucified

Summary — *Christ Delivered to Pilate. Judas Hangs Himself. Jesus Before Pilate. Barabbas and Christ. Pilate's Wife's Intercession. Pilate Acquits Jesus, but Yields to the Clamor. Jesus Scourged, Mocked, Taken to Golgotha, Crucified. Mocked on the Cross. Reviled by the Thieves. It Is Finished. The Veil of the Temple Rent. The Centurion's Confession. Pilate Yields the Body of Jesus to Joseph. Buried in the New Tomb. The Tomb Sealed and Guarded.*

1. When the morning was come. Jesus had already been condemned, but another meeting of the Sanhedrim after daylight was necessary to give its legal effect, as condemnations to death could not be made in the night. That was the object of this meeting. For a fuller account of it, see [Luke 22:66–71](#). For account of Christ before Pilate and the crucifixion, compare [Mark 15:1–47](#); [Luke 23:1–56](#); [John 18:1–38](#).

2. Delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. The first mention of the Roman procurator by that name. He was both military and civil commander, usually dwelt at Cæsarea, but came up to Jerusalem at the passover feasts to preserve order. The Sanhedrim could not put Jesus to death, as the Roman rulers demanded that all cases of capital punishment be referred to them.

3. Then Judas ... saw that he was condemned. The annals of men record no sadder history than that of Judas, impelled by avarice and resentment to betray his Master for money, and only to awake to the nature of his awful crime when it was too late. The language here suggests that Judas had hoped that the betrayed Jesus would deliver himself from his enemies. **Repented himself.** Not, in the Greek, the word used for “repent” in [Acts 2:38](#), and elsewhere, but one that means, rather, *remorse*. The first means “to change the mind or purpose;” the other “to carry a burden of sorrow over the past.” One promises a change in the future; the other is born of despair; Peter repented; Judas regretted.

4. I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood. The Jewish law demanded that if new testimony was offered after condemnation the case should again be heard. Perhaps Judas thought his testimony to the innocence of Christ might, under the circumstances, be heard. **What is that to us?** No words could more emphatically declare the utter disregard of the Jewish rulers to justice. They concerned themselves not in the slightest concerning the innocence or guilt of Christ; they cared only to procure his death.

5. Cast down the pieces of silver in the temple. Where he had this interview with the Sanhedrim. **Went and hanged himself.** So have done, since, thousands of criminals when the blackness of their crime had revealed itself to them. How often a man after the committal of a murder shoots himself!

6. It is not lawful to put it in the treasury. These men were not too scrupulous to send the innocent to death, to shed the blood of the innocent, but were too scrupulous to put blood money into the treasury. They could pay blood money, but could not take it back.

7. Bought the potter's field. A field that had been used for the purpose of making pottery until it was worthless for other purposes and could be bought cheap. Potters' fields are still found in the Kedron Valley south of the city. **To bury strangers in.** A burial place for the poor. The Jews usually provided their own tombs. Peter, in [Acts 1:18](#), says that Judas fell down headlong and his bowels gushed out. The common explanation is that he hung himself on a tree overlooking the valley of Hinnom, that the rope gave way, and that he fell headlong upon the rocks below, a distance of forty to sixty feet.

9. Then was fulfilled. The prophecy is found in [Zech. 11:12](#). Albert Barnes shows that a change of a single letter in the original would transform Zechariah into Jeremiah, and it is supposed that some early copyist made the mistake. Another explanation is that Jeremiah, in the Jewish arrangement of the prophets, stood first, and that his name was given to the whole book of prophecy.

11. Now Jesus stood before the governor. In the judgment hall ([John 18:28](#)), which the Sanhedrim did not enter for fear of defilement. It was probably about seven A.M. that they presented themselves to Pilate, hoping that he would order their condemned prisoner to death without inquiry, but on his demand for charges they accuse Jesus of seeking to make himself King of the Jews. This charge causes Pilate to ask: **Art thou the King of the Jews?** They had condemned Jesus for blasphemy, but now make a political charge, and Pilate's question is whether Jesus is claiming a temporal kingdom. **Thou sayest.** Jesus was King, not of the Jews only, but men, and he admits the charge. He was King, however, in a spiritual sense, as he explained to Pilate ([John 18:36](#)).

12. He answered nothing. He made no defence, just as he had done when before Caiaphas.

13, 14. He gave no answer. To their charges of seeking to establish a worldly kingdom and of stirring up sedition he returned not a word. His impressive silence moved Pilate deeply.

15. At that feast. The passover. How the custom of releasing a prisoner at the passover arose is unknown, but such customs are common under arbitrary rule.

16. A notable prisoner. A leader in an insurrection in which he had committed murder ([Mark and Luke](#)). **Barabbas.** The word means "son of a father." Some have made him a type of the guilty human race which is released from punishment by the substitution of the innocent Christ.

17. When therefore they were gathered. After the first examination, Pilate, finding that Jesus was from Galilee, sent him to Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, then in Jerusalem, to be tried by him as belonging to his jurisdiction. Herod, however, after trying to induce him to

work a miracle and mocking him, sent him back ([Luke 23:6–11](#)). Now they had gathered after his return. **Barabbas, or Christ?** Pilate, desirous of releasing an innocent man, afraid to oppose the Sanhedrim, adopted this expedient in the hope that the increasing multitude of people would demand Christ rather than a blood-stained robber.

19. While he was sitting on the judgment seat. Probably while the people were deciding for which one to ask. The judgment seat was a kind of lofty official throne, placed on the pavement ([John 19:13](#)). **His wife sent to him.** On this sad day the voice of a Gentile woman was the only one that interceded for Christ. That she should speak of Jesus as a “righteous man,” shows that she knew much of him and that he had already made a wide and deep impression. **A dream.** It may have been entirely natural. She was probably already deeply interested in Jesus and knew that he was to be seized in the night. Her waking thoughts would be reflected in her sleep.

20. Persuaded the multitudes. To call for the release of Barabbas, instead of Christ. It is likely that few of the Galileans, so favorable to him, yet knew of his arrest. “The multitudes” were such as the authorities would summon at this early hour.

21. They said, Barabbas. Pilate's artifice had failed. The Jewish nation had not only rejected its Messiah, but chosen a robber instead.

22. Let him be crucified. This is the decision of the Jewish people. He shall suffer the fate which was due the crime of Barabbas who had been released in his stead.

23. What evil hath he done? Pilate's struggle between his desire to be just and to please a body demanding a crime at his hands is pitiable. He repeats the question three times and offers to appease their rage by chastising the innocent ([Luke 23:22](#)). He had, however, lost his power when he began to parley with a mob. They, utterly unreasonable, only demand the move vehemently that Jesus be crucified.

24. When Pilate saw that ... a tumult was arising. It was a dangerous time for a tumult, with more than a million Jews in Jerusalem, and probably not a thousand Roman soldiers in the castle. If one occurred, it would be reported to Rome, and he could hardly make a plausible defence to the emperor. He therefore yielded, and gave his sanction to confessed wrong, rather than endanger himself. **Washed his hands.** A symbolic act, meaning that the responsibility of the sin was upon the Jewish authorities and people instead of himself.

25. His blood be on us. That is, let us have the responsibility and suffer the punishment. A fearful legacy, and awfully inherited. The history of the Jews from that day on has been the darkest recorded in human annals.

26. Jesus he scourged. Scourging usually preceded crucifixion. It was an awful punishment, inflicted by brutal soldiers, and continued until the victim was fainting under the torture.

27. Then the soldiers ... took Jesus into the palace. After the scourging which was inflicted in the court ([Mark 15:16](#)). Josephus says that Pilate stayed, while in Jerusalem, in

Herod's palace, on the northern brow of Zion, near the Jaffa gate. **The whole band.** The cohort (from 400 to 600 men) on duty at the palace. They gathered to mock the doomed prisoner.

28. They stripped him. His clothing, stripped off at the scourging, had been replaced, but was now removed to wrap him in a mock royal mantle. Scarlet or purple were the royal colors.

29. A crown of thorns. Both in mockery and for torture. **And a reed in his right hand.** For a sceptre. Having thus arrayed him, in royal robe, crown of thorns, and mock sceptre, they kneel before him and deride him.

30. They spat on him. In order to show still greater contempt. Brutal as these heathen soldiers were, they were no more so than the Jewish Sanhedrim had been.

31. When they had mocked him. Pilate presented the bleeding prisoner once more to the people, evidently to secure their pity, and made one more effort to release him, but in vain ([John 19:5](#)). Then Jesus was led away to the cross.

32. As they came out. Of the city. Jesus was crucified "without the gate" ([Heb. 13:12](#)). A company of soldiers, led by a centurion, had charge. **A man of Cyrene.** Simon by name, the father of two well-known Christians ([Mark 15:21](#)). Cyrene was in North Africa, and was the home of many Jews. **That he might bear the cross.** At first Jesus bore his own cross, but exhausted by scourging, sank under the weight ([John 19:17](#)). [Luke 23:26](#) seems to show that Simon only bore the "after" part of the cross, the lighter end, which had been dragging on the ground.

33. When they were come unto a place called Golgotha. A Hebrew word, meaning a skull. From its Latin equivalent, *calvaria*, comes our English word Calvary, which occurs in the English New Testament only in [Luke 23:33](#), where it should be translated "a skull" The name was due, either to a rounded rock like a skull, or to the fact that it was a place of execution and that skulls were lying there. The locality is not certainly known.

34. They gave him wine to drink mingled with gall. A stupefying drink, intended to lessen suffering. **He would not drink.** The "tasting" implied a recognition of the kindly purpose of the act, but a recognition only. In the refusal to do more than taste, we trace the resolute purpose to drink the cup which his Father had given him to the last drop.

35. They crucified him. This was the most dreadful, terrible and shameful death known to antiquity. The Jews never crucified Jews, nor the Romans, Romans. That the Jews should demand of the Romans to inflict it on Jesus shows the intensity of their hate. **And parted his garments.** From [John 19:23](#) we learn that there were four soldiers at the cross, and the garments were the perquisite of the soldiers. The outer garments were divided into four parts, one to each, but the *coat*, rather the "tunic," an inner garment, was seamless, woven in one piece, probably of wool. As it would have been spoiled by dividing it, the soldiers decided to cast lots for it, thus fulfilling another prophecy ([Psalm 22:18](#)).



36. And sitting down they watched him there. It was their duty to remain by the cross until the execution was ended by death.

37. This is Jesus the King of the Jews. It was the Roman custom to place on the cross over the criminal's head, a *titulus*, or placard, stating the crime for which he suffered. Luke (23:38) says that the title was written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, the chief languages then spoken, and all spectators would be able to read it.

38. Then were there two robbers crucified with him. In all probability, partners in the crime of Barabbas. The mountain robbers, or banditti, were always ready to take part in such desperate risings against the Roman power.

39. They that passed by reviled him. The people going in and out of the city, on the thoroughfare near the place of crucifixion. **Wagging their heads.** Derisively and insultingly. Compare 2 Kings 19:21; Job 16:4; Psalm 109:25.

40. Thou that destroyest the temple. It is very remarkable that now, while this was receiving its real fulfillment, it should be made more public and more impressive by the insulting proclamation of his enemies. Hence the importance attached to it after the resurrection (John 2:22).

41, 42. He saved others. This may be ironical, but if Christ had saved himself he could not have saved others. **If he be the King of Israel.** The language is that of taunt, and refers to the inscription upon the cross.

43. He said, I am the Son of God. It was because he said this that the Sanhedrim condemned him to death. In that he hung, seemingly helpless, on the cross, the chief priests, the very persons who voted his death, considered it demonstrated that he was not the Son of God.

44. The robbers also cast upon him the same reproach. Luke only (23:39–43) tells of the repentance of one. Doubtless, both at first reviled him, but one was converted in three hours that they hung side by side.

45. From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land. Darkness from twelve until three o'clock. "Over all the land" means, not the whole earth, but Judea. Early Christian writers speak of this, and appeal to heathen testimony in support of the fact. The period of outward darkness, no doubt, coincided with that of Christ's mental agony and sense of desertion. The darkness was not total, but probably a deep gloom, such as every one remembers to have experienced in his life-time.

46. About the ninth hour. Three o'clock, after the Lord had been six hours on the cross. The cry that follows is from the 22d Psalm. **Why hast thou forsaken me?** These words can only express the idea that he was treading the wine-press alone. As he hung on the cross, "made sin for us," he was left to struggle without a sense of his Father's presence. Still, the cry, **My God, my God!** shows that he still clung to the Father as his own.



47. Some ... said, He calleth of Elias. The resemblance between the word “Eli” and the name Elijah is very close in the original. There is an allusion to the belief that Elijah would come before the Messiah.

48. One ran and filled a sponge. This was occasioned by our Lord's cry, “I thirst” ([John 19:28](#)), the fifth word from the cross. **Full of vinegar.** This was the sour wine used by the soldiers; not mixed with myrrh, as in the case of the stupefying draught Jesus had refused before crucifixion.

49. Let be, let us see, etc. This was spoken in the way of interruption of him who was furnishing the draught of vinegar. According to Mark, he replied, and asked to be let alone.

50. When he had cried again with a loud voice. “It is finished” ([John 19:30](#)), the sixth word from the cross. The three evangelists all dwell upon the loudness of the cry, as if it had been the triumphant note of the conqueror. The last words from the cross were those recorded in [Luke 23:46](#), “Father, into thy hands,” etc. The first “word” is the prayer for his enemies ([Luke 23:34](#)). **Yielded up his spirit.** He voluntarily gave up his life for his sheep, and took it back again ([John 10:17](#)).

51. The veil of the temple was rent. The curtain before the Holy of Holies separating it from the Holy Place. It took place about the time of the evening sacrifice and showed by symbol that the real atonement, of which the yearly atonement was only a type, had been offered and that the true High Priest had entered into the true Holy of Holies. **And the earth did quake.** A common event at Jerusalem, but now significant of the sympathy of nature with the great tragedy.

52. The tombs were opened. The convulsions of the earth would naturally roll the stones from the doors of the sepulchers. **The saints ... were raised.** Who is not stated, or whether their bodies returned to the grave again. Their rising was a testimony that the death of Christ is life to the saints.

54. The centurion. The Roman officer in charge of the execution. **Truly this was the Son of God.** Rather, “a son of a god.” He was a heathen soldier, believing in many gods, and the scenes of the cross had convinced him that Jesus was more than man.

55, 56. Many women. The devoted women were still faithful, when the disciples had fled. Of the apostles we only know that John was near. **Mary Magdalene.** Mentioned first here, also in [Luke 8:2](#), before the resurrection. She had been healed by the Lord. **Mary the mother of James and Joses.** She was the wife of Clopas or Alphæus ([John 19:25](#)). **The mother of the sons of Zebedee.** Salome. John ([John 19:25](#)) mentions “his (Jesus') mother's sister,” but does not name Salome, his own mother. Hence it is inferred that Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also at the cross ([John 19:25](#)).



57. There came a rich man. On the burial, compare [Mark 15:42–47](#); [Luke 23:50–56](#); [John 19:38–42](#). **Of Arimathæa.** Its location is unknown. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrim, who had not consented to the murder of Jesus ([Luke 23:50–51](#); [Mark 15:43](#)). **Jesus' disciple.** But “secretly for fear of the Jews” ([John 19:38](#)). The death of Christ made him braver.



58. Asked for the body of Jesus. Usually, the Romans suffered the crucified to remain unburied, but Joseph, to prevent this, or any abuse of the sacred body, begged it of Pilate. The latter consented readily, probably anxious for respect for the body of him whom he vainly sought to save from death.

59. Joseph took the body. Carefully down from the cross. **Wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.** A winding sheet. Another Sanhedrist, Nicodemus, aided him ([John 19:39](#)), and they enclosed spices in the winding sheet.

60. Laid it in his own new tomb. A rock-hewn sepulcher, cut horizontally into the cliff. **Rolled a great stone to the door.** The usual method of closing the rock-hewn tombs. Thus Christ “was buried, according to the Scriptures” in a rich man's tomb, was “with the rich in his death” ([Isa. 53:9](#)).

61. The other Mary. The mother of James and Joses. These women saw where he was laid and returned there after the Sabbath with spices.

62. The morrow. The Sabbath. **After the day of preparation.** “That is, the day before the sabbath” ([Mark 15:42](#)).

63. Sir, we remember. These dignitaries had not forgotten the predictions of Christ that he would rise on the third day, even if his own disciples had.

64. Until the third day. That is, until Sunday morning. Friday would be the first day.

65. Ye have a guard. That is, ye can have a guard. He granted them a guard of Roman soldiers.

66. Sealing the stone. A cord was stretched across the stone door and sealed at each end with wax. The seal would have to be broken to remove the stone.



Chapter XXVIII

The Resurrection

Summary —*The Women at the Sepulcher. The Message of the Angel. The Risen Lord. The Report of the Guard. The Charge of the Priests. Christ Appears to the Eleven. The Meeting in Galilee. The Great Commission.*

1. In the end of the sabbath. After the Sabbath in which Jesus had lain in the tomb. **As it began to dawn.** All the gospels mark the precious moment when the great news first became known. Mark (16:2) says they arrived at sunrise Compare [Mark 16:1–8](#); [Luke 24:1–11](#); [John 20:1–21](#); [1 Cor. 15:1–20](#). **The first day of the week.** The Lord's day, or Sunday. **Came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary.** Mary, the mother of James and Joses. Also Salome ([Mark 16:1](#)). Late on Friday evening they had watched the sepulcher ([Matt. 27:56](#)). Now, after the Sabbath, they came with spices ([Mark 16:1](#)) in the hope that they could anoint the body. These disciples would not break the Sabbath, even to preserve the body of their beloved Lord. The Sabbath ended at sunset, so that Jesus had been dead and buried Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday morning, beginning at the previous sunset, three days according to Jewish reckoning. See [1 Sam. 30:12, 13](#); [2 Chron. 10:5, 12](#).

2. Behold, there was a great earthquake. The word rendered “earthquake” is rendered *tempest* in [Matt. 8:24](#). It means a “commotion.” It is not needful to decide that there was more than a local disturbance. **For the angel of the Lord descended.** An angel. There is no article. All the gospels speak of the angelic appearance at the tomb, though some give details omitted by others. **Rolled back the stone.** The commotion, or earthquake, accompanied the rolling back of the stone. “It was not for him to whom ([John 20:19, 20](#)) the stone was no hindrance, but for the women and disciples that it was rolled away.”—*Alford*.

3. His countenance was like lightning. Was bright like lightning. Compare [Exod. 34:29](#); [Matt. 17:2](#); [Rev. 1:14](#). **And his raiment white as snow.** White is the emblem of purity. So was the Savior's raiment at the Transfiguration, and the robes of the saints as described in Revelation.

4. The keepers. The Roman soldiers placed to guard the tomb with Pilate's consent.

5. Ye seek Jesus which was crucified. The angel does not forget that Jesus is the crucified one, nor do the redeemed in heaven ([Rev. 5:6](#); [7:9](#)).

6. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. The women had not seen him rise and had to be informed. They therefore came to the sepulcher after the resurrection. Christ had risen “as he said.” For the prophecies of a resurrection see [Matt. 16:21](#); [17:23](#); also read [Luke 24:6](#). **See the place where the Lord lay.** The angel does not say “your,” but *the* Lord—the Lord of the angels as well as men.

7. Tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead. To woman it was first announced that the birth of the child whose name should be Jesus, “because he should save his people from their sins,” was near; women were the last of his disciples to linger at the cross or to watch at the sepulcher; they were the first to see the empty tomb, to hear the glad news, or to be sent to tell the story of their risen Lord. **He goeth before you into Galilee.** They are cited to Galilee to meet the Lord, not that his only appearance would be there, for that was the seventh, but because, in that country, where the largest number of his disciples lived, he proposed to reveal himself to the whole body of saints. There he was seen “by about five hundred brethren at once.”

9. Jesus met them, saying, All hail! This was the second appearance of the Risen Savior. The appearances were: 1. To Mary Magdalene alone ([Mark 16:9](#); [John 20:11–18](#)), near Jerusalem—Sunday, April 9. 2. To the women returning from the sepulcher ([Matt. 28:9, 10](#)). 3. To Simon Peter alone ([Luke 24:34](#)). 4. To the two disciples going to Emmaus ([Luke 24:13](#)), etc. 5. To the apostles at Jerusalem, excepting Thomas, who was absent ([John 20:19](#)). These are all the same day. 6. To the apostles at Jerusalem a second time, when Thomas was present ([John 20:26, 29](#))—Sunday, one week later. 7. At the Sea of Tiberias, when seven disciples were fishing ([John 21:1](#)). 8. To the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee ([Matt. 28:16](#)). 9. To above five hundred brethren at once ([1 Cor. 15:6](#)), in Galilee, near the time of the last. It is possible these two are identical. 10. To James only ([1 Cor. 15:7](#)). 11. To all the apostles on Mt. Olivet at his ascension ([Luke 24:51](#))—Thursday, May 18. 12. We may add to these that he was seen by Saul of Tarsus ([Acts 9:3](#)) and by John on Patmos ([Rev. 1:13](#)).

10. Be not afraid. They had met the Lord while hastening to tell the story of his resurrection. It is when we are in the path of duty that we will enjoy his presence and his blessing. **Go tell my brethren.** This is the first time he had called the disciples his brethren.

11. Behold, some of the watch came into the city. The time when these men went into the city is noted. It was while the women were on their way to tell the disciples. It is also stated that “some of the watch” only went to the priests. How numerous the watch was we are not informed. As the watch had been set by the priests themselves ([Matt. 27:65, 66](#)), it made its report to them instead of to Pilate.

12. When they were assembled with the elders. The chief priests and the elders, probably a secret meeting of the leading members of the Sanhedrim. They had gone too far into crime to stop.

13. His disciples came by night, etc. The improbability of this story is easily seen: 1. The soldiers would not dare to go to sleep on guard. It was death. 2. If they had gone to sleep they could testify nothing of what was done while asleep. Their testimony of what occurred then would be worthless. 3. The disciples did not expect a resurrection and would hardly believe it when it occurred. 4. They had shown themselves cowards and would not have dared to take his body away. 5. Had they dared, had the Roman soldiers slept, they could



not have removed the stone and carried off the body without detection. It was a night lighted with the full moon and all the environs of Jerusalem were crowded with people attending the passover.

14. If this come to the governor's ears, etc. As he had taken so little interest in the matter as to leave the watch to them it was not likely it would come to his ears at all, as we know that he was wont to spend only a few days at Jerusalem and then return to Cæsarea.

15. This saying is commonly reported ... until this day. It was still current among the Jews when Justin Martyr wrote in the second century, at least a hundred years after Matthew penned these words.

16. The eleven disciples went away into Galilee. The time when they went to Galilee is not stated, though we learn from [John 20:26](#) that they remained in Judea for over a week after the resurrection. Of the appearances in Galilee we have three accounts: the brief one here, which describes the official meeting of the Lord with the entire body of disciples: the one by the sea, described in [John 21](#), and the reference by Paul in [1 Cor. 15:6](#). The eleven went into Galilee because the Lord had commanded them to do so. **Into a mountain where Jesus had appointed.** The Revision says, "the mountain," which is correct. The Lord had named the mountain where he should meet them, and had probably also appointed the time. The object of the appointment was probably to secure a general meeting of his disciples.

17. When they saw him they worshipped him. It is also stated of the women ([verse 9](#)) that they worshiped him, or kneeled at his feet. **Some doubted.** This does not, as I suppose, refer to the eleven. The doubts of all, including the skeptical Thomas, had been silenced before this. But the story that he had risen seemed so incredible, that there were those assembled on this occasion who had been doubters. These, "when they saw him," remained doubters no longer, but "worshiped him."

18. Spake unto them. To the whole assembly of five hundred brethren ([1 Cor. 15:6](#)). A commission had been given long before to the twelve apostles ([Matt. 10:1-15](#)), and also to the seventy, but it differed widely from the one now given. It confined the preaching to the Jews, and announced the kingdom of heaven as yet in the future. Now the preachers of Christ are sent, by the authority of the King, to make disciples of all nations. The old dispensation had ended with the cross. The new one had begun with the resurrection. **All authority.** Henceforth he was the King and Judge of the nations. The word "is given" denotes the source from whence he obtained his power, and implies that it was not inherent in the Son. [Phil. 2:9](#) indicates that it was given to him after, and in consequence of, his voluntary humiliation; and [1 Cor. 15:27](#), shows that it held in subjection to the Father. It was because the authority to rule the world had been placed in his hands that he issued his commands that it should be conquered.

19. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations. There are several things to be noticed: 1. *Go*, implies an aggressive warfare. The Gospel army must move upon the nations.



The Lord seeks universal empire, and sends forth his armies to conquer the world. Every church and every disciple must understand that they have marching orders. 2. Not only is every saint commanded to go, or to take steps to make the gospel go, but the object is stated. They are to make *disciples*, or pupils, and scholars of Christ; not great philosophers, but “babes in Christ Jesus,” who have entered the school of Christ and are to be taught afterwards. 3. Who are to be made disciples is next indicated. Not the Jews only, but *all nations*. Christ came to be the Savior of the world. His is a universal religion. In the Great Commission he looks beyond Judea, and commands that the Gospel shall be offered to all nations. The test of eighteen centuries shows that Christianity is not local or national, but is adapted to the needs of all mankind. 4. It is next stated how disciples shall be made. **Baptizing them.** The rite by which those who believe upon him should be formally enlisted and enrolled in the school of Christ is baptism. It is not a baptism of the Spirit that he means, because it is one that those whom he addresses are commanded to administer. He alone baptized with the Spirit; his apostles and disciples baptized in water, and it is to this rite that he refers. Hence, when we turn to the preaching of the apostles under this commission, we find that all converts were at once baptized ([Acts 2:38–41](#); [8:12–18](#)). 5. The end or result of baptism is also given. Converts were to be baptized *into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*. It is a positive affirmation of the Old Testament that where the name of the Lord is recorded there will he meet his disciples, or there will be his presence. See [Exod. 20:24](#). The Lord declares that the three names, that of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, are recorded in baptism. In this rite, then, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit meet the believer; the Father to receive him as a child, the Son to welcome him as a brother, and to cover him with the mantle of his own purity; the Holy Spirit to endow him with that Spirit by which he can say, “Abba, Father.” “Into the name of” is equivalent to “into the presence of,” or “into the Father, and into the Son, and into the Holy Spirit.”

20. Teaching them. The second part of the commission is next given. The first part commands the making of disciples, and tells how they must be made. The second part provides for the instruction of the disciples in righteousness. This is to be done by “teaching them.” **To observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.** What must be taught by the faithful Christian teacher is prescribed. It will at once be seen that this cuts off much that is often taught. We are not to teach “untaught questions,” “oppositions of science, so called,” dogmatic speculations, isms or human creeds. Christ has never commanded these. On the other hand, we are to teach *all things* he has commanded. Some of these things we have recorded in the Gospels; others we have in the Acts and in the Epistles. They embrace the various duties of Christian life. **I am with you alway.** It was an arduous work he had commanded his disciples to undertake; a few uninfluential and unlettered laboring men to undertake the moral and religious conquest of a world that had just crucified their Master. There was, however, an assurance that they should be equal to the task, for, (1) All power,

or authority, in heaven and earth was in the hands of their crucified Lord. (2) He now declares, *I am with you always*. He who has all power will be present with them, a help in time of need. He is a mighty, present and helping Savior. **Even unto the end of the world.** Until the close of the Christian dispensation, coming of the Lord, and the day of judgment.

**The Gospel According to
Mark**



Introduction to Mark

The Second Gospel was written by Mark, the kinsman of Barnabas, and the companion of Paul in his first missionary journey. When and where it was written is uncertain. Of its author the following facts are gathered from the New Testament: He is first named in [Acts 12:12](#). His mother's name was Mary, and we learn from [Col. 4:10](#), that she was a sister of Barnabas. She dwelt in Jerusalem, and this city was probably Mark's early home. He was converted by Peter ([1 Peter 5:13](#)), it has been supposed, at the great ingathering on the day of Pentecost. He became a minister ([Acts 12:25](#)), attended Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey did not prove satisfactory to Paul ([Acts 15:38](#)), and as Barnabas insisted on taking him, he and Paul parted company on the second missionary journey. That Paul and Mark were afterwards intimate is shown by the subsequent history. We find him by Paul's side during his first imprisonment at Rome, a.d. 61–63; and he is acknowledged by him as one of his few fellow-laborers who had been a “comfort” to him during the weary hours of his imprisonment ([Col. 4:10, 11](#); [Philemon 24](#)). We next have traces of him in [1 Peter 5:13](#). “The church that is in Babylon ... saluteth you, and so doth Marcus, my son”. From this we infer that he joined the spiritual father, the friend of his mother, at Babylon, then and for some hundred years afterwards returned one of the chief seats of Jewish culture. From Babylon he would seem to have returned to Asia Minor; for during his second imprisonment, a.d. 68, Paul, writing to Timothy, charges him to bring Mark with him to Rome, on the ground that he was “profitable unto him for the ministry” ([2 Tim. 4:11](#)). From this point we gain no further information from the New Testament respecting the Evangelist. It is most probable, however, that he did join the Apostle at Rome, whither also Peter would seem to have proceeded, and suffered martyrdom along with Paul. After the death of these two great pillars of the Church, ecclesiastical tradition affirms that Mark visited Egypt, founded the Church of Alexandria, and died by martyrdom. This tradition is, however, very uncertain.

Mark was not one of the twelve, and there is no reason to believe that he was an eye and ear witness of the events which he has recorded; but an almost unanimous testimony of the early fathers indicates Peter as the source of his information. The most important of these testimonies is that of Papias, who says, “He, the presbyter (John) said: Mark, being the interpreter of Peter, wrote exactly whatever he remembered; but he did not write in order the things which were spoken or done by Christ. For he was neither a hearer nor a follower of the Lord, but, as I said, afterward followed Peter, who made his discourses to suit what was required, without the view of giving a connected digest of the discourses of our Lord. Mark, therefore, made no mistakes when he wrote down circumstances as he recollected them; for he was very careful of one thing, to omit nothing of what he heard, and to say nothing

false in what he related.” Thus Papias writes of Mark. This testimony is confirmed by other witnesses.

Tradition affirms that Mark wrote for the benefit of Gentile Christians, and this view is confirmed by the fact that he often explains Jewish customs, where Matthew, writing for Jews, omits the explanation as if well understood. In the comments on Mark references will be found to the parallel passages in Matthew, where full explanatory notes will be found.



Chapter I

The Beginning of the Ministry of Christ

Summary — *The Mission of John the Baptist. His Preaching in the Wilderness. His Baptism in the Jordan. The Baptism of Jesus and the Anointing. The Temptation. Christ's Ministry in Galilee Begun. The Call of Four Apostles. An Unclean Spirit Cast Out. The Increased Fame of Jesus. Peter's Wife's Mother. Solitary Prayer. Preaching Throughout Galilee. Healing the Leper.*

1. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a sort of title. The whole history of Jesus is an unfolding of the gospel. **Gospel.** Good news. **Jesus.** The personal name given by the angel ([Matt. 1:21](#)), meaning “Savior.” **Christ.** The official title of the Lord. It means the anointed. Kings and priests were anointed in Israel, and Jesus, “the Lord's Anointed” is our Priest and King. They were anointed with oil; Jesus with the Holy Spirit.

2, 3. As it is written in the prophets. [Isa. 40:3](#) and [Mal. 3:1](#). See notes on [Matt. 3:3](#) and [11:10](#).

4. John did baptize in the wilderness. Of Judea. See note on [Matt. 3:1](#), for account of the wilderness and John the Baptist. **And preached the baptism of repentance.** He preached, as well as baptized. Only those who repented were fit subjects of baptism. Hence it was called the “baptism of repentance.” Repentance signifies, not only sorrow for sin, but the resolve to sin no more. **For remission of sins.** This indicates the object of repentance and baptism. Those who repented and were baptized were pardoned. Both were needful to remission. Compare [Acts 2:38](#).

5. There went out to him. See notes on [Matt. 3:5, 6](#).

6. John was clothed with camel's hair. See note on [Matt. 3:4](#).

7, 8. There cometh one after me. See note on [Matt. 3:11](#). **Shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.** See note on [Matt. 3:11](#).

9. In those days. When John had been preaching and baptizing about six months. For the account of the baptism of Jesus see [Matt. 3:13–17](#), and the notes.

10. Coming up straightway out of the water. The Greek preposition translated “out of” is *ek*, which means out from within. This could only be true of immersion. Thus all great and candid Pedeo-baptist scholars concede that Christ was baptized.

12, 13. Tempted of Satan. See [Matt. 4:1–11](#), and the notes.

14. Now after John was put into prison. Mark proceeds to the account of the Savior's public ministry in Galilee. Between Christ's baptism and this occurred the events narrated in [John, chapters 2, 3 and 4](#). For notes on this ministry see [Matt. 4:12–25](#).

16. He saw Simon. For notes on the call of the four apostles see [Matt. 4:18–22](#).



21. They went into Capernaum. For account of Capernaum see note on [Matt. 4:13](#). **Entered into the synagogue.** For description of a Jewish synagogue see note on [Matt. 4:23](#).

22. They were astonished at his doctrine. See note on [Matt. 7:28](#). **Scribes.** For account of scribes see notes on [Matt. 5:20](#).

23. A man with an unclean spirit. See note on [Matt. 8:28](#). Compare [Luke 4:31–37](#). The New Testament plainly teaches that demoniac possession was a real and actual possession of the soul by a fallen spirit.

24. What have we to do with thee? A common Jewish way of saying, “Do not trouble us.” **Art thou come to destroy us?** An admission that Christ came to destroy the devil and his works. **I know thee.** The demon made a better confession than most of the Jews.

26. He came out of him. At the command. The whole account shows that there was a real possession by an evil spirit.

27. They were all amazed. Those in the synagogue.

28–34. His fame spread abroad. For notes on the increasing fame of Christ see [Matt. 4:25](#); for notes on the healing of Peter's wife's mother, see [Matt. 8:14](#).

35. And in the morning. See note on [Matt. 8:17](#).

36. Simon. Peter and the other disciples.

38. Let us go into the next towns. The villages of Galilee.

39. Throughout all Galilee. This was the first missionary circuit of Galilee. Galilee was then densely peopled. Josephus says it contained 240 towns and villages.

40. There came a leper. See notes on [Matt. 8:2–4](#). Compare also [Luke 5:12–15](#). This miracle occurred after the Sermon on the Mount. Leprosy, that terrible scourge of the East, is unknown in our times, or even in the United States.

44. Shew thyself to the priest. At Jerusalem. **Those things which Moses commanded.** See [Lev. 14:4–7](#), and note on [Matt. 8:4](#).

45. Came to him from every quarter. Not only to see and hear, but to be healed.



Chapter II

The First Conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees

Summary — *The Palsied Man Healed. The Charge of Blasphemy. The Calling of Matthew. The Feast at the House of Matthew. Not the Whole, but the Sick Need a Physician. Fasting. New Wine in Old Bottles. Plucking Corn on the Sabbath Day. The Son of Man Lord of the Sabbath.*

1. Again he entered Capernaum. After his first missionary circuit of Galilee.

2–12. Many were gathered together. For notes on the healing of this paralytic see [Matt. 9:2–8](#). Compare [Luke 5:17–26](#). As we learn from Luke, among those gathered were Pharisees and scribes from Judea, Jerusalem, and Galilee, evidently by a preconcerted arrangement. The whole incident illustrates: (1) The Divine power of Christ. He could assert that he forgave sins without blasphemy. (2) The difference between Christ and his apostles, none of whom claimed to forgive sins (see [Acts 8:22–24](#)). (3) It affords a test for all priests who claim to forgive sin. If they possessed power to forgive sins they would have power also to relieve the body of the physical consequences of sin.

14. He saw Levi the son of Alphæus. Matthew Levi; the apostle after this, but now a publican. On the call of Matthew and Matthew's feast see notes on [Matt. 9:9–17](#), and compare also [Luke 5:27–39](#).

15. Sat at meat. At a meal. **In his house.** Matthew's. **Many publicans.** Gatherers of the Roman tax. **Sinners.** Persons excommunicated from the synagogue.

18. Why do the disciples of John ... fast? See notes on [Matt. 9:14, 15](#).

21. No man also seweth, etc. On this figure and that of old and new bottles see notes on [Matt. 9:16, 17](#).

23. He went through the corn fields on the sabbath. See notes on [Matt. 12:1–8](#). Compare [Luke 6:1–11](#).

26. In the days of Abiathar, the high priest. In [1 Sam. 21:1–9](#), Ahimelech is represented as the high priest. Abiathar was his son and successor. The Revised Version gives the text of the best MSS. by omitting “the high priest.”

27. The sabbath was made for man. The Sabbath rest; that is, a rest of one day in seven was made for man, not for Jews only. This implies that it is to be a universal institution; that the good of man requires it, and that it is not an arbitrary enactment, but a wise and benevolent provision for the welfare of the race. Experience shows that men are happiest, most moral, most prosperous and healthiest where it is devoutly observed.

28. The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. This affirms the Divine nature of Jesus. None but the Divine is Lord of a divine institution. Since Christ is Lord of the Sabbath day, he has the right to modify it, to adapt it to the new dispensation, and to change the time of



its observance from the last day of the week to the first, so as to make it the memorial of the beginning of the New Creation, instead of commemorating the rest from the first creation.



Chapter III

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

Summary — *The Man with the Withered Hand. The Pharisees and Herodians in Council. The Great Physician Healing. The Twelve Apostles Appointed. The Blasphemy of Ascribing His Divine Power to Beelzebub. The Sin That Hath No Forgiveness. Christ's Mother and Brethren.*

1. He entered again into the synagogue. Of Capernaum. Compare [Matt. 12:9–14](#); [Luke 6:6–11](#). For fuller notes, see Matthew.

2. They watched him. The same critics who had found fault in the [preceding chapter](#). There was present a man whose right hand was withered, and they watched to see whether the Lord would heal him on the Sabbath.

3. Stand forth. He read their thoughts and determined to give prominence to the good work. He would heal him on the Sabbath; heal him in the synagogue, heal him before all.

4. Is it lawful ... to save life, or to kill? A home thrust at the fault-finders. They were harboring murderous thoughts; he was seeking to save life. Which was breaking the Sabbath?

5. Looked on them with anger. Indignation. **Hardness of heart.** Shown by their fault finding, evil thoughts, and silence by his questions.

6. Pharisees. See note on [Matt. 3:7](#). **Herodians.** See note on [Matt. 22:16](#). **Took counsel.** Already these inveterate enemies were resolved to destroy Jesus. They took counsel *how* it might be done. As they went to the partisans of Herod, who ruled in Galilee, they probably sought to persuade them to have Herod put him to death.

7. Jesus withdrew himself. See fuller notes on the popularity described in [verses 7–12](#) under [Matt. 12:15–21](#). **The sea.** Of Galilee. Also consult map for the localities named.

8. Idumæa. More anciently called Edom. Southeast of the Jordan, and south of the Dead Sea. That country was occupied by the descendants of Esau. Herod the Great was, on his father's side, an Idumæan. **Tyre and Sidon.** See note on [Matt. 11:21](#).

9. A small ship. A fishing boat. The Revision correctly renders the term by the word boat.

11. Unclean spirits. See note on [Matt. 8:28](#).

13. Goeth up into a mountain. Compare [Matt. 10:1–4](#), and [Luke 6:12–16](#). The selection of the apostles occurred before the Sermon on the Mount ([Luke 6:13](#)). Matthew gives it out of order. See notes on [Matt. 10:1–4](#).

14. Ordained twelve, that they should be with him. They were to attend him into order to be specially prepared to preach Christ.

16. Simon he surnamed Peter. He did this previously ([John 1:42](#)).

17. Boanerges. Why this title was bestowed on James and John we are not told. Possibly from their power as preachers.

19. They went into a house. On the return to Capernaum.

20. Could not so much as eat. The multitudes were so eager to hear, or be healed, and Jesus so ready to bless them, that there was no time for meals.

21. His friends. Probably his relatives. See [verse 31](#). His brethren were not yet counted among his disciples. **He is beside himself.** Carried away by an unwise enthusiasm.

22. The scribes ... said. For notes on the charge of the scribes, Beelzebub, and the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, see [Matt. 12:22–37](#). Compare [Luke 11:14–23](#). **From Jerusalem.** The men who were leaders in this effort to destroy the influence of Jesus were a delegation from the very religious bodies at Jerusalem that finally sent him to death.

30. Because they said he had an unclean spirit. This was a sin against the Holy Spirit because Jesus did mighty works in the power of the Holy Spirit, and they ascribed the power to an unclean spirit.

31. Then came his brethren and his mother. See notes on [Matt. 12:46–50](#). Compare [Luke 8:19](#). The natural inference is that the “brethren” were the sons of Mary and the half-brothers of Jesus. No other idea would ever have been maintained had it not been that the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary arose some centuries after the apostles.



Chapter IV

Teaching in Parables

Summary —*The Sower, The Good Seed, The Hard, Stony, Thorny and Good Soil. The Parable Explained. The Candle Under a Bushel. The Seed Growing Secretly. The Grain of Mustard Seed. The Storm on the Sea.*

1. He began again to teach by the seaside. This is the first recorded teaching in parables. For notes on the parable of the Sower see [Matt. 13:1–23](#). Compare [Luke 8:4–15](#). Mark's report is nearly that of [Matthew](#), word for word, as well as of the explanation that follows. Matthew gives much the fullest account of this day's teaching, reporting a number of parables not found elsewhere.

12. That seeing they may see. Matthew gives this saying more fully and clearly. See note on [Matt. 13:13](#).

21. Is the lamp put under a bushel? The Jews used lamps instead of candles. These were set on, not a candlestick, but a light stand. See note on [Matt. 5:15](#). It is possible that these words, as well as [verse 24](#), were not spoken on this day, but borrowed from the Sermon on the Mount, because they are parables of a certain kind.

24. Take heed what you hear. [Luke 8:18](#) says, “*How you hear.*” Both admonitions are very important. Our ears should be deaf to evil counsel. We should hear attentively, earnestly and devoutly the word of the Lord.

26. So is the kingdom of God. This parable is given only by Mark, but its general lesson is enforced by parallel passages, *e. g.*, [Isa. 55:10, 11](#); [Jas. 5:7, 8](#); [1 Pet. 1:23–25](#). In the kingdom of grace, as in nature, we are laborers together with God; the results of our work depend on him, and for the perfection of these results he takes his own time ([1 Cor. 3:6–9](#)). Hence, (1) it is ours to sow the seed (the truth), his to give it growth; (2) having sown, we are to wait for time and God to perfect it; (3) this he does according to the definite order of development—first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear; (4) not until there has been time for the development, are we to expect to reap. The lesson is one of trust and hope. **Should cast seed.** The word of God, the Gospel.

27. Should sleep, and rise, etc. While giving the seed sown time to germinate and come forth.

28. First the blade. There is a law of orderly development in natural growth, so also is it in reference to spiritual growth. Compare [1 John 2:12–14](#). Some growths are quicker than others, but in all there is *growth*. And we have no right to look for the end at the beginning, the ripened Christian experience in the young convert, the full corn in the first appearance of the blade. Observe, too, that we can know that *there is growth* by its results, though we know not *how*, and that each stage of the growth is more apparent than the preceding stage.



29. Immediately he putteth in the sickle. The time of harvest is when the fruit is ripe; in this instance when the word had produced faith, repentance and obedience. Then those who exhibit the fruit are to be gathered into the church.

31. Like a grain of mustard seed. See note on [Matt. 13:31–35](#). Compare [Luke 13:18, 19](#).

34. Without a parable, etc. See notes on [Matt. 13:36–43](#).

35. On the same day. The days the parables were uttered. **Unto the other side.** Of the Sea of Galilee.

37. There arose a great storm. See notes on [Matt. 8:23–27](#). Compare [Luke 8:22–25](#). The Sea of Galilee lies 600 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and has a tropical climate. Only a short distance north are the high mountains of Lebanon. The heated air about the sea invites the rush of cold waves from the mountains.

41. They feared exceedingly. The disciples in the boat. Such an astounding display of power, the control of the storm in which men are as helpless as infants, filled them with awe. What manner of being could he be whom storm, wind, and sea obeyed? They had not yet learned that the word which the sea obeyed was the word in obedience to which the world itself was made.



Chapter V

Healing the Afflicted

Summary —*In the Country of the Gadarenes. The Fierce Demoniac. The Demons and the Swine. The Gadarenes Do Not Wish Jesus. The Preacher in Decapolis. Jesus Again in Capernaum. The Daughter of Jairus. The Woman with the Issue of Blood. Healed by Faith. The Dead Damsel Made Alive.*

1. They came to the other side. After the storm. **Into the country of the Gerasenes.** [Matthew](#) in the parallel account says *Gadarenes*. The explanation is easy. Gerasa, a town whose modern name is Gersa, stood on the southeast shore of the sea, while Gadara, the chief city of the district, was south about seven or eight miles. As the capital city of the district, “the country of the Gadarenes” embraced Gerasa and its vicinity.

2. There met him out of the tombs. The tombs are still seen in the cliff near Gersa. For notes on demoniacal possession and this account see [Matt. 8:28–33](#). Compare [Luke 8:26–39](#).

3. Dwelling in the tombs. The tombs of that age were either natural or artificial caves in a rocky hillside, and hence would afford shelter. They are now sometimes the homes of the poorer classes. **No man could bind him.** Modern lunatics in their frenzy often exhibit almost superhuman strength.

10. Besought ... that he would not send them out of the country. In other words, “Do not send us back to the place of perdition from whence we came.” They confess the power of Christ.

11. Mountain side. At Gersa the mountain rises near the sea. **A great herd of swine.** Either the property of Gentiles, or of Jews who disobeyed the law of Moses for gain.

13. Ran ... down a steep place. The declivity at the base of the mountain at Gersa is almost perpendicular.

17. They began to pray him to depart. Christ does not stay where he is not wanted. He never visited the country of the Gadarenes again.

20. Decapolis. A district so called from its ten cities, of which Gadara was one. The first preacher of Christ there was one who could testify of his power.

21. When Jesus was passed ... to the other side. Sailed back across the sea to Capernaum.

22. One of the rulers of the synagogue. The office of ruler in the synagogue was somewhat similar to that of elder in a Christian congregation.

23. At the point of death. In [verse 35](#) the word comes to the ruler that his daughter is dead. [Matthew](#) in his account condenses the two reports and says, “She is dead.”

25. And a certain woman. For notes on this miracle, see [Matt. 9:20–22](#). Compare [Luke 8:41–56](#). **An issue of blood.** A hemorrhage of the womb or bowels.



26. Suffered many things of many physicians. The medical art in Judea in that age was in a very crude condition. Lightfoot gives, from the Rabbinical books, the remedy for a female hemorrhage: “Let them dig seven ditches, in which let them burn some cuttings of vines under four years old. Let her take in her hand a cup of wine; let them lead her away from this ditch and make her sit over that. Let them remove her from that and sit her over another. At each removal you must say to her, 'Arise for thy flux.'” This is an illustration of what this woman suffered.



30. Perceiving that power. Christ, conscious of the approach and condition of this woman, voluntarily healed her. His language that follows is to bring out the moral issue. He cured her, not by touch or word, as was usual with him, but by act of will. By his question he called out her public confession. Faith saves. It may not be intelligent faith, for this woman was not well instructed, but is a faith strong enough to lead to action.

35. While he yet spake, ... Thy daughter is dead. For notes on this example of Christ's power over death, see [Matt. 9:18, 19](#) and 23–26. Compare [Luke 8:41,42 and 49–56](#).

37. Suffered no man to follow him. Into the house of the ruler. The mourners were excluded and only the parents and three apostles, the same three that saw him transfigured, and in the agony of Gethsemane, were allowed to enter. Matthew omits this fact.

38. Many weeping and wailing greatly. At a Jewish funeral were professional mourners called by [Matthew](#) “minstrels.” It is still the funeral fashion in the East.

41. Talitha cumi. Words from the common language of the people of Palestine in that age, meaning, “Damsel, arise.”

42. Straightway. The restoration was immediate.

43. That no man should know it. That is, that it should not be published abroad. It was often needful for Jesus to restrain the fame of his miracles for various reasons, one of which was the wrath they excited in the Jewish authorities. It was needful for him to delay exciting them to the point of putting him to death till his time had come.

There are three cases, besides his own resurrection, of Christ raising the dead. This case is immediately after death; another, that of the son of the widow of Nain ([Luke 7:11–15](#)), at least twenty-four hours after death; the third, that of Lazarus ([John, chapter 11](#)), several days after death, when corruption would naturally have begun; in one case privately; in the second, publicly; in the third, before bitter enemies.



Chapter VI

The First Commission

Summary — *Christ in Nazareth. Teaching in the Synagogue. Rejected by the Nazarenes. The Twelve Sent Forth to Preach. Their Preaching and Work. King Herod's Opinion of Jesus. Account of the Death of John the Baptist. Feeding the Five Thousand in the Desert Place. Praying in the Mountain Alone. The Disciples in the Storm. Christ Cometh and Saves. Healing.*

1. Went out from thence. From Capernaum. **Came into his own country.** Nazareth, where he had been brought up.

2. When the sabbath day was come. For notes on his reception at Nazareth, see [Matt. 13:53–58](#). This was the second time he was rejected here ([Luke 4:14–29](#)).

3. Is not this the carpenter? [Matthew](#) reads “The carpenter's son.” This shows that Jesus also had worked at the trade. It was the custom for every Jew to be taught some trade by his parents.

5. He could do there no mighty work. [Matthew](#) states the reason: “Because of their unbelief.” It was not from want of power, but of the conditions that he required. Those in need of help must either have faith enough to seek his help, or their friends must have faith. As faith is the condition of the salvation of the soul, so Christ required it as a condition of the salvation of the body from disease or death.

6. He marvelled because of their unbelief. See note on [Matt. 8:10](#). **Went round about the villages.** See note on [Matt. 9:35](#).

7. He called unto him the twelve. For the commission of the twelve see notes on [Matt. 10:1–42](#), and compare [Luke 9:1–6](#). [Matthew's](#) account is much the fullest.

8. Save a staff only. Only the staff that each had already. [Matthew](#) forbids a supply for future use.

9. Be shod with sandals. [Matthew](#) forbids shoes, instead of which they were to wear sandals. The ancient shoe resembled the modern; the sandal was a sole tied on the foot. The latter was usually worn by the common people and they were to dress like them.

13. Anointed with oil. [Matthew](#) says nothing of this. Oil was a symbol of the Divine grace; to anoint with it, of the Holy Spirit. Its use implied that God was the healer.

14. And king Herod heard of him. For Herod's opinion of Christ and the death of John the Baptist, see notes on [Matt. 14:1–12](#). Compare [Luke 9:7–9](#).

17. For the Herodias' sake. This states why John was cast into prison, on account of the instigation of the adulterous woman, a fact omitted by [Matthew](#).

19. Would have killed him. The wicked woman sought his murder, but could not kill him because Herod refused to consent.



20. Herod feared John. Was in awe of him as a holy man, and feared the indignation of the people if he slew him.

21. When a convenient day was come. For the execution of the plans of the vengeful woman.

27. Sent an executioner. One of his body guard. Under Oriental monarchs the captain of the guard was the executioner.

31. Come ye apart into a desert place. For notes on the feeding of the five thousand see [Matt. 14:14-21](#). Compare [Luke 9:10-17](#) and [John 6:5-14](#). All the [four gospels](#) give this account.



32. Departed into a desert place. An uninhabited place; in this case the small plain of Butaiha, just east of where the Jordan enters the lake of Galilee.

45. To go to the other side before unto Bethsaida. [John](#) says, “toward Capernaum.” Capernaum was the ultimate point to be reached; but on the way there they were to sail along the coast in a northwest direction, and touch at Bethsaida, take into the boat Jesus, who would go there by land, and then sail southwest to Capernaum. The ruins at Bethsaida are found near where the Jordan empties into the Sea of Galilee, and not very far distant from the scene of the miracle. For notes on the storm and Christ walking on the sea, see [Matt. 14:22-32](#). Compare [John 6:15-21](#).



Chapter VII

Making Void the Law of God

Summary — *The Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. Eating with Unwashed Hands. Making Void the Law of God by Tradition. What Defileth a Man. In the Borders of Tyre and Sidon. The Syrophenician Woman. Healing in Decapolis.*

1. Then came together unto him the Pharisees. This sharp controversy, which contains the sharpest rebuke that Christ had thus far paid to the Pharisaical system, is recorded also by [Matt. 15:1–20](#), where see notes. Mark, for the benefit of Gentile readers, adds a few words concerning Jewish customs. **Come from Jerusalem.** Probably formally sent by the Sanhedrim to investigate the work and teaching of Jesus.

2. Eat bread with defiled hands. Not dirty, but “unwashed.” The “tradition of the elders” required them to always wash before eating lest they might have touched something ceremonially unclean.

3. For the Pharisees ... except they wash diligently, eat not. The duty of washing before meat is not inculcated in the law, but only in the tradition of the scribes. So rigidly did the Jews observe it, that Rabbi Akiba, being imprisoned, and having water scarcely sufficient to sustain life given him, preferred dying of thirst to eating without washing his hands.

4. When they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. In the Greek, not the word rendered “wash” elsewhere in the passage, but *baptize*. Abbott renders it “plunge” and says: “Apparently, in the ritual of the Pharisees, washing by pouring on water sufficed for those who remained at home, but *immersion* of the hands in water was required of those who had gone abroad.” **Many other things.** They not only insisted on washing the hands, because of the tradition, but also, many other things. Geikie says: “The law of Moses required purifications in certain cases ([Lev. 12:1–5](#)), but the rabbis had perverted the spirit of Leviticus in this as in other things, for they taught that food and drink could not be taken with a good conscience when there was the possibility of ceremonial defilement. If every perceivable precaution had not been taken, the person or the vessel used might have contracted impurity, which would thus be conveyed to the food, and through the food to the body, and by it to the soul. Hence it had been long a custom, and latterly a strict law, that before every meal not only the hands, but even the dishes, couches, and tables, should be scrupulously washed.”

5. The Pharisees and scribes asked him. On the Savior's discourse that follows, as far as [verse 23](#), consult notes on [Matt. 15:1–20](#).



24. From thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. Consult the notes on [Matt. 15:21–28](#), where the incident of the “woman of Canaan” is fully given.

31. He came ... through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. A district east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan, so called because it contained ten cities. Only Mark gives the account of the following miracle.

32. One that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech. Probably had not been born deaf, as he was not dumb.

33, 34. Put his fingers in his ears. The manner of the Lord in this miracle was peculiar. I understand that he used signs instead of words in order to arouse faith in the deaf man. He touched the organs that had lost their office and then looked to heaven. This would be deeply significant to one who had learned to understand by signs. **Ephphatha.** A word in the common language of Judea at that time, meaning “Be opened.”

35. His ears were opened. At once both his difficulties were removed.

36. He charged them that they should tell no man. Consult note on [Matt. 8:4](#).

37. He hath done all things well. Compare [Gen. 1:31](#). **He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.** Christ, ever since, has been engaged, spiritually, in the same work.



Chapter VIII

In the Coasts of Cæsarea Philippi

Summary — *The Four Thousand Fed. At Dalmanutha. Seeking a Sign from Heaven. The Blind Man Healed at Bethsaida. Peter's Confession at Cæsarea Philippi. The Death and Burial of the Son of Man. Peter Rebuked. Taking the Cross and Following Christ.*

1. In those days. While Christ was in Decapolis. For notes on the feeding of the four thousand, see [Matt. 15:32–38](#). This is not the same event as the feeding of the five thousand ([Matt. 14:13–21](#); [Mark 6:32–44](#); [Luke 9:10–17](#); [John 6:1–14](#)). In [Mark 8:19, 20](#), the Lord refers to both miracles.

10. Into the parts of Dalmanutha. [Matt. 15:39](#) says “Magdala.” Neither place exists now, but they are supposed to have been near each other on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee. Abbott suggests that they were two different names for the same place, a common circumstance.

11–13. The Pharisees came ... seeking of him a sign from heaven. See notes on [Matt. 16:1–4](#).

14–21. The disciples had forgotten to take bread. For notes on the warning against the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod, see [Matt. 16:5–12](#). [Matthew](#) says “Sadducees” instead of “Herod.” Herod was a Sadducee, and the Sadducees generally were his supporters.

22. He cometh to Bethsaida. Near the mouth of the upper Jordan into the lake. It was upon the eastern bank of the river. The account of the miracle that follows is only given by [Mark](#). **And they bring a blind man unto him.** The people, not the disciples, brought him. He was brought (1) either because he could not find the way alone, or (2) because he had not faith that would induce him to go, and so was brought by the faith of his friends. This man was not born blind. He had evidently seen men and trees aforetime.

23. Led him out of the town. As he had taken the deaf man out of the crowd ([Mark 7:33](#)). The Lord often sought to escape publicity. **When he had spit on his eyes.** I suppose that this unusual course was intended to develop in the man the faith which the Lord made the usual condition of healing.

24. I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking. Certain moving forms about him, but without the power of discerning their shape or magnitude; trees he should have accounted them from their height, but men from their motion.

25. Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes. This is the only example of a *progressive* cure. I suppose that it was an example of progressive faith. The Lord could have healed him with a word, but he wished to save the soul as well as the body.

26. Sent him away to his house. Evidently he did not live in Bethsaida, as he was forbidden to go into the town, or to tell the story there.



27–30. Jesus went forth ... into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi. For notes on Peter's confession of Christ, see [Matt. 16:13–20](#). Compare [Luke 9:18–21](#). Cæsarea Philippi was a heathen town, in the extreme north of Palestine, near the foot of Mount Hermon, and one of the sources of the Jordan.

31–38. He began to teach them, etc. For the first announcement of the suffering of our Lord, the rebuke of Peter, and the lesson concerning the cross, and saving the soul, see notes on [Matt. 16:21–28](#). Compare [Luke 9:22–27](#). [Verse 38](#) is peculiar to Mark in this connection, though given in [Matt. 10:32, 33](#), on which see notes.



Chapter IX

The Transfiguration

Summary — *The Coming of the Kingdom. The Transfiguration. Moses and Elias. The Elias That Must Come. The Boy with the Dumb Spirit. The Condition of Receiving Christ's Help. The Disciples Taught of Christ's Sufferings. Who Shall Be Greatest? The Narrowness of the Disciples Rebuked. A Cup of Cold Water in the Name of Christ. The Offending Hand or Eye.*

1. Till they have been seen the kingdom of God come with power. Compare [Matt. 16:28](#) and [Luke 9:27](#). Matthew says, "Till they have seen the Son of man coming in his kingdom;" Luke, "Till they have seen the kingdom of God." A comparison shows that the reference is to "the coming of the kingdom in power" on the day of Pentecost. Of the twelve, one at a time was dead; the others had not tasted of death.

2. After six days. After six days intervening. [Luke](#) says, "About eight days," he counting the one before and after the six days that intervened. For notes on the Transfiguration see [Matt. 17:1–13](#), and compare [Luke 9:28–36](#).

14. And when he came to his disciples. After the transfiguration. **He saw a great multitude.** For notes on this miracle, see [Matt. 17:14–21](#). Compare [Luke 9:37–42](#). Mark's account is the fullest. According to the Revision, [Matthew](#) says that the youth was an epileptic, and the symptoms given by [Mark](#) are those of epilepsy. [Mark](#) also states that he had been afflicted from childhood.

23. If thou canst. The question is not whether Jesus can, but whether the afflicted father can. Can he have the needful faith in Christ? Faith is the great need.

24. Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief. The spark of faith has been kindled; if his faith is not strong, he prays the Lord to give him stronger faith. So should always pray the doubting Christian. If your faith is weak, cry for help.

26. The spirit cried and rent him sore. The evil spirit obeys most reluctantly and seeks to destroy one whom it can no longer use. The paroxysm of departure was fearful, and left the boy exhausted and as dead. The touch of Jesus completed the cure.

28, 29. Why could we not cast him out? His answer first was, according to [Matthew \(17:20\)](#), "Because of your belief." The whole difficulty centered in their want of faith. No demon could defy them if only they had faith enough. And then Jesus illustrates the power of faith by showing that even a small amount of active, living faith, like a grain of mustard-seed, could remove "this mountain," perhaps pointing to Mount Hermon, at whose base they were, and which towered in its grandeur above them. **Can come forth by nothing, but by prayer.** (*Fasting* is omitted in the New Version, but placed in the margin.) The faith which will be effectual must be a faith exercised in prayer. The work of the Church is still

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to cast out devils, the unclean spirits of worldliness, selfishness, greed, infidelity, lust, intemperance, Sabbath-breaking. These still defy the ordinary efforts and faith of God's people. We have faith enough for ordinary duties, for some giving, for prayer-meetings, for building churches; but there is a work which ordinary faith cannot do. How shall we get that higher faith? By prayer and fasting. By such an earnestness that we forget the needs of the body.

31, 32. The Son of man is delivered. See notes on [Matt. 17:22, 23](#). Compare [Luke 9:43–45](#).

33. What was it that ye disputed among yourselves? See notes on [Matt. 18:1–9](#). Compare [Luke 9:46–50](#).

35. Servant of all. The two conditions of true greatness are humility and service; not to be the servant of friends, or kindred, or of a class, or even of church members, but of *all*, like Christ.

38. John answered him, we saw one. The disciples had shortly before returned to Christ from their first missionary tour, in which they were empowered to cast out devils ([Matt. 10:8](#)). The man here referred to they probably met during this tour. He must have been a disciple of Christ, who was enabled by his faith, yet without a commission, to cure the possessed—*Abbott*. **Casting out devils in thy name.** Really, and not in a wrong spirit, as did the Jewish exorcists ([Acts 19:13, 14](#)); for it was done *in thy name*. Such workers as this man believed in him, or they would not have used his name. **He followeth not us.** Did not join himself to the apostles as one of their followers.

39. Forbid him not. He neither praises nor blames him for following an independent course, and not working with his disciples. He simply declares that he must not be forbidden, and that those who work the same kind of work that we do should be regarded, not as enemies, but allies. Thousands, in every period of church history, have spent their lives in copying John's mistake. They have labored to stop every man who will not work for Christ in their way from working for Christ at all.—*Ryle*.

42. Cause one of these little ones ... to stumble. See notes on [Matt. 18:6–10](#).

43. The fire that never shall be quenched. See note on [Matt. 5:29](#). The fires that were occasionally lit in the literal Gehenna, or Tophet, were necessarily only temporary. They died out for want of fuel. It was to be otherwise with the “fire” of the other and ulterior Tophet. The “fire” referred to is, of course, a mere symbol of the sum total of certain dreadful realities, for which there are no adequate representations in human language.

48. Worm dieth not, ... fire is not quenched. An expression borrowed from the [last verse of Isaiah](#), and probably in current use among the Jews of our Savior's time, as applied to the state of future retribution.

49. For. Our Lord is alluding to the pervading idea of [verses 45–48](#). These sacrifices of hand, foot, eye, must be made; *for*—**every one shall be salted with fire**. Fire is used in the

Scripture to denote suffering, persecution, trial, distress of any kind. Salt is used to denote permanence, preservation from corruption. *Every one, good and bad, must suffer.*

50. Have salt in yourselves. The spirit of self-sacrifice, and thus you will “have peace with one another.”



Chapter X

Christ's Law of Divorce

Summary —*Beyond Jordan En Route to Jerusalem. Dispute with the Pharisees About Divorce. The Law of Moses and That of Christ. Blessing the Little Children. The Rich Young Ruler. The Danger of Riches. Reward of Those Who Forsake All for the Gospel. The Ambitious Mother and Sons. The Baptism of Suffering. Blind Bartimæus Healed.*

1. He arose from thence. From Capernaum. His Galilean ministry was now terminated. He was about to start his last journey to Jerusalem. See notes on [Matt. 19:1, 2](#).

2–11. The Pharisees came to him. Somewhere on the east of the Jordan, while on his way. For notes on this conversation about marriage and divorce, see [Matt. 19:3–13](#). Compare [Luke 16:18](#).

12. If a woman shall put away her husband. This was allowed by the Greek and Roman law ([1 Cor. 7:13](#)), but not by the Jewish. Christ applies his principles to either sex on the same footing.

13–16. They brought unto him little children. See notes on [Matt. 19:13–15](#). Compare [Luke 18:15–17](#). See also notes on [Matt. 18:3, 4](#).

17–22. There came one running. See notes on [Matt. 19:16–22](#). Compare [Luke 18:18–22](#). [Mark](#) adds that the young man came “running,” and “kneeling” in the way. He alone tells us that “Jesus beholding him loved him.”

23–31. How hardly shall they that have riches. For notes on the Lord's words concerning riches, see [Matt. 19:23–30](#). Compare [Luke 18:24–30](#). [Mark](#) adds one sentence that furnishes the key to the interpretation of the whole discourse: “How hard it is for them that *trust* in riches,” etc.

32–34. They were amazed; ... they were afraid. For they now distinctly perceived that their Master intended to proceed with the pilgrims to Jerusalem, and they held back in dismay, knowing that his destruction had been determined on by the ruling authorities there. They seemed to hang back as men foreboding peril, and were amazed that their Master should throw himself into such danger. **He began to tell them.** To their terror lest he should be put to death at Jerusalem, he responded that he was going to die. He had told them at least twice before, but they were unable, as yet, to understand it. See notes on [Matt. 20:17–19](#). Compare [Luke 18:31–34](#).

35–45. James and John come unto him. For notes on this ambitious request, see [Matt. 20:20–28](#). We learn from [Matthew](#) that Salome, the mother, came and spoke for them.



38. Ye know not what you ask. Prayer is often unwise in its requests from ignorance. Before many days they saw places on his right and left occupied by two robbers on the cross.

46–51. They came to Jericho. They had now crossed the Jordan into Judea. For Jericho and the healing of the blind man, see notes on [Matt. 20:29–34](#). Compare [Luke 18:35–43](#).

52. Thy faith hath made thee whole. Bartimæus' faith was shown, (1) by his going to Jesus; (2) by his belief that Jesus was the Messiah; (3) by persevering against opposition; (4) by casting away all that hindered; (5) by obeying Jesus when he was called; (6) by following and praising him after he was cured.



Chapter XI

The Royal Entrance into Jerusalem

Summary — *The Official Entrance into Jerusalem. The Barren Fig Tree Cursed. The Second Cleansing of the Temple. The Indignation of the Jewish Rulers. The Power of Faith. The Demand of the Rulers for His Authority. Their Mouths Closed by a Question Concerning the Baptism of John.*

1–10. When they came nigh to Jerusalem. On the Sunday before the Lord's suffering. He had passed the Sabbath at Bethany. We have four accounts of this entry into Jerusalem: here; [Matt. 21:1–11](#); [Luke 19:21–44](#); [John 12:12–19](#). For notes, see [Matt. 21:1–11](#).

11. He went out to Bethany with the twelve. After entering the city and temple and observing the condition of things within the sacred building he retired to Bethany for the night. As far as we know he passed all his nights of the last week of his earthly life at Bethany, save Thursday, perhaps to avoid the rulers in the hours of rest and to have an opportunity for private conference with his disciples, which he could not have in crowded Jerusalem. Besides, he had loving friends at Bethany, who delighted to have him under their roof.

12–14. And on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, he hungered. etc. See notes on [Matt. 21:17–22](#).

15–19. Jesus went into the temple. For notes on this cleansing of the temple see [Matt. 21:12, 13](#). Compare [Luke 19:45–48](#).

20–24. They saw the fig tree dried up. See notes on [Matt. 21:19–22](#). Mark adds the fact, not stated by Matthew, that this language was spoken the day after the tree was cursed. **Believe that ye receive them.** That they are yours from the time you ask for them.

25. When ye stand praying, forgive. This is one of the conditions of prevailing prayer. See notes on [Matt. 5:23, 24](#).

27–33. And they come again to Jerusalem. On Tuesday. On Sunday the Lord entered officially. On Monday he cleansed the temple, and cursed the fig tree. On Tuesday his disciples called attention to the withered fig tree, and he again entered the city. There a delegation of the rulers demanded by what authority he had driven out the money changers the day before. For notes on his answer and what follows, see [Matt. 21:23–27](#). Compare [Luke 20:1–8](#).



Chapter XII

A Day of Controversy

Summary — *The Vineyard and the Wicked Husbandmen. Prophecy of the Calling of the Gentiles. The Herodians and Pharisees. Tribute to Cæsar. The Sadducees and the Resurrection. Which Is the Greatest Commandment? The Son of David David's Lord. Beware of the Scribes. The Widow's Mite.*

1–12. He began to speak unto them in parables. A series of parables, given more fully by Matthew, outlining the sins and fate of the stubborn Jewish nation. **A man planted a vineyard.** For notes on this parable, see [Matt. 21:33–46](#). Compare [Luke 20:9–19](#).

13–17. They send certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians. For notes on the effort to entrap Jesus on the matter of tribute to Cæsar, see [Matt. 22:15–22](#). Compare [Luke 20:20–26](#).

18–27. Then come the Sadducees. For notes on this interview with the Sadducees, see [Matt. 22:23–33](#). Compare [Luke 20:27–40](#).

28–34. One of the scribes came. See notes on [Matt. 22:34–40](#). Matthew adds that the scribe asked his question, “tempting him;” that is, “testing him.” **Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.** This commendation, not given by Matthew, is given because the scribe had declared that outward obedience amounted to nothing unless the heart was right. Pharisaism consisted of forms and paid little attention to love, mercy, and purity of heart. Alford says: “This man had hold of that principle in which law and gospel are one. He stood, as it were, at the door of the kingdom of God. He only wanted (but the want was indeed a serious one) repentance and faith to be *within* it. The Lord shows us here, that even outside his flock, those who can answer discreetly, who have knowledge of the *spirit* of the great command of law and gospel, are nearer to being of his flock than the formalists; but then, as Bengel adds, 'If thou art not far off, enter; otherwise it were better than thou wert far off.'”

35–37. How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? See notes on [Matt. 22:41–46](#). Mark adds to Matthew's account, **The common people heard him gladly.** Not the Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees or rulers, but the common people, of whom the Pharisees were wont to say, “This people who know not the law and are cursed” ([John 7:49](#)). We have many hints of the favor with which Christ was regarded by the people.

38–40. Beware of the scribes. Mark gives in three verses his report of the wonderful discourse recorded in [Matthew, chapter 23](#). These three verses are parallel to [Matt. 23:5, 6, 14](#). See notes there. Compare [Luke 20:45–47](#). **Love to go in long clothing.** Peculiar to Mark. Long, flowing robes, reaching to the feet, similar to those worn by Romish priests, and were worn by the scribes as a kind of professional attire, in order to attract attention. When Christ sent his apostles out to preach, he directed that they should be clothed as the common people ([Mark 6:9](#); [Matt. 10:10](#)). The *scribes*, ancient and modern, love display, showing themselves

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off in the chief places of concourse. They love appellations of honor and respect, such as Rabbi, Father, Master, Teacher. Men often profess a desire to magnify their office, when in truth they want to magnify themselves. They love robes that advertise to every one that they are separate from the rest of the people.

41. He sat over against the treasury. This incident of the widow's mites is omitted by Matthew, but given in [Luke 21:1–4](#). It is given as a contrast to the hypocrisy of the scribes. **Treasury.** A name given by the rabbins to thirteen chests, called trumpets, from their shape, which stood in the court of the women, at the entrance to the treasure-chamber. “Nine chests were for the appointed temple tribute, and for the sacrifice-tribute; that is, money-gifts instead of the sacrifices; four chests for free-will offerings, for wood, incense, temple decoration, and burnt offerings.—*Lightfoot*. **Beheld how the people cast money.** Jesus still takes note of our offerings. Before the passover, free-will offerings, in addition to the temple tax, were made.

42. There came a certain poor widow. Here, as in other places in the Bible, we must remember the exceedingly depressed and dependent condition of a poor man's widow in the countries where our Lord was. The expression is almost proverbial for one very badly off, and most unlikely to contribute anything to a charitable purpose. **Two mites.** The smallest of Jewish coins, about the value of one-fifth of a cent. It took its name from its extreme smallness, being derived from an adjective signifying *thin*. **A farthing.** Mark (not Luke) adds for his Roman readers an explanation, using a Greek word (taken from the Latin), meaning the fourth part, as our word “farthing” does. The value is only of importance as showing upon how minute a gift our Lord pronounced this splendid panegyric, which might be envied by a Croesus or a Rothschild.

43. Cast more in than all. Note the word *more*—proportionately, to-wit, to her means, and thus *more* in the estimation of God, who measures quantity by quality.

44. For. The worth of a gift is to be determined, not by intrinsic value, but *by what it costs* the giver. The measure of that cost is what is *left*, not what is given. For the widow to give her mites was noble; for one well off to give “his mite” is contemptible. **All that she had, all her living.** Out of her want, out of her destitution, she has cast in all that (in cash) she possessed—her whole (present) means of subsistence. In love she devoted all of God, with strong faith in his providential care.



Chapter XIII

Christ's Discourse on the Last Days

Summary — *The Destruction of the Temple Foretold. The Persecution of the Saints. The Gospel Preached to All Nations. The Awful Calamities of the Jewish Nation. Christ's Coming to Judgment. The Hour When He Shall Come Not Known. Watch, Pray, and Be Ready.*

1. As he went forth out of the temple. This whole discourse is reported most fully by [Matthew, chapter 24](#), on which see notes. Compare [Luke 21:5–38](#). I only notice here what is peculiar to Mark.

3. Peter and James ... asked him privately. [Matthew](#) says “the disciples came to him privately,” but does not name them. “Privately” probably means apart from the multitude. The destruction of the temple had been publicly foretold ([Matt. 23:38; 24:2](#)).

9. Take heed to yourselves. In [Matthew's](#) report persecution is foretold, but the injunctions of [verses 9, 10, 11](#), or rather given in [Matt. 10:18–20](#), on which see notes. **Take heed.** Not to escape persecution, but to be ready for it. **They shall deliver you to councils.** Jewish courts. Besides the great national council, the Sanhedrim, each principal town had a smaller council, or local Sanhedrim. **In the synagogues ye shall be beaten.** In every Jewish synagogue there were three magistrates authorized to inflict certain punishments, scourging being one. The number of stripes could not exceed forty ([Deut. 25:3](#)); hence they always stopped at thirty-nine. **Governors and kings.** Roman officials, such as Felix, Festus, Gallio, King Agrippa and Nero.

18. Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. [Matt. 24:20](#) adds, “*neither* on the Sabbath day.” The reasons for these monitions to the Jerusalem church are given in the notes on [Matthew](#). The sign given by the Lord for the flight, the environment of the city by the Romans, and the panic that caused their sudden withdrawal, occurred on Tuesday, in October. Hence the flight was neither in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day.

30. This generation shall not pass. See notes on [Matt. 24:34](#).

32. Of that day ... knoweth no one, ... neither the Son. When the Son was on earth in the flesh, he voluntarily subjected himself to limitations, among them ignorance of the hour when he would return again to judgment. If he voluntarily knew not, what folly of theologians to fix upon the time.

37. Watch. Observe in this chapter the emphasis given to Christ's exhortation, “*Watch!*” [Matthew](#) tells us how the Lord sought to impress these lessons of watchfulness and faithfulness still more deeply by the parables of the “Ten Virgins” ([Matt. 25:1–13](#)), and the “Talents” ([Matt. 25:14–30](#)), and closed all with a picture of the awful day when the Son of man should



separate all nations from one another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats
([Matt. 25:31-46](#)).



Chapter XIV

The Seizure, Trial, and Condemnation of Christ

Summary — *The Sanhedrim Resolves on Christ's Death. The Anointing at Bethany. Judas Sells His Lord. The Day of Unleavened Bread. The Lord's Passover. The Lord's Supper Established. Peter's Denial Predicted. The Agony in the Garden. Christ Seized by the Soldiers and Temple Guards. Christ Before the Sanhedrim. The Confession and Condemnation.*

1–9. After two days was the feast of the passover. See notes on [Matt. 26:1–16](#). Compare [John 12:1–8](#). The action of the Sanhedrim was taken on Wednesday, the Anointing took place the Saturday before, and is brought up here on account of its connection with the bargain Judas made with the chief priests.

10, 11. Judas Iscariot. See notes on [Matt. 26:14–16](#).

12–16. On the first day of unleavened bread. See notes on [Matt. 26:17–19](#).

17–21. In the evening he cometh. On the Lord's last passover see notes on [Matt. 26:21–25](#). Compare [Luke 22:21–23](#); [John 13:21–35](#). See also notes on [John](#).

22–26. As they did eat. On the institution of the Lord's Supper, see notes on [Matt. 26:23–29](#). Compare [Luke 22:19–21](#); [1 Cor. 11:23–25](#).

27–31. All ye shall be offended. See notes on [Matt. 26:31–35](#). Compare [Luke 22:31–38](#).

32–42. They came to a place which was named Gethsemane. See notes on [Matt. 26:36–46](#), where the fullest account of the agony is given. Compare [Luke 22:40–46](#). [Luke](#) only speaks of the “sweat, as it were drops of blood.”

43–52. While he yet spake, cometh Judas. For the Betrayal and Arrest, see notes on [Matt. 26:47–56](#). Compare [Luke 22:47–53](#); [John 18:1–12](#). See notes on [John](#). [Verses 51 and 52](#) are peculiar to [Mark](#). Some have supposed the **certain young man** to be [Mark](#). This is only conjecture. The incident may have been introduced to show the rudeness of the assailants and to emphasize the escape of all the disciples from so wanton an attack. The linen cloth was a night robe.

53–65. They led Jesus away to the high priest. For Trial of Christ, see notes on [Matt. 26:57–68](#). Compare [Luke 22:63–71](#); [John 18:13–27](#). [Mark's](#) account corresponds very closely with [Matthew's](#).

66–72. As Peter was beneath in the palace. See notes on [Matt. 26:69–75](#). Compare [Luke 22:54–62](#); [John 18:15–17, 25–27](#). **He wept.** The form of the Greek verb (imperfect) implies that he continued weeping. “It is a touching and beautiful tradition, true to the sincerity of his repentance, if not as a historical reality, that, all his life long, the remembrance



of this night never left him, and that, morning by morning, he rose at the hour when the look of his Master had entered his soul, to pray once more for pardon.”—*Geikie*.



Chapter XV

The Crucifixion

Summary — *Jesus Sent by the Sanhedrim to Pilate. The Multitude, Moved by the Priests, Clamor for His Death. They Reject Jesus and Demand Barabbas. Jesus Delivered to Be Crucified. Crowned with Thorns, Spit Upon, and Mocked. Crucified at Golgotha Between Thieves. Mocked by the Priests. Jesus Dies. The Veil of the Temple Rent. The Centurion's Confession. Buried in the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa.*

1–20. The chief priests ... bound Jesus ... and delivered him to Pilate. See notes on [Matt. 27:1, 2](#); 11–31. Mark's account differs a little from that of Matthew. Compare [Luke 23:1–35](#); [John 18:28–40](#); [19:1–16](#).

21–41. They compel one Simon ... to bear the cross. See notes on [Matt. 27:32–56](#). Mark's account is almost parallel. Compare [Luke 23:26–49](#); [John 19:17–30](#). Only Mark declares that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. See [Romans 16:13](#); [1 Tim. 1:20](#); [Acts 19:33](#). Simon, while a native of Cyrene in North Africa, was a Jew.

42–47. When the even was come. See notes on [Matt. 27:57–61](#) for the Burial of Jesus. Compare [Luke 23:50–56](#); [John 19:36–42](#). Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa, who obtained the body of Jesus and placed it in Joseph's new-made tomb, were both members of the Jewish Sanhedrim. Nicodemus had come to Jesus by night ([John 3:1, 2](#)) and had vainly opposed the animosity of the Sanhedrim ([John 7:50–53](#)).



Chapter XVI

The Resurrection

Summary — *The Women at the Tomb. The Empty Sepulcher. The Message of the Angel. Mary Magdalene Sees the Risen Lord. The Message to the Disciples. Seen of Two Disciples at Emmaus. Appears to the Eleven. Rebukes Their Unbelief. Gospel for All the World. Received into Heaven.*

1. When the sabbath was past. Compare [Matt. 28:1–17](#); [Luke 24:1–11](#); [John 20:1–10](#). As Mark's account is peculiar in some things, I add some notes. The Sabbath ended at sunset; the women then made their preparations to visit the tomb at dawn. **Might come and anoint him.** This shows that they did not expect his resurrection. The Jews were wont, as a mark of honor, to surround the body in the tomb with fragrant spices. Nicodemus ([John 19:39, 40](#)) had brought spices. Perhaps the women did not know this; perhaps they wished, in addition, to render their own loving service.

3. Who shall roll away the stone? They were not aware of the deputation of the Jewish rulers which had gone to Pilate and secured the sealing of the stone and the setting of the watch over the tomb ([Matt. 27:62–66](#)), and their only anxiety was how they would get the great stone, with which the rock-cut sepulcher was closed, rolled away.

4. Looked. Rather, *looking up*. They may have been looking down before, absorbed in the conversation. The tomb was probably above them, cut horizontally in the face of the rock at a slight elevation.

5. And entering into the sepulchre. Mary Magdalene, seeing the stone rolled away, and supposing the body had been removed by the Jews, runs to find Peter and John ([John 20:1, 2](#)). The other women proceed to the sepulchre, and enter. **Saw a young man.** **Matthew** calls him an angel. **Luke** says that there were two who “stood;” *i. e.*, appeared suddenly. Besides, they might easily have both sat and stood during the interview; might have been both outside and inside at different moments, and they might have been seen both singly and together in the sudden and shifting apparition.—*Jacobus*.

6. He is risen. Through woman death was first introduced into the world; to woman the first announcement was made of the resurrection.

7. Tell his disciples and Peter. Observe that as Christ's first appearance is to Mary Magdalene ([John 20:18](#)), out of whom he had cast seven devils, so his special message is to Peter, who had denied him. A touching commentary on our Savior's saying that he came to save sinners.

8. Neither said they anything to any man; i. e., on their way to tell the disciples. “For,” says Dr. Wells, “they were afraid to stay, and not to hasten all they could to the apostles.” They were in a tumult of commotion, and could not pause by the way to speak to any.

9. Now when he had risen. The remainder of the chapter is not found in the Vatican or Siniatic Greek MSS., but is found in the Alexandrian. These are the three oldest and most reliable MSS. Some hold these verses to be a later addition, but as they are found in all the most ancient versions they must have been a part of Mark's Gospel when the first century ended. Schaff, Plumptre, Olshausen, Lochman and others regard them genuine, while other critics consider them doubtful. A circumstance in their favor is that the Vatican MS. has a vacant space for them. It seems probable that in an early copy, therefore, they were omitted for some cause by a copyist who left space for them, but did not afterwards fill it, and that the Siniatic MS. was made from the mutilated copy. It is clear that [verse 8](#) was not designed to conclude Mark's narrative. **He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.** This appearance is described more fully in [John 20:11–17](#).

10. And she went. While she was going to tell the disciples, Jesus appeared to the other women, who had started before on the same errand ([Matt. 28:9, 10](#)).

11. They ... believed not. Their disbelief was overruled for good, for it furnishes abundant proof that they did not *invent* the story of the resurrection.

12. Jesus next appeared to Peter ([Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5](#)). **After that.** On the afternoon of the same day (Sunday) ([Luke 24:13–32](#)). **He appeared in another form.** Luke explains this by saying that their eyes were holden. If their eyes were influenced, of course, optically speaking, Jesus would appear *in another form*.

13. And they went. Back to Jerusalem, to the upper room where the ten disciples were assembled ([Luke 24:33](#)). **And told it.** They related their whole interesting interview.

14. He appeared to the eleven themselves. Compare [Luke 24:36–49; John 20:19–23](#).

15. He said unto them. Probably not at the time referred to in [verse 14](#), but later. The Lord appeared many times during the forty days. These words may have been spoken at the great meeting in Galilee ([verse 7; Matt. 28:18–20](#)). **Go into all the world.** Jesus is the world's Savior; he died for all; the gospel must be preached to all. In the first commission ([Matt. 10:6](#)) they were sent only to Jews. **Preach the gospel.** The good news of salvation through Christ; the way of life. **To every creature.** To every mortal. None are denied the Savior if they will have him.

16. He that believeth. Believeth the gospel message; believes in Christ as his Savior. **And is baptized.** These are the conditions of pardon; faith in Christ and obedience to his command. If any one has not faith enough in Christ to obey him he has not faith enough to be saved. **He that believeth not.** Remains in a state of unbelief. Such have no promise. See [John 3:18](#).

17. These signs shall follow them that believe. It is generally held that this is a promise limited to the apostolic age and to a few of the disciples of that age. Perhaps the plural *them* does not have for its antecedent the singular *he* in [verse 16](#), but the plural *them* in [verse 14](#). If it does not, why is the number changed in [verses 15 and 16](#)? The grammatical construction

requires us to look to [verse 14](#) for the antecedent of *them* in [verse 17](#). In [verse 14](#) the apostles are “upbraided for their unbelief because they believed not them who had seen him after he had arisen.” They are commanded to go and tell the glad story, and assured that miraculous credentials shall be given to those of “them who believe” and tell the wonderful tidings. **In my name shall they cast out devils, etc.** See [Acts 2:4; 5:16; 8:7; 16:18; 28:3](#).

19. After the Lord had spoken unto them. The words above, and other words recorded in the other Evangelists. **He was received up into heaven.** In [Acts](#) it says, “a cloud received him out of their sight.” He did not fade away from sight, but a cloud came as a veil between him and the eyes of the gazing disciples. The cloud can be pierced by the eye of faith, and our Lord seen interceding for us at the right hand of God.

20. They went forth, and preached everywhere. Acts of the Apostles is the history of their preaching. It should be studied to see how the Apostles understood and preached the Commission of the Lord. The Commission of Christ is to his Church; its field is the world; its work is to preach the gospel; its congregation embraces every creature; its offer is a free and full salvation; the conditions of salvation are faith in Christ, and obedience to him; the consequence of rejecting Christ's salvation is eternal condemnation.



**The Gospel According to
Luke**



Introduction to Luke

The Third Gospel is assigned by the common voice of the primitive Church to Luke, “the beloved physician” and companion of Paul. Of his earlier history nothing is recorded. There is no proof that he ever saw the Lord or that he became a believer until some time after his death. He was not a Jew, his name is Greek, his style and modes of thought point to Greek training, and it has been generally believed that he was one of “the Grecians who turned to the Lord” in the great commercial city of Antioch where the first Gentile church beyond Palestine was founded. From the incidental references to himself in the Acts we learn that he was the constant companion of the later ministry of the great apostle to the Gentiles, and this is confirmed by the allusions to him in the Epistles. From [Col. 4:14](#); [Philem. 24](#); [2 Tim. 4:11](#), we learn that he was a Gentile, a physician, that he remained with Paul in his imprisonment at Cæsarea and attended him to Rome, where he was his companion during his long sufferings

The Gospel of Luke differs from the other three in its sources of information. Matthew wrote as an eye witness; Mark probably recalled the recollections of Peter; John recalled his own personal memories of the life and words of the Lord, but Luke draws from the authentic sources of information then accessible, and he carefully presents the results in an orderly narrative. There are reasons for believing that during the period when Paul was a prisoner at Cæsarea, Luke, under his direction, set in order the facts of the Life of Christ in order to furnish an account fitted for the use of Gentile converts, and Gentiles who desired to learn of the Lord. “As Paul was the apostle, so in a faint degree Gentile Luke was the evangelist, of the Gentiles. He traces the genealogy up, not merely to Abraham, but Adam, the son of God. He makes Christ’s first teachings at Nazareth commemorate the extension of God’s mercy beyond the limits of Israel. [Luke 4:16–30](#). He shows how the sinner is forgiven upon condition of obedient faith. [Luke 7:36–50](#). The publican is, in Paul’s favorite term, *justified*. Evidently their narrative of the Lord’s supper is the same tradition. [Luke 24:34](#); [1 Cor. 15:5](#).”

Luke’s two books, his Gospels and the Acts, are properly two successive parts of one Christian history; and as the latter terminates at the point where Paul has lived two years at Rome, in the year 64, so the Gospel must have been written before that period, namely during the 27 years after Christ’s death. For as Luke terminates his Acts abruptly with the close of Paul’s two years’ imprisonment, without adding a syllable of that apostle’s later history, it is very certain that the Acts was published at that time. Yet, we know from the preface to Acts that the Gospel had been already written. Thus, it is evident, that it was written 27 years after the crucifixion.



Chapter I

The Birth of John

Summary —*Preface. The Announcement to Mary. The Visit of Mary to Elisabeth. The Prophecies of Mary and Elisabeth. The Birth of John. The Prophecy of Zacharias. The Child in the Deserts.*

1. Forasmuch as many. [Verses 1–4](#) are an introduction. They explain that already many narratives of Christ had been written, that these were by eye witnesses and ministers of the word, that Luke had made a careful examination of all these sources of information, and thought it good, “having traced all things accurately from the first, to write them out in order.” We thus learn that at least as early as twenty-seven years after the death of Christ (see [Introduction to Luke](#)) many histories of eye witnesses and ministers had already written, of which only two, Matthew and Mark, have come down to us.

3. Most excellent Theophilus. The name means “A lover of God.” He is named in [Acts 1:1](#), but of him nothing more is known.

5. There was in the days of Herod. For Herod, see notes on [Matt. 2:1](#). **A priest.** Not a chief priest, but one belonging to the courses. **Course of Abijah.** All the priests were divided into twenty-four courses, or classes. That of Abijah was the eighth course ([1 Chron. 24:10](#)); each course took charge of the temple worship in succession, for a week at the time, beginning on a Sabbath. The heads of these twenty-four courses are “the chief priests” so often spoken of in the New Testament. **Had a wife of the daughters of Aaron.** Elisabeth also was of priestly family.

6. They were both righteous. Almost invariably great men of God are born of parents eminently pious. Augustine, Luther, Wesley, and Campbell are examples.

8. While he executed the priest's office. His course came on duty once in twenty-four weeks, and then he repaired to Jerusalem to remain his week.

9. His lot was to enter into the temple. In the service of the sanctuary nothing was left to accident or to human arrangement. The *lot* determined who was to perform each separate portion of the sacred service, and especially who was each morning and evening to burn incense before the Lord. **To burn incense.** Burned on the altar of incense in the Holy Place morning and evening. To burn the incense was an office held so honorable that no one was allowed to perform it twice, since it brought the offering priest nearer the divine presence in the Holy of Holies than any other priestly act, and carried with it the richest blessing from on high, which all ought to have a chance of thus obtaining.

10. Praying without. The incense itself was a symbol of prayer ([Psa. 141:2](#); [Rev. 5:8](#)), and when offered by the priest a bell was rung as a signal to the people in the courts without, who all engaged in prayer in deep silence.



11. An angel. His name was Gabriel ([verse 19](#)). This is the first messenger of the New Dispensation. **The altar of incense.** It was of cedar, overlaid with gold ([1 Kings 6:20](#); [1 Chron. 28:18](#)), was a cubit (about two feet) in length and breadth, and two cubits high; it stood in the Holy Place before the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

13. Fear not. This first celestial message at the dawning of the New Testament dispensation is one of cheer. **Thy prayer is heard.** The childless old priest had prayed for offspring. **Shalt call his name John.** That is, “the God-given.”

15. Shall drink ... nor strong drink. No kind of intoxicant. Like the Nazarites ([Numbers 6](#)).

17. In the spirit and power of Elijah. The likeness of John the Baptist to Elijah strikes us not only in his outward appearance, his clothing and way of living, but in his spirit and character as a preacher of repentance. **Turn the hearts of the fathers.** These are the last words of the Old Testament, there uttered by a prophet, here expounded by an angel; there concluding the law, and here beginning the gospel ([Mal. 4:6](#)). **To make ready a people prepared for the Lord.** This was his mission, but it was only partially successful. The common people, who heard him gladly, received with gladness the Messiah; the scribes and Pharisees, who rejected the forerunner, rejected also the King.

18. Whereby shall I know this? He wanted a sign.

19. I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God. The word of such a messenger was sign enough. He is named also in [Dan. 8:15–18](#). Seven angels “stand before God” ([Rev. 8:2](#)).

20. Thou shalt be dumb. His power of speech taken away shall be a sign.

21. The people waited for Zacharias. Those who were praying without waited until the incense offering priest came out and dismissed them with a benediction.

23. To his own house. To his own city and home.

24. Hid herself. Did not go into society, both from delicacy and that she might have more time for devotion.

25. Take away my reproach. To be childless was regarded a great calamity in Israel. Compare [Gen. 16:1–3](#) and [30:1](#).

26. Was sent to a city of Galilee. Nazareth, the home of Mary. Matthew ([1:20](#)) gives an account of this visit, but does not give the angel's name.

27. To a virgin. She was espoused; that is, formally engaged to Joseph, but not yet married. Compare with [Matt. 1:18–25](#).

30–33. Fear not. In the angel's message we have, (1) An assurance, **Fear not.** (2) A promise, **Thou shalt bring forth a son.** (3) A command, **Thou shalt call his name Jesus.** (4) A prophecy, **He shall be great, the Son of the Highest, sit on David's throne, reign forever.**



39. Arose. In consequence of the angel's words. **Went into the hill country.** The central plateau of Judea, containing the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron. Hebron was a Levitical city ([Josh. 21:11](#)). Whether the city was Hebron, Juttah, or some other, is only conjecture.

42–45. Blessed art thou among women. The language of Elisabeth, Oriental poetry, is that of an inspired prophet. **Mother of my Lord.** Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

46–55. Mary said. Mary also is filled with the spirit of prophecy. These two godly women are the first human prophets of the New Testament. Mary's language is in part drawn from the Psalms. This hymn is divisible into three parts: (1) [46–49](#), recognition of God's strange grace upon her own humble person and character; (2) [50–53](#), a recognition that it is ever thus that God exalts the humble, and brings low the proud; (3) [54, 55](#), the result is that humble Israel is now to be exalted according to God's ancient promise to Abraham. **My Saviour.** Mary, by this word, reckons herself among that which was lost. She obtained salvation, not from herself, but from Jesus.—*Bengel.* **Call me blessed.** Pronounce me highly favored, or happy in being the mother of the Messiah. Abraham was blessed in being the father of the faithful; Paul in being the apostle to the Gentiles; Peter in first preaching the gospel to them; but who would think of worshiping or praying to Abraham, Paul, or Peter? **To Abraham.** See [Gen. 12:1–3; 13:14–17; 15:5](#). **And his seed.** The seed promised to Abraham was to be a blessing to the whole world. Compare the hymn of Hannah ([1 Sam. 2:1](#)).

59. On the eighth day. On the eighth day male Jewish children were circumcised and named ([Gen. 17:12](#)). The kinsmen present called the child after his father's name, a common Jewish custom, but Elisabeth protested that his name should be John, that given by the angel. The matter was referred to the father.

63. Asked for a writing tablet. Because his tongue had not yet been loosed.

65. Fear came on all ... them. On account of so many marvels.

67. Zacharias ... prophesied. As soon as his tongue was loosed it was employed to praise the Lord. All inspired utterances are called prophesying, but in the present case there was clearly inspired prediction. In the Old Testament spirit the kingdom of Christ in the future is described in general terms.

68–75. A horn of salvation. An allusion to the Savior. The horn was a symbol of power. **As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets.** “Of him have all the prophets borne witness.” “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” “The whole volume of Scripture did prophesy of him. He was the sum and scope of all their predictions. He was Abraham's promised seed, Abraham's Isaac, Jacob's Shiloh, Moses' Great Prophet, Esaias' Immanuel, Ezekiel's Shepherd, Daniel's Holy One, Zechariah's Branch, Malachi's Angel; all of them predictions to foretell his coming. All their types and ceremonies pointed at him. He was Abel's Sacrifice, Noah's Dove, Abraham's First Fruits, Aaron's Rod, the Israelites' Rock, the Patriarchs' Manna, David's Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple; all these prefigured his incarna-

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tion. They were the folds and swathing of the this babe Jesus.”—*Bishop Brownrig*. **From our enemies.** The priest is, at the same time the patriot in the best sense of the term, deeply moved by the sight of Roman tyranny. **The oath.** This oath is recorded in [Gen. 22:16, 17](#). It was an oath in which God swore by himself, because he could swear by no greater ([Heb. 6:13, 14](#)), that he would surely bless Abraham and his posterity; that promise was now to be entirely fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah.

76–79. Thou, child. The babe, John, before him. **Prophet of the Highest.** “The Most High” is an epithet in Scripture only of the *supreme God*. **By the remission of their sins.** The remainder of the sentence embodies the gospel in brief. It promises (1) salvation, (2) not merely political but spiritual. A remission of, and redemption from sin, (3) indicates the cause—the divine mercy (compare [John 3:16](#); [Eph. 2:4–8](#)), and (4) promises the result, “like to eyes in darkness, and peace to feet straying in paths of sorrow and perplexity.” **The dayspring.** Christ is the *morning light*, the *rising sun* ([Mal. 4:2](#)). The gospel brings *light* with it ([John 3:19](#)).

80. The child ... was in the deserts. In the wilderness of Judea where he could have ample opportunity for communion with God.



Chapter II

The Birth of Jesus

Summary — *The Decree of Augustus Cæsar. The Journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The Babe in the Manger. The Shepherds and the Song of the Angels. The Circumcision of the Child. The Child in the Temple. The Prophecies of Simeon and Anna. The Child at Nazareth. Jesus with the Doctors. My Father's Business.*

1. Went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus. Augustus Cæsar, the nephew and heir of Julius Cæsar, the first of the Roman emperors, was now the ruler of the civilized world. Though Judea was ruled by Herod as king, he was dependent upon and the servant of Augustus Cæsar. **That all the world.** The Roman empire which embraced all the world then known to civilization; all southern and western Europe, western Asia and northern Africa. **Should be enrolled.** A census was to be taken as a preliminary to a poll tax in the provinces.

2. This was the first enrolment made, etc. This statement has caused some difficulty. Luke seems to affirm that the enrolment took place the year Jesus was born, but while Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Now Cyrenius was governor of Syria from a.d. 6 to a.d. 11. There are two ways of settling the apparent difficulty: (1) Augustus Cæsar, incensed at Herod, ordered an enrolment for taxation of the Jews the year of the birth of Jesus. It was carried out in all probability by Cyrenius. The intercession of Herod's minister, Nicolas, averted the displeasure of Augustus and the taxation did not take place until Cyrenius was governor of Syria, after Archelaus, son of Herod, was deposed. These facts we learn from Josephus, and they remove the apparent discrepancy. But (2) A. W. Zumpt, of Berlin, followed by Alford and Schaff, make it highly probable that Cyrenius was governor of Syria twice, the first time from b.c. 4 to b.c. 1. I have not space for the argument which seems conclusive. But in b.c. 4 Jesus was born. Ancient writers, Christians as well as pagan opposers, state that Jesus was born while Cyrenius was governor of Syria.

3. Every one to his own city. It was the Jewish custom to enroll by tribes and families. Joseph was of the family of David, and would have to be enrolled where that family had its landed inheritance.

4. Joseph also went from Galilee. How long he had been living in Galilee is unknown. **To the city called Bethlehem.** The city of David, and of David's family.

5. To enrol himself with Mary. Women had to be enrolled also and were subject to the poll tax. Mary was of the line of David, and hence would also have to go to Bethlehem.

6. And it came to pass. Mary and Joseph, when journeying to Bethlehem, were probably ignorant of the fact that they were helping to fulfill the prophecy that pointed to Bethlehem as the birthplace of Christ.

7. **Her first-born son.** This implies that Mary was subsequently the mother of other children. **Swaddling clothes.** A long, narrow cloth in which new-born children were closely wrapped. **In a manger.** In the feeding trough of beasts of burden, probably attached to the inn, where there was no room for them among the crowds of strangers then in the city. When the Lord stooped from Divine glory to take upon him humanity, he stooped to its most lowly estate. An Oriental inn is thus described: “The *khan* is usually much on the model of the Eastern house, but of much larger extent. Four rows of apartments are so constructed as to enclose a large yard with a well in the center where the cattle may be kept. The outer wall is usually of brick upon a stone basement. The apartments are entered by the guests from the yard, and are elevated two or three feet above the level of the yard. Below and behind the row of the travelers' apartments was often the row or the long room of stables, into which the floors of the apartments being a little extended, formed a platform upon which the camels could eat.”

8. **There were shepherds.** The fields around Bethlehem have been for four thousand years the resort of shepherds. There David had cared for his flocks. **Keeping watch.** To guard their flocks from robbers and wild beasts, and to keep them from straying.

9. **The angel of the Lord.** An angel announces the conception of Jesus; a host of angels publish his birth; in his temptation an angel strengthens him; in his agony an angel comforts him; at his resurrection an angel rolls away the stone from the door of the sepulcher; at his ascension the angels attend him up to heaven; and at his second coming to judge the world he shall be “revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.”

10. **I bring you good tidings.** The way to pardon and peace with God was about to be thrown open to all mankind. **To all people.** The knowledge of God was no longer to be confined to the Jews, but to be offered to the whole Gentile world.

11. **City of David.** A term applied to the village of Bethlehem as the birthplace of the greatest among Israel's kings; David's greater Son begins his earthly career in his ancestor's home. Seven hundred years before the prophet had predicted the Messiah's birth at Bethlehem ([Mic. 5:2](#)). **Christ the Lord.** The Anointed Lord, for which the nation was so eagerly longing.

12. **A sign unto you.** The *sign* was not itself a miraculous one, but the prediction of it was so. The babe, the swaddle, and the manger were the three tokens.

13. **A multitude of the heavenly host; i. e.,** angels, who are represented as a host surrounding the throne of God ([1 Kings 22:19](#); [2 Chron. 18:18](#); [Psa. 103:21](#); [Dan. 7:10](#); [Matt. 26:53](#); [Rev. 19:14](#)). **Praising God.** Their praises are recorded in the [next verse](#).

14. **Glory to God.** The life of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the earth was the working out and development of the song of the angels. It was “Glory to God” illustrated in his consecration and death. It was “peace” in all the utterances of his lips; peace in his Gospel. It was “good will toward man;” for every thought, word and act of that blessed life was the translation of God's infinite love into forms visible to the mortal eyes that saw him.

16. Came with haste. Mark the prompt obedience to the heavenly vision displayed by the shepherds. We see in them no doubts, or questionings, or hesitations.

19. Mary kept all these things. A mother forgets none of those things which occur respecting her children.

21. When eight days were accomplished for circumcising of the child. See note on [Luke 1:59](#). According to the law Jesus was circumcised the eight day. Born under the law of Moses, he kept it, in all things blameless, until “the handwriting of ordinances was nailed to the cross.” He was circumcised because it was then God's law, to be obeyed until it was set aside. His example does not warrant infant baptism, because he was afterwards baptized when a man, but does show that the law of God is to be observed, whatever it may be. There is no ground for the assertion that baptism came in the place of circumcision. Note, (1) circumcised Jews were also baptized; (2) only males were circumcised, while both sexes are baptized; (3) there is no scriptural ground for the statement that one rite takes the place of another. **His name was called Jesus.** The name was given on the eighth day, according to Jewish custom, which the angel had commanded.

22. The days of their purification. See [Lev. 12:4–6](#). These “days” were a period of thirty-three days after the circumcision of a male child. He was then to be presented in the temple by the parents.

23. Every male ... shall be called holy. That is, devoted to the Lord. See [Exod. 13:12](#). All the first-born were to be presented to the Lord and redeemed by an offering ([Num. 18:15](#)).

24. To offer a sacrifice. The law ([Lev. 12:6–8](#)) required a lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or turtle-dove for a sin offering, but in the case of the poor one of these birds might be substituted for the lamb, “and the priest shall make atonement for her and she shall be clean” . The fact that Joseph and Mary brought a pair of birds instead of a lamb shows that they were very poor. The gifts of the wise men were after this.

25. Simeon. The first prophet to declare that Christ had come. **Looking for the consolation of Israel.** The promised Messiah. **The Holy Spirit was upon him.** To give him supernatural knowledge. It was revealed to him that he should see Christ.

27. Came in the Spirit into the temple. Directed by and filled with the Spirit. **After the custom of the law.** Offered the required sacrifices. The law was strictly observed, because Jesus was “born under the law.”

28. And said. The utterances of Elizabeth, Mary and Simeon are consecutive. Each begins where the other ends. Mary sings her own born Messiah; Zacharias celebrates the triumph of Israel, and Simeon announces the hopes of the Gentiles. But, besides this holding forth the Messiah as a Savior for Gentile as well as Jew, what is remarkable is, that he announces in Jesus a *suffering* Messiah as well as a glorious.—*Whedon*.



32. A light to lighten the Gentiles. Scholars have said that in the work of opening the gates of Christianity to the Gentiles, Stephen was the forerunner of Paul. Might it not be said that Simeon was the forerunner of Stephen, and the Gentile Luke the historian of both? Yet the true doctrine on the subject is explicitly and repeatedly declared not only here, but in the prophecies of the Old Testament. Compare [Isa. 9:2; 40:1; 49:6](#).

33. Marvelled. That Simeon should know the child.

34. Set for the falling and rising of many. Christ brought downfall to the hopes of those who expected a temporal prince and a political millennium, and ruin to those whose desire for the kingdom of God was ambition for place and power in it, as the Pharisees. He brought rising to those who were willing that God should overthrow their plans and ambitions, and who accepted from him the grander gift of a universal kingdom, prepared for all people. The rejection of him brought ruin to the Jews; the acceptance of him brought life eternal.

35. A sword shall pierce through thine own soul. He announces that the blessed mother should also be a sorrowing mother. Though she was exulted in the thought that her son should sit on the throne of David, she learns now that the calumny will make him its sign, and a sword shall pierce her soul. **That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.** Christ brings to light by bringing into activity the thoughts of the heart. The result of preaching Christ is always to awaken opposition or love and obedience.

36. One Anna, a prophetess. An aged saint who spoke by inspiration. **Daughter of Phanuel.** Evidently a man well known in that day. **Of the tribe of Asher.** One of the twelve tribes occupying the strip of sea-coast from Sidon to Carmel.

37. A widow even for fourscore and four years. She had passed seven years with a husband when young and then remained a widow until, at this time, she was eighty-four years old, devoting herself to a religious life. **Departed not from the temple.** Probably assigned, on account of her saintly character, a chamber in the temple.

38. Spake of him. Of the Babe, she speaking by inspiration, and declaring that he was the promised child.

39. They returned into Galilee. Luke omits the stirring events that lie between the visit to the temple and the return to Nazareth, possibly because they are so fully given by Matthew. See [Matthew, chapter 2](#). **Their own city Nazareth.** The old home of Joseph and Mary, now to be the home of Jesus until he was thirty years of age; a mountain village in southern Galilee.

40. The child grew. He was a child, and a child that grew in heart, in intellect, in size, in grace, in favor with God. Not a man in child's years. **Filled with wisdom.** The body advances in stature and the soul in wisdom. The divine nature revealed its own wisdom in proportion to the measure of the bodily growth.—*Cyril*. In “the mystery of godliness,” “God manifest in the flesh,” one of the inscrutable things that was that the Divine man should become a babe, not only in body, but in mind and wisdom.

41. Went to Jerusalem. The law of Moses required that the adult males of the Jewish nation should appear before the Lord, at the place of his altar, three times every year—at the great festivals, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Though females were not required to attend, they often did from religious devotion.

42. When he was twelve years old. At the age of twelve a boy was called by the Jews “son of the law,” and first incurred legal obligation. Henceforth it would be his personal duty to keep the law.

43. Fulfilled the days. The seven of the passover week. **Jesus tarried behind.** Luke neither tells us that Jesus remained behind at Jerusalem intentionally, nor that Joseph and Mary lost sight of him through want of necessary care. A circumstance must here have been omitted, and we may safely suppose that Joseph and Mary joined their fellow-travelers in the persuasion that Jesus, who knew of the time and place of departure, was among the younger ones.

44. In the company. The caravans, in which the passover companies went, for the purpose of protection against beasts and robbers, must have each been large, composed of many parties, clans and kindreds. Jesus might easily, therefore, have not been missed until the end of the first day.

46. In the temple. Probably in one of the porches of the court of the women, where the schools of the rabbis were held, and the law regularly expounded. **In the midst of the doctors.** The learned rabbins. Some of the greatest doctors of Jewish history lived about this period—Hillel, Rabbi Simeon and Gamaliel. **Asking them questions.** It was the custom in Jewish rabbinical schools for scholars to ask questions.

49. How is it that ye sought me? Did ye not know that I must be in my Father's house? That is, in the temple, where they did find him. They ought to have come there at once. These words are the first in which he reveals his consciousness of his supernatural birth.

50. Understood not. Did not comprehend all he meant in speaking of his Father's house.

51. He went down with them. If his heart drew him to the temple, the voice of duty called him back to Galilee, for the law required obedience to parents.

52. Jesus increased. Jesus grew up among a people seldom and only contemptuously named by the ancient classics, and subjected at the time to the yoke of a foreign oppressor; in a remote and conquered province of the Roman empire; in the darkest district of Palestine; in a little country town of proverbial insignificance; in poverty and manual labor; in the obscurity of a carpenter's shop; far away from universities, academies, libraries, and literary or polished society; without any help, as far as we know, except the parental care, the daily wonders of nature, the Old Testament Scriptures, the weekly Sabbath service of the synagogue

at Nazareth ([Luke 4:16](#)), the annual festivities in the temple of Jerusalem ([Luke 2:42](#)), and the secret intercourse of his soul with God, his heavenly Father.—*Schaff*.



Chapter III

Jesus Anointed by the Holy Spirit

Summary — *John's Preaching and Baptism. John's Witness of Christ. Herod and Herodias. Jesus Baptized. The Anointing and the Voice from Heaven. The Genealogy of Christ.*

1. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. Tiberius, the second Roman emperor, was the step-son and successor of Augustus Cæsar (see [Luke 2:1](#), note). Tiberius was raised to the throne A.U.C. 764 (after the founding of Rome), and the fifteenth year would be A.U.C. 779. Counting back thirty years from this, brings us to A.U.C. 749, which is about four years earlier than the common date of the birth of Jesus and before the death of Herod the king. See notes on [Matt. 2:1](#). **Pilate being governor of Judea.** Archelaus, the son of “Herod the king,” was deposed after ten years of rule, and Judea made a province under the rule of a Roman governor. Pontius Pilate was the fifth of these. **Herod being tetrarch of Galilee.** See notes on the Herods under [Matt. 2:1](#). It was this Herod, Herod Antipas, who murdered John the Baptist. **His brother Philip.** This was not the husband of Herodias, but another brother Philip. **Abilene.** North of Palestine.

2. In the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. The Jews recognized but one high priest, who held his office for life, but Annas was removed from the office by the Roman governor, Pilate, and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, appointed in his place. Hence, both were called high priests at the same time. **The word of God came unto John.** He was called to begin his work.

3. Came into all the country. Compare [Matt. 3:1–12](#), on which see notes; also [Mark 1:1–8](#).

7. Offspring of vipers. Spoken to the Pharisees ([Matt. 3:7](#)).

10, 11. What shall we do? Note, (1) Those that are baptized must be taught; and those who have baptized them are concerned, as they have opportunity, to teach them ([Matt. 28:19, 20](#)). (2) In John's answer we have his moral system. His morality differs from that of the Lord, inasmuch as the former lays more stress upon the regulation of the external conduct, while Jesus lays more upon that of the inner life.

12. Publicans. The gatherers of the Roman tax.

14. And the soldiers. Whether these were Jews or Romans cannot be ascertained. It is not improbable that, as Judea was a Roman province, they were Jews or Jewish proselytes in the service of Herod Antipas or Philip, and so were really in the Roman service.

19, 20. But Herod the tetrarch. See notes on [Matt. 14:1–12](#); also [Mark 6:14–18](#).

21, 22. Jesus also being baptized. See notes on [Matt. 3:13–17](#); also [Mark 1:9–11](#).



23–38. The Genealogy. For a comparison of the genealogies given by Matthew and Luke, see notes on [Matt. 1:1–17](#). In those notes I have followed Godet, Van Oosterzee, and others in the view that Luke gives the line of Mary, and therefore the line of Christ. Jesus was only *supposed to be the son of Joseph*, but was *the son* (that is, descendant, grandson) of *Heli*, the father of Mary.



Chapter IV

The Beginning of Christ's Ministry

Summary —*The Temptation. Teaching in the Synagogues. Jesus at Nazareth. Rejected by the Nazarenes. Jesus at Capernaum. The Unclean Spirit Cast Out. The Healing of the Mother-in-Law of Peter.*

1–13. The Temptation. See notes on [Matt. 4:1–11](#). Compare [Mark 1:12, 13](#).

14. Returned. After the Temptation. For the events before the return, see [Matt. 4:12](#). **In the power of the Spirit.** Full of Divine strength since his victory over Satan. To conquer evil always lifts to a higher power.

15. Taught in their synagogues. See note on [Matt. 4:23](#), for description of synagogues.

16. Entered ... into the synagogue. The meetings were held every Sabbath in the synagogues, and Jesus was accustomed to attend, as were all religious Jews. Compare with [Matt. 13:53–58](#) and [Mark 6:1–5](#). Critics differ whether this is an account of the same visit as that of [Matt. 13](#), or a different one. It seems probable that there were two visits. **Stood up for to read.** To indicate his readiness to read. It was allowed that any member of the synagogue might read the lesson, and this was the one in which he had been reared.

17. The book of ... Isaiah. There were regular readings for each Sabbath, and that of this one was partly in Isaiah. The book was a roll of manuscript. **He found. Isa. 61:1–3.** A passage that refers to the Messiah. All will note how accurately it describes his work.

20. Closed the book. Rolled up the manuscript. **Gave it to the minister.** Not a rabbi, but an officer who had charge of the building and its furniture. **And sat down.** It was the custom of the synagogue to stand while reading, to sit while teaching. **The eyes of all ... in the synagogue.** The man brought up among them was about to address them for the first time. The report from other places preceded this visit; the passage was remarkable, and doubtless there was something in the appearance of our Lord, especially under these circumstances, which would command unusual attention—*Schaff*. His mother, brethren and sisters were probably present.

21. This day is this Scripture fulfilled. By the preaching to which they were now about to listen.

22. Bare witness, and wondered. As he proceeded with his discourse. **Is not this Joseph's son?** They were astonished that Joseph's son, without rabbinical education, could speak with such power and knowledge.

23, 24. Physician, heal thyself. This seems to have been answered to their whispered words and the thoughts he read in their hearts. They had heard of his fame in Capernaum, but they knew him as a poor young man, and his family was poor. "If he has such power as



fame reports, let him better his own condition.” He replied to their proverb with another, often verified, **No prophet is acceptable in his own country.**

25–27. Many widows were in Israel. He points out that Elijah saved a Sidonian widow, and Elisha healed a Syrian leper, passing by Hebrews and healing Gentiles, and thus he points to the salvation of Gentiles by Christ. **Sarepta.** The same as Zarephatha, a town between Tyre and Sidon. See [1 Kings 17:9, 10](#). **Naaman.** See [2 Kings 5:14](#).

28–30. Were filled with wrath. They were so filled with bigotry that the suggestion of the salvation of the Gentiles was intolerable, and in their rage they sought to slay him. See [Acts 2:22](#), where a similar suggestion leads the Jews to seek Paul's death. **Passing through the midst of them.** With a majesty that overawed them.

31. Came down to Capernaum. Nazareth was on the hills; Capernaum in the deep depression of the Sea of Galilee.

33–37. In the synagogue was a man. See notes on [Mark 1:21–27](#). Matthew omits this account.

38, 39. Simon's wife's mother. See notes on [Matt. 8:14–17](#). Compare [Mark 1:29–34](#).

43. I must preach ... in other cities. See notes on [Matt. 4:23–25](#) and [Mark 1:35–39](#).



Chapter V

Christ Teaching and Healing

Summary — *Christ Teaching from Peter's Boat. The Miraculous Draught of Fishes. Called to Be Fishers of Men. Cleansing the Leper. Palsied Man Healed. Matthew Called. Eateth with Publicans. Persecution Foretold. New Wine in Old Bottles.*

1. The people pressed ... to hear the word of God. When the people are not prejudiced by false teachers they are usually eager to hear the Word. **Lake of Gennesaret.** Another name for the Sea of Galilee.

2. Saw two boats standing. Those of Peter and Andrew, and of James and John. See [Matt. 4:18–22](#), for notes; also [Mark 1:16–20](#).

3. Which was Simon's. Simon Peter. **Taught the people out of the ship.** So that they could not press upon him. The “ship” was a fishing boat.

4, 5. Put out into the deep. Deep water. **For a draught.** He thus promises one. **At thy word.** Though he had fished all night in vain, at Christ's word he would try again. He already was a disciple of Christ ([John 1:40–42](#)).

6. Their net brake. Tristram (*Land of Israel*) says of the fish in the Sea of Galilee: “The shoals are marvelous, black masses, many hundred yards long, with their black fins projecting out of the water as thick as they could pack. Any net would break that enclosed such a shoal.”

8. Fell down at Jesus' knees. Filled with awe and reverence at the miracle that had drawn the shoal to their net.

10. Said unto Simon. Not to him alone ([Matt. 1:19](#)). Simon, Andrew, James and John were all told to become “fishers of men.”

11. They forsook all. The four just named. Before this all were disciples; henceforth they follow Jesus personally. These all together cast the gospel net on Pentecost and had a mighty draught.

12–16. A man full of leprosy. See notes on [Matt. 8:2–4](#) and [Mark 1:40–45](#).

17–26. There were Pharisees and doctors. See notes on [Matt. 9:2–8](#) and [Mark 2:1–12](#).

27–39. Saw a publican named Levi. See notes on [Matt. 9:9–17](#) and [Mark 2:14–22](#). **Levi.** Matthew Levi. He was the fifth called to attend the footsteps of Jesus. Like the others, at the call, he rose and followed at once. **Made a great feast.** To let Jesus meet with his fellow-publicans. **Why do the disciples of John fast?** Intended as a rebuke for their attendance at a great feast. Jesus shows that fasting ought not to be a form, but to have a meaning.

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Chapter VI

The Twelve Apostles Chosen

Summary — *The Son of Man Lord of the Sabbath. The Man with the Withered Hand Healed. Accused of Sabbath-Breaking. The Apostles Chosen. Blessings and Woes. Returning Good for Evil. Evil and Good Fruit. The Wise and Foolish Builders.*

1–5. It came to pass on a sabbath. Such is the reading of the Revision. The common text, the *second-first* in the Greek, is referred by Godet to *second-first* Sunday of the year. The *first* first Sabbath was the first Sabbath of the civil year; the *second* first was the first sabbath of the religious year. It came in the spring. For notes on the controversy caused by the Lord's disciples plucking the ears of wheat on the Sabbath, see [Matt. 12:1–14](#). Compare also [Mark 2:23–28](#) and [3:1–5](#). **Ears of corn.** Of wheat or barley.

6–11. It came to pass on another sabbath. For notes on the healing of the withered hand on the Sabbath, see [Matt. 12:1–15](#) and [Mark 3:1–5](#).

12. Went out into a mountain to pray. Preparatory to calling the apostles. Our Lord always prepared for any great crisis by prayer.

13. He called his disciples. After the night of prayer. Out of these twelve were chosen. For notes on the call of the Apostles see [Matt. 10:1–5](#). These are four lists of the twelve: that here: [Matt. 10:2–4](#); [Mark 3:16–19](#); [Acts 1:13](#). They differ slightly because some of the apostles had two different names: for example, Matthew is also called Levi, and Simon is called Peter.

17–19. Came down and stood on a level place. We now come to Luke's report of the Sermon on the Mount, given much more fully in [chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew](#), on which see notes. Luke only states that the sermon was preceded by the healing of the diseased in the vast multitudes which had assembled from all parts of the country.

20–23. Blessed. These beatitudes are given more fully in [Matt. 5:3–12](#), where see notes. Luke says **kingdom of God**; Matthew, *of heaven*, showing that the two are the same.

24–26. Woe unto you that are rich! Matthew omits these woes. Woe unto all whose heart is set upon their riches and who take their delight and consolation in them. The woe rests upon all who are engaged in the greedy chase after wealth, or make it their great good. See [Mark 10:24](#) and [1 Tim. 6:9, 10, 17](#). **Woe unto ye that are full now!** Because, satisfied, they do not hunger after righteousness ([Matt. 5:6](#)). Such shall hunger when stripped of all that is earthly. **Woe unto you, ye that laugh now!** Give themselves to merriment, seeking fun and enjoyment instead of preparation. **When all men shall speak well of you!** Those who seek to be universally popular. Whoever does his duty will meet those who oppose him. Christ was reviled and slandered. These four woes are addressed to four classes: (1) Those who worship wealth; (2) those satisfied with their present life; (3) those who live for present enjoyment; (4) those whose aim is human praise and adulation.

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27–36. Love your enemies. These precepts are found in 1 in their connection. See notes there.

37, 38. Judge not. See notes on [Matt. 7:1, 2](#). **Give into your bosom.** The loose garment of a Jew was belted at the waist, and in its capacious bosom grain, or other articles, were carried.



39. Can the blind lead the blind? See notes on [Matt. 15:14](#).

40. The disciple is not above his master. See note on [Matt. 10:24](#).

41, 42. The mote that is in thy brother's eye. See notes on [Matt. 7:3–5](#).

43–45. For a good tree. See notes on [Matt. 7:15–20](#).

46–49. Why call ye me, Lord, Lord? See notes on [Matt. 7:21–27](#). Luke adds: **Digged deep.** This is often needful to reach the rock. We must dig deep, even to our heart, to its center, to build upon *the* Rock, Christ our Lord. The confession of faith in Christ ([Matt. 16:16](#)) must be believed with the heart ([Rom. 10:10](#)), confessed with the mouth, in order that we may be built upon the Rock ([Matt. 16:18](#)).



Chapter VII

The Widow's Son Raised from the Dead

Summary — *The Centurion's Servant Healed. The Son on the Widow of Nain Raised. John's Message and the Reply. The Greatness of John the Baptist. The Banquet at the House of a Pharisee. The Woman That Was a Sinner. The Rebuke of Simon. The Woman Saved by Faith.*

1–10. A certain centurion's servant. For notes on the healing of the centurion's servant, see [Matt. 8:5–13](#).

11. He went into a city. The raising of the son of the widow of Nain is only recorded by Luke. **Nain.** A village on the northwest slope of Little Hermon, about twenty-five miles south of Capernaum.

12. Came nigh to the gate. Like most Oriental towns it had walls and a gate. Just outside of the gate he met the funeral procession. The dead were always carried out of a Jewish city for burial. **A dead man carried out.** On a bier, the body covered by a cloth, but not in a coffin. **The only son.** Such a loss to a Jewish widow would be too great for consolation. See [Jer. 6:26](#); [Amos 8:10](#); [Zech. 12:10](#).

13. Had compassion. Sorrow or need always touched his loving heart. **Weep not.** How often he has dried up the fountains of sorrow!

14. Touched the bier. As a signal to stop. There was an authority in not only the words but the acts of the Lord which compelled obedience. **Arise.** This is the first time he spoke these words to the dead. It must have been to his disciples and the multitude a moment of suspense and wonder.

15. Sat up. As the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus, so the widow's son at once obeyed, arose and spoke. The Lord finished his work by taking him by the hand and presenting him to his mother. Language is too feeble to express her joy.

16, 17. Came a fear. A sense of awe. **That a great prophet.** Not even the apostles had yet confessed him as the Christ. **Throughout all Judaea.** The story seems even to have reached John in prison, east of the Dead Sea.

18–33. The disciples of John. For notes on John's message, Christ's reply, and discourses about John, see [Matt. 11:2–19](#).

36. One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. This anointing is a different one from that recorded in [Matt. 26:7](#), and elsewhere. The breach between Jesus and the Pharisees was not yet so great as to prevent intercourse. Jesus accepted invitations of Pharisee and publican alike, with the like purpose of instruction in righteousness. "We must imagine the guests arriving; Simon receiving them with all courtesy, and embracing each in turn; slaves ready to wash the dust of the road from their sandaled feet, and to pour

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sweet olive oil over their heads to soften the parched skin. See [Gen. 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; Ru 3:3; 1Sa 25:41; Psalm 23:5; 141:5; Eccl. 9:8; Dan. 10:3; Amos 6:6; Matt. 6:17](#). But there is one of the guests thus not treated. He is but a poor man, invited as an act of condescending patronage. No kiss is offered him; no slave waits upon him; of course a mechanic cannot need the luxuries others are accustomed to.”

37. A woman ... a sinner. Evidently an outcast woman. **When she knew.** She had them heard before of his compassion and tender mercy. She had learned to believe that there was mercy even for her, for whom earth had no mercy. **Brought.** How could she enter into the banquet chamber? Kitto says: “There were always many people hanging about the court and the outer parts of the guest chamber, which was wholly open in front. A door is a great hindrance to admission into a room, and where that does not exist people easily slip in.”

38. Stood at his feet behind him. The Jews reclined at table, leaning upon the left elbow, with the feet stretched out behind. **With tears.** Heart-broken, with a sense of sin and a hope of mercy, her tears fell upon his feet.

39. When the Pharisee ... saw it. He wondered that Jesus did not spurn her. **He spake within himself.** The Pharisee mentally put the Lord into this dilemma—either he does not know the true character of this woman, in which case he lacks discernment of spirits which pertains to every true prophet, or, if he knows it, and yet endures her touch, he is lacking in that holiness which is also the mark of a prophet of God.

40–43. Jesus answering. To the unspoken thought. **Five hundred pence.** About seventy dollars. **Fifty pence.** About seven dollars. **Had nothing to pay.** The small debtor was as helpless as the other. We are all insolvent. **Forgave.** Forgiveness is the only hope of sinners. **To whom he forgave most.** There is a peculiar gratitude which the restored wanderer realizes, to which the one who has grown up in rectitude must be a stranger. Both may love with all the heart, yet their love will not possess precisely the same characteristics.

44–46. I entered into thine house. How strong the contrast between the indifference of the Pharisees and the earnestness of the penitent! He withheld water; she gave precious tears, “the blood of her heart,” says Augustine. He gave no kiss to his cheek; she covered his feet with kisses. He grudged even a drop of oil; she broke the box of rare ointment for her Lord. He treated him with despite as an underling; she adored him as a prince. The water for the feet, the kiss and the oil for the head were ordinary Oriental courtesies.

47–50. Wherefore I say unto thee. This woman, a great sinner, shows that she is forgiven by her great love. Her faith in Jesus led her to trust for forgiveness. **Thy sins are forgiven.** The fact which her trust led her to believe and which filled her soul with love is now announced. **Thy faith hath saved thee.** Her faith brought her to the feet of Christ, a contrite and weeping sinner. **Go in peace.** All her tokens of penitence and affection could not, even

in the eyes of sinful men, wash away the stain of her life, but the grace of Christ led her to true peace, as her abiding condition.—*Schaff*.



Chapter VIII

Speaking in Parables

Summary — *Women Ministering to Christ. The Parable of the Sower. That of a Candle Under a Bed. His Mother and Brethren. The Storm on the Sea. In the Country of the Gadarenes. The Devils and the Swine. The Daughter of Jairus Raised. The Woman with the Bloody Issue Healed.*

1. He went throughout every city and village. A thorough missionary tour of Galilee.

2. And certain women. That these women should attend the footsteps of Christ was opposed to the custom of Palestine. The admixture of the sexes was not common. The rabbis held that the law should not be taught to women. **Mary that was called Magdalene.** That is, of Magdala, a village near the Sea of Galilee. This is the first mention of her and we know nothing more of her preceding history. We know that after this she was one of the most devoted friends of Christ. **Seven devils.** For notes on demoniac possession see [Matt. 8:29](#).

3. Joanna the wife of Chuza. Nothing more is known of her. As her husband held a very responsible position, she must have been a woman of wealth and influence. **Herod.** Herod Antipas. See notes on [Matt. 2:1](#). **Susanna.** Not named elsewhere. **Ministered unto him.** Contributed to his support. They used their means to support Jesus and the apostles while preaching.

4–15. A sower went forth to sow. See notes on [Matt. 13:3–23](#); [Mark 4:1](#).

16–18. When he hath lighted a candle. See notes on [Matt. 5:15](#) and [Mark 4:21–25](#). [Mark](#) says, “Take heed *what* you hear;” [Luke](#), “*how* you hear.” *What* we hear depends on *how* we hear; *i. e.*, our attention and honesty.

19–21. Then came to him his mother. See notes on [Matt. 12:46–50](#); [Mark 3:21](#).

22–25. For notes on *Stilling the Tempest*, see [Matt. 8:23–27](#) and [Mark 4:35–41](#).

26–39. A certain man who had devils. For notes on the cure of the Gadarene demoniac, see [Matt. 8:28–34](#); [Mark 5:1–21](#).

40–56. A man named Jairus. For the miracles of raising from the dead the daughter of Jairus, and the healing of the woman with the bloody issue, see [Matt. 9:18–26](#) and the notes; also [Mark 5:22–42](#). This was the second instance of the Lord raising the dead.



Chapter IX

The Transfiguration

Summary — *The Twelve Apostles Sent Forth. Herod's Wonder About Jesus. The Five Thousand Fed. Peter's Confession of Faith. Saving and Losing Life. The Transfiguration. The Child Healed. Who Shall Be Greatest? James and John and the Samaritan Village. Excuses for Not Following Christ.*

1–6. He called the twelve. This Commission of the Apostles is given in [Matt. 10:1–42](#) and [Mark 6:7–13](#). Matthew's account is the fullest, on which see notes.

7–9. Now Herod the tetrarch. Herod Antipas. See notes on [Matt. 2:1](#). For Herod's perplexity about Christ, see notes on [Matt. 14:1–12](#) and [Mark 6:14–29](#).

10–17. Went aside privately into a desert place. See notes on [Matt. 14:13–27](#), for the feeding of the five thousand. Also [Mark 6:30–44](#) and [John 6:1–21](#). **Bethsaida.** Near the mouth of the Jordan into the Sea of Galilee. The *desert place* was near it on the eastern shore.

18–21. Whom say the people that I am? See notes on Peter's confession of faith, [Matt. 16:13–20](#); also [Mark 8:27–30](#). Luke only informs us that **he was alone praying**, his disciples being present, when he asked the question.

22–27. For the first announcement to his disciples of his death, and the discourse, see notes on [Matt. 16:21–28](#) and [Mark 8:31](#) to 9:1.

28–36. About an eight days after. See notes on [Matt. 17:1–9](#), for the Transfiguration. Also [Mark 9:1–8](#). Luke adds the fact that the Lord **went into the mountain to pray**; that **as he prayed**, he was transfigured; that **the fashion of his countenance was altered**; that the theme of conversation with Moses and Elias was the Lord's **decease**; that the apostles **were awake** when they saw the vision; that they **told no man in those days**, even as Jesus directed ([Matthew](#)). **They kept it close.** Until after the death and resurrection of the Lord.

37–42. Look upon my son. For the healing of the lunatic child see [Matt. 17:14–21](#) and [Mark 9:14–29](#). [Matthew](#) calls the boy a lunatic. The symptoms are like epilepsy.

43–45. For this second statement of the Lord's suffering at Jerusalem, see notes on [Matt. 17:22, 23](#) and [Mark 9:31, 32](#).

46–50. Which of them should be greatest. See notes on [Matt. 18:1–6](#) and [Mark 9:33–50](#). For notes on the question of John and the Lord's answer, see [Mark](#) as above.

51, 52. When the days were well-nigh come. The time of his suffering was not far away. He was about to leave Galilee. **He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.** Knowing what he should suffer there. Just when this was we are not told. **Sent messengers.** To secure a stopping place for himself and disciples on their journey. **Went into a village of the Samaritans.** To go from Galilee to Jerusalem “he must needs go through Samaria,” unless



he went down on the east of the Jordan. The Samaritans were hereditary enemies of the Jews, and the two peoples had no intercourse.

53, 54. They did not receive him. Because he was evidently journeying to Jerusalem. This stirred up their bigotry. They thus not only refused Jesus as a prophet, but violated the sacred duties of hospitality. The refusal to receive a religious teacher was considered a rejection of his claims. **Wilt thou that we command fire?** These gentle apostles were filled with wrath at the insult to the Master. Their zeal for the Lord led them into a sanguinary feeling that was sinful. Thus, often, religious zeal has led men to sinful acts and a persecuting spirit. **As Elias did?** See [2 Kings 1:9–12](#).

55. He rebuked them. Their spirit was not his. He quietly left the inhospitable village and went elsewhere. He was not a destroyer, but a Savior. Zeal for Christ is no excuse for fanaticism.

57–62. On these excuses, see notes on [Matt. 8:18–22](#); also [Mark 4:35](#). Luke adds a few new facts which I notice. **A certain man.** A scribe ([Matthew](#)). **I will follow thee.** The Lord tries his sincerity by telling him of the hardships before him. **The Son of man.** The Messiah (see note on [Matt. 10:23](#)). He had no permanent home. Often his only shelter at night was the open sky. **Another.** A disciple. See note on [Matt. 8:21](#). **Let the dead bury their dead.** Let the world attend to its own duties. To preach the kingdom rises above every other duty. The disciple was probably an apostle, who wished to stay with his father until his father's death. **No man having put his hand to the plough.** An agricultural figure. The plowman must look ahead instead of back. So, too, of the Christian. The Savior's words were suggested by a request of one to go home for a farewell before following him. In thousands of instances it has been shown that the convert who goes to confer with unbelieving relatives before the final step is likely to part with Christ instead. Heathen, ready to be baptized, who go home for a final farewell before the step, are likely to be persuaded not to take it, so missionaries tell us.



Chapter X

The Seventy Disciples Sent Forth

Summary — *The Harvest Ready but the Laborers Few. Seventy Preachers Chosen. The Charge. The Warning to Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. The Return of the Seventy. The Lawyer's Question. Who Is My Neighbor?. The Parable of the Good Samaritan. Martha and Mary.*

1. After these things. All that we can be certain of as to the time when the seventy were appointed is that it was *after* the events Luke has already related. There are reasons for thinking that it was near the close of our Lord's ministry. It is usually located in the country east of the Jordan, when the Lord began his last journey to Jerusalem. **Appointed seventy others.** He had already sent forth the apostles ([Luke 9:1](#)), and he now sent forth seventy preachers more. That he could find seventy fitted for this mission shows that his teaching was making a deep impression on the Galileans. **Sent them two and two.** That each one might have a helper, a counsellor and a sympathizer. **Into every city and place.** As the time of his earthly ministry shortened, it increased in earnestness and activity. The Lord in person visited as many places as possible, and these messengers were sent before to preach to the people and to prepare the way.

2. The harvest truly is great. See notes on [Matt. 9:37](#), where the same language is used, not on the same, but a similar occasion.

3–12. Go your ways. The instructions to the seventy are in substance the same as those given to the twelve in [Matthew, chapter 10](#). See notes on there. Matthew is fuller. Luke adds: **Salute no man by the way.** The Jewish salutations were very formal, hypocritical, and consumed much time. It is said that it often required from one to three hours to complete these formal salutations. The disciples were not to consume thus their precious time, nor did the Savior wish them to go through with foolish and insincere forms. **Peace be to this house.** The usual form of blessing when entering a house as a guest. **Son of peace.** One who is worthy of such a blessing and hospitality receives the messengers of the Lord.

13–15. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! See notes on [Matt. 11:21–24](#). It is thought that this is a repetition of the words used on a former occasion, in order to emphasize the sin of rejecting the messengers of the Lord.

16. He that heareth you, heareth me. See notes on [Matt. 10:40](#), where we have the same solemn and suggestive declaration.

17–20 The seventy returned with joy. How long after they were sent forth is unknown. **Even the devils are subject unto us in thy name.** In accordance with the promise made to the twelve ([Matt. 10:8](#)), and probably repeated to the seventy. All was wrought by the power of Christ's name. **I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.** Various interpretations



of this statement are given, but it is probable that Christ refers to the original fall of Satan (Isa. 14:12; Jude 6). The victory of his disciples over the demons is the harbinger of another fall, when Satan and all his works shall be destroyed. **To tread upon serpents and scorpions.** Evidently an allusion to the promise that the seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). It is a promise of victory over the power of sin, of victory **over all the power of the enemy.** The connection shows that it is symbolical. **Rejoice not** in your own power. Judas had this power in Christ's name. **But rather rejoice.** In the hope of salvation. The greatest of all subjects of rejoicing is that we are the children of God.

21, 22. I thank thee, Father. See Matt. 11:25–27, for notes. The same language is probably uttered here a second time.

23, 24. See notes on Matt. 13:16, 17. A similar occasion calls for the same language here recorded.

25–29. The parable of the Good Samaritan, as well as that of the Prodigal Son and Lazarus and Dives, are given only by Luke. **A certain lawyer.** One versed in the Jewish law, a theologian, a scribe, and possibly a rabbi. **Tempted him.** Put him to trial. **What shall I do to inherit eternal life?** He probably had noted that Jesus was calling sinners to repentance, but he fancied that he belonged to another class, and hence asks, What shall I do? **What is written?** The Lord calls on the lawyer to state his own understanding of the law. **Thou shalt love the Lord.** The lawyer answered well and gave the sum of the whole law. See Deut. 6:4, 5 and Lev. 19:18. **This do and thou shalt live.** He who fulfills the great law of love is born again. There is no inconsistency. *We repent and live, believe and live, obey and live, and love and live.* For these are all co-related. One cannot exist without the others. We cannot love God unless we believe and repent. “He that loves me will keep my words” (John 14:23). **Willing to justify himself.** Evidently conscious that he did not keep the law of love. **Who is my neighbour?** The Lord answers by a parable.

30–37. A certain man. A Jew of Jerusalem. **Went down.** It was a constant descent from Jerusalem to Jericho, over 3,000 feet in eighteen miles. **Fell among robbers.** The road is a dark, desolate, mountain pass, dangerous then, so beset by robbers still that no traveler dares go through it without a guard. **Which stripped him.** Not only of raiment, but of all he had; then left him, stunned, bleeding, unconscious, nearly dead. **A certain priest.** Jericho was a city of priests. A priest ought to be a holy man. The law commanded mercy and help to a neighbor (Exod. 23:4–5; Deut. 22:1–4). The priest and Levite both disregarded the law in passing the poor sufferer. **Likewise a Levite.** A temple minister. He probably excused himself by the example of his priest. **A certain Samaritan.** The hereditary enemy of the Jews; despised and hated by the latter. “The Jews and Samaritans have no dealings” (John 4:9). If any man had excuse for passing the wounded Jew by it was the Samaritan. But he, unlike the priest and Levite, **had compassion.** His compassion leads to action, to self-denial, and inconvenience. He dresses the man's wounds, sets him on his own beast, carries him

to the inn, and when he left, left money for his care. For ancient inns, see note on [Luke 2:7](#). **Two pence** was two days' wages, and there was promise of more. **Which of these three ... proved neighbour?** The stranger became the neighbor. So we are to be neighbors to all who need help. Christian love must know no narrow bounds of race or sect. Genuine philanthropy is a Christian spirit.

38. Entered into a certain village. Bethany, the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. It is probable that this incident is not related in its order of time. It may have occurred on the last journey.

39. Sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word. Martha seems to have been mistress of the house. Her thought was to entertain the Lord; Mary's to hear his word; both commendable; the latter, best.

40. Dost thou not care? Her sister seemed to her negligent and selfish, when her apparent neglect was due to the absorption in the truth.

41, 42. Thou art anxious and troubled. Agitated over temporal matters while there are others more important. **One thing is needful.** Jesus cared nothing for bodily indulgence. The important thing was the bread of life. That, Mary had chosen. Heed the lesson that he who *receives* most of his word and spirit, is most pleasing in his sight.



Chapter XI

Rebuking the Pharisees

Summary — *Teaching the Disciples to Pray. Parable of the Three Loaves. Earnestness in Prayer. The Charge That Jesus Cast Out Demons by the Aid of Beelzebub. The Sign of Jonas. Dining with a Pharisee. The Pharisees and Lawyers Denounced.*

1–4. Praying in a certain place. Luke neither tells where nor when. **Teach us to pray.** [Matt. 6:9–13](#), gives the Lord's prayer, but does not say that the prayer was taught in response to a request. See the notes on Matthew.

5–8. Friend, lend me three loaves. This parable is uttered to teach earnestness in prayer. **My children are with me in bed.** He could not rise to give the bread without disturbing them. **Because of his importunity.** When he should continue knocking and asking. How much more will the loving Father yield to the importunity of his children. Compare [Gen. 32:28](#); [Psa. 55:17](#); [1 Thess. 3:10](#) and [5:17](#); [1 Tim. 5:5](#); [2 Tim. 1:3](#).

9–13. Ask, and it shall be given. See notes on [Matt. 7:7–11](#). These verses are a part of the Sermon on the Mount. It is probable that Luke, who does not give a chronological history, incorporates them here, though not the time when they were spoken. The same may be said of various utterances given by Luke. Luke says instead of *good things* ([Matthew](#)) that the Father will give the **Holy Spirit**, the best possible gift.

14–26. He casteth out devils through Beelzebub. See notes on [Matt. 12:22–29](#); 43–45. This discourse was given in Galilee ([Matthew](#)).

27, 28. Blessed is the womb that bare thee. This woman, in her untaught enthusiasm, comes nearer the adoration of the mother of Jesus than anything elsewhere in the New Testament. The Lord rebukes it by saying: “Rather are they blessed who hear and keep the word of God.” Mariolatry is idolatry. There is not the slightest foundation for it in the New Testament.

29–32. They seek a sign. See notes on [Matt. 12:38–42](#), where we have the same language reported.

33–36. When he hath lighted a lamp. See notes on [Matt. 5:15](#) and [6:22, 23](#). **If thy whole body be full of light.** If it were thus the whole body would be luminous, and if our souls be full of light, of the light of Christ, then our light shall shine as that of a lamp.

37, 38. A certain Pharisee besought him. Jesus did not refuse invitations of Pharisees, or of publicans and sinners. **Marvelled that he had not first washed.** Dipped his hands. The tradition of the elders required those who came in from without to immerse their hands before eating. See [Matt. 15:2](#) and [Mark 7:2–5](#), for notes.

39–52. The Lord said unto him. The denunciation of the Pharisees and lawyers contained in these verses is found in similar language in [Matthew, chapter 23](#). That address was

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spoken in the temple. There is no improbability about the Lord speaking the same discourse twice to the same class of opposers. See the notes on [Matt. 23:1–36](#). [Verse 41](#) is peculiar to Luke. **Give for alms, etc.** The Pharisees were careful for the outside; careless for what was within; but the Lord says: “Give for alms **the within;**” *i. e.*, let your hearts and lives be full of compassion, and it will make you clean. **Ye tithe mint.** See note on [Matt. 23:23](#). **Ye love the uppermost seats.** See note on [Matt. 23:6](#). **Ye build the sepulchres.** See notes on [Matt. 23:29, 30](#). **Taken away the key of knowledge.** [Matt. 23:13](#), in different words, gives the thought. See note there.

53, 54. The scribes and the Pharisees. For the manner in which they tried to entrap Jesus, see the [22d chapter of Matthew](#), and the [8th and 10th of John](#).



Chapter XII

Various Warnings

Summary — *The Leaven of the Pharisees. God's Care for His Servants. Confessing Christ. The Two Brothers and the Inheritance. The Rich Fool. The Life More Than Raiment. The Lilies. Watching. The Wise and Faithful Steward. The Baptism of Suffering. Sending Peace on Earth. The Signs of the Times.*

1–5. Many thousands of the multitude. This is one of the passages that show the great impression produced at that time by Christ's teaching. See also [Mark 1:33; 2:2; 3:9; 6:31](#), etc. The discourse that follows is found almost verbatim in [Matthew. Beware of the leaven.](#) The spirit of the Pharisees. There is great danger of religion becoming formal and hypocritical. See note on [Matt. 16:6](#). **There is nothing covered.** For notes on [verses 2–5](#) see [Matt. 10:26–28](#). The flat tops of Eastern houses were the places from whence public proclamations were made.

6–9. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? See notes on [Matt. 10:29–33](#). Sparrows were the cheapest of all birds offered for sale.

10. Blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit. See notes on [Matt. 12:31, 32](#).

11, 12. When they bring you unto the synagogues. See notes on [Matt. 10:19, 20](#).

13, 14. One of the company said. This question concerning the inheritance, and the parable of the *Rich Fool* that follows, are only found in Luke. **Speak to my brother.** The man wished to enlist Christ's moral power for his pecuniary advantage. Whether his brother had wronged him or not is not stated, but the Lord's business was not to gain acres of land and money for men, and hence he replies: **Who made me a judge or a divider over you?** It was not his mission to look after temporal gains, but to save the souls of men.

15. Keep yourselves from covetousness. A greedy desire for the goods of this world. A sin of all ages and a besetting sin of our times. **A man's life consisteth not, etc.** Comfort, happiness, and, above all, eternal interests, do not depend on the abundance of our goods. Why then should a man give his life to a greedy chase after wealth?

16–19. He spake a parable. To show that riches do not secure one from evil. **A certain rich man.** There is no intimation that his wealth was unjustly secured. **What shall I do?** A common perplexity of the rich. They do not know what to do with their surplus wealth, though the needs of humanity call for it. **There will I bestow my goods.** In his enlarged storehouses. He will hoard his goods. Here was the beginning of his folly; to *hoard* his surplus instead of *using it* for the good of men. **Thou hast much goods laid up for many years.** He had the goods, but the years he could not claim. It was a second element of his folly to forget that life is uncertain, and to make no provision for its close. **Take thine ease.** Here is

the third element of his folly; to attempt to satisfy his soul with food, drink and merriment: to feed that which demands heavenly food on husks.

20, 21. Thou fool. The still, small voice may have said this, as mortal disease attacked him. Men said that he was sagacious, wise; but God said, "Thou fool." **This night.** Instead of having many years, *this night* he shall die, unprepared, and all his goods on which he set his heart be delivered over to others. **So is he that layeth up treasure for himself.** He is guilty of folly in the eyes of God. Wisdom requires that we should lay up treasure in heaven.

22–31. Be not anxious for your life. These verses are found in almost the same words in [Matt. 6:25–34](#). See notes there.

32. Fear not, little flock. The flock is safe only because of the Shepherd's care. The Lord is the Shepherd, and it is his pleasure to give not only food and raiment, but the kingdom to his children.

33. Sell what ye have. Lay up treasure in heaven. The true way of investing wealth is to consecrate it to good purposes. Better to sell in order to have wherewith to give, than to hoard like the rich fool. See notes on [Matt. 6:19–21](#).

35–46. Let your loins be girded. The long Oriental robe had to be taken up and girded before one was ready to travel. See notes on [Matt. 24:42–51](#). **Lights burning.** See [Matt. 25:3–8](#). **May open unto him immediately.** Be ready when the Lord's summons come. **In the second watch.** The Jews divided the night into four watches. The second and third covered the midnight hours. **The thief would come.** See notes on [Matt. 24:43, 44](#). **Who then is the faithful and wise steward?** See notes on [Matt. 24:45–51](#).

47, 48. That servant, which knew his lord's will. This is the wilfully disobedient servant. The man who sins in the face of knowledge is such a servant. His neglect of known duty shall aggravate his punishment. **He that knew not.** The man who sinned in ignorance shall have lighter punishment. Certainly degrees of punishment for degrees of guilt are taught. All will not be punished alike.

49. I am come to cast fire on earth. Conflict and persecution. This was the effect of preaching the gospel. It aroused opposition. See notes on [Matt. 10:34–37](#). **If it is already kindled.** The conflict had already begun. The enemies were seeking his death.

50. I have a baptism. Of suffering. That of the cross. **Straitened.** Feeling the burden in anticipation.

51–53. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? See notes on [Matt. 10:34](#).

54–57. When ye see a cloud rising. See notes on [Matt. 16:2, 3](#). **Why even of yourselves?** Why not judge what is right without any external signs?

58, 59. As thou art going with thine adversary. See notes on [Matt. 5:25, 26](#).



Chapter XIII

Christ Still Teaching

Summary — *The Galileans Slain by Pilate. Those on Whom the Tower of Siloam Fell. The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree. The Suffering Woman Healed in the Synagogue. Parable of the Mustard Seed and Leaven. Entering in at the Strait Gate. The Warning about Herod. The Woe of Jerusalem.*

1. Some ... which told him of the Galileans, etc. The incident referred to is not mentioned elsewhere. Tumults at the temple and bloody interference by the Romans were common. On this occasion, no doubt, many had been slain in the temple courts, and from what follows it is evident that those who brought the word thought it a judgment.

3. I tell you, Nay. He does not deny that they were sinners, but that they were greater sinners than others. **Except ye repent.** All were so great sinners that only repentance could save them. It was only a generation until the words of the Lord were strikingly fulfilled. The impenitent Jewish nation was destroyed by the Roman sword, as were those Galileans.

4, 5. Those eighteen, on whom the tower of Siloam fell. Nothing is known of the incident. The lesson is the same as before. These did not perish because they were greater sinners. All must repent or perish. Siloam was a suburb of Jerusalem, south of the city.

6–9. Had a fig tree. A common fruit in Palestine. It represents here the Jewish nation. **Found none.** The nation did not glorify God by fruitfulness in righteousness. **Three years.** The period of Christ's ministry among the Jews. **Cut it down.** As worthless. **Let it alone this year also.** The last year of opportunity was then being given. After that year and the final rejection of Christ the doom of the nation was sealed.

10–17. Behold, a woman who had a spirit of infirmity. This case of healing in the synagogue on the Sabbath is only given by Luke. We do not know when or where it occurred. In [Matt. 12:10–13](#) and [Mark 3:1–5](#), is recorded a similar case. The disease of the woman was probably paralysis. **The ruler of the synagogue.** The president of the body of elders. **Moved with indignation.** Because he thought Jesus had broken the Sabbath. The Mosaic law did not forbid healing on the Sabbath, but the "Tradition of the Elders" did. **There are six days.** He argues that the woman could have been healed on a week day. **Thou hypocrite.** Because he would help his ox or ass out of trouble on the Sabbath, but would not so help a human being. **Whom Satan hath bound.** All disease is the offspring of sin, but from Satan came sin.

18–21. For notes on the parables of the **Mustard Seed** and **Leaven**, see [Matt. 13:31–33](#).

22. He went on his way through the cities. It is supposed, east of the Jordan, in Perea.

23. Are there few that be saved? The same question is often asked now. Christ never answers it, but bids the questioner to look out for his own salvation.



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24. Strive to enter in by the narrow door. The language implies that effort, earnest, agonizing is necessary. The word “strive” in the Greek is the one from whence our word *agonize* comes. **The narrow door.** The door of the kingdom is so narrow that we cannot take our sins, our lusts, our worldliness and worldly pleasures in with us.

25. Hath shut the door. Even that narrow door shall be shut. The time of opportunity will pass by. Even here on earth, the heart hardens so that it will be impossible to stir it to repentance.

26, 27. We did eat and drink in thy presence. Compare with [Matt. 7:22](#), where see notes.

28, 29. Ye shall see Abraham. See notes on [Matt. 8:11, 12](#).

30. The last shall be first. See notes on [Matt. 20:16](#).

31. There came certain of the Pharisees. Their object was to frighten Jesus away, and hence they asserted that Herod, Herod Antipas, would kill him. He was the tetrarch of Galilee and ruler of the country beyond the Jordan, who slew John the Baptist. See notes on [Matt. 2:1](#).

32, 33. Tell that fox. Herod's most marked characteristic was unscrupulous cunning. The Lord uses the term to indicate that he understood the scheme. It was an artifice of Herod and the Pharisees to get him away. Herod was afraid to kill him on account of his popularity. **I perform cures to-day.** The meaning is, “I will attend to my present work here, which is only for a little season,” **and the third day,** in a short time. **I shall be perfected.** By the suffering at Jerusalem. See [Heb. 2:10](#). In other words, he will go freely about his work, but will soon be put to death, but not by Herod, who had no jurisdiction at Jerusalem. In that city he would die, for **It cannot be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem.**

34, 35. O Jerusalem. See notes on [Matt. 23:37–39](#). These words were probably uttered twice.



Chapter XIV

Teaching in Parables

Summary —*Healing on the Sabbath. The Chief Seats at a Wedding Feast. The Rule for Inviting Guests. The Parable of the Great Supper and the Excuses. Bearing the Cross Essential to Discipleship. Counting the Cost.*

1. One of the rulers of the Pharisees on a sabbath to eat bread. In despite of the rigid ideas of the Pharisees concerning work on the Sabbath, it was made a day of feasting. “Meet the Sabbath with a lively hunger; let thy table be covered with fish, flesh, and generous wine,” is a rabbinical precept. **They were watching.** Though pretending hospitality, on the watch for grounds of accusation.

2–6. A certain man who had the dropsy. Either a guest or one who came to be healed. **Is it lawful?** Conscious that they were watching him, he asked them a question which they declined to answer. The “tradition” said it was unlawful. **Which of you shall have an ass?** See notes on [Matt. 12:11](#).

7–11. Put forth a parable. In this case a spiritual meaning lies under the social instruction. **Chose out the chief seats.** The places of honor at the table. Certain seats were considered the most honorable. The Savior's instruction insists upon humility. The spiritual lesson is that one must not, like Diotrophes, seek the pre-eminence, but be content to work in lowly places, from whence he can be invited higher if his merits so demand. **He that exalteth himself, etc.** The Lord states a general law, but the final adjustment is often left to another state of being. Many a preacher has failed because he sought a place that was beyond his ability.

12–14. When thou makest a feast. To give dinners for the sake of earthly reward is worldly; to feed the needy is heavenly, and will be rewarded in heaven.

15–24. A certain man gave a great supper. This parable was spoken in reply to the remark in [verse 15](#), and shows that the world is not ready to “eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Compare [Matt. 22:1–14](#). **Come; for all things are now ready.** The second invitation, which it is the usual course to give in the East. John bade all get ready; and the Gospel of Christ bade all to *come*. Such is still the Gospel message. **Began to make excuse.** The excuses show that they did not wish to be guests. **The first said.** The first pleads landed property; the second, business; the third, social considerations; none of them good excuses. **Go out quickly.** To another class of persons. The first, who despised the invitation, are now rejected. The Jews are primarily meant. **The poor, the maimed, etc.** An abundant class in the East, a country destitute of alms-houses and hospitals. These probably represent the publicans and sinners. **Go out into the highways and hedges.** Far away—to the Gentiles. **Compel**

them to come in. Use the constraining power of the love of the gospel. **None of those men which were bidden.** They were excluded by their own act. They had refused to come. The stubborn Jews missed the slightest taste; so do all like them.

26, 27. If any man come to me. See notes on [Matt. 10:37, 38](#). **Hateth not his own father.** In just the same sense that he hates **his own life also.** That is, these must all be given up, turned away from, if we have to choose between them and Christ.

28–33. Doth not sit down first and count the cost? This calculation of what any enterprise or step will require before entering upon it is the part of wisdom. So, too, a disciple of Christ should count the cost. It is well to understand that every obstacle to the service of Christ must be given up.

34, 35. Salt therefore is good. See [Matt. 5:13](#) and [Mark 9:50](#), for notes. The Christian is the salt of the earth; the **savour** is the spirit of self-sacrifice; if it is wanting his life is worthless.



Chapter XV

Joy of Repenting Sinners

Summary — *The Publicans and Sinners. The Pharisees and Scribes. The Lost Sheep. The Lost Coin. The Lost Son. In the Far Country. Feeding on Husks. Coming to Himself. The Father's Welcome. The Elder Brother.*

1. All the publicans and sinners were drawing near. At the period of his ministry these classes were flocking in great numbers to hear him. **Publicans.** Gatherers of the Roman tribute, generally corrupt, universally despised, usually Jews by birth. **Sinners.** Persons excommunicated from the synagogues and usually held as outcasts.

2. Pharisees. The orthodox leaders. **Scribes.** Primarily copyists, but also the great theologians. **Eateth with them.** That he should be on social terms with sinners the Pharisees could not overlook.

3–6. What man of you, having a hundred sheep? Three parables spoken in succession to show how cordially God “receiveth sinners.” The shepherd who loseth one sheep out of the flock of a hundred will leave the rest and go to seek the straying one. **Layeth it on his shoulders.** A common custom with Eastern shepherds. **Rejoicing.** So every servant of God should rejoice at the return of a sinner.

7. There shall be joy in heaven. The Father rejoices and the Son and the angels with him. **Over one sinner that repenteth.** That “comes to himself,” decides to leave off sin and to serve God. Repentance means a change of mind or heart. **Than over ninety and nine just persons.** Over those who are already in Christ, safe, and need no repentance. It is the saving of the lost that brings the greatest joy.

8–10. What woman having ten pieces of silver? It is the custom of the East to have a string of coins for a bracelet, necklace, or headdress. The joy of finding the lost piece again illustrates the joy of heaven over the lost sinner. **Light a candle.** Because Eastern rooms, often only lighted by the doors, are very dark.

11–32. The Parable of the Lost Son. The two preceding parables represent Christ seeking for the lost; this, the sinner seeking for the Father's house; all three, the rejoicing over repentance. **A certain man had two sons.** There is something in this inimitable parable which goes straight to every human heart. It is almost impossible to refuse an entrance to it. It storms the strongest fortress of the soul, by its appeal to the latent sensibility to impression, that dormant or sepulchered humanness which underlies in every man his surface of passion or pride; it makes its way to the sympathy of the rudest, and surprises the most callous into the emotion which finds its best relief in tears. The child loves to hear its simple and affecting story, and many a criminal whom crime has done its worst to harden has been subdued by some stray hearing of its experience, it seemed so like his own.—*Punshon.* In this parable



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the father is the Heavenly Father; the elder son, the self-righteous, in this case the Pharisees and scribes; the younger son, the sinful, in this case the publicans and sinners. **Give me the portion of thy substance.** A selfish and unfilial demand, suitable to the sinner who demands of God to give, but returns no gratitude. **He divided unto them his living.** The elder would receive two shares and the younger one ([Deut. 21:17](#)). **Into a far country.** Wandered far away from the Father's house, from God. **Wasted his substance.** All do in that far country. The worldly life is a wasted life. It is more baneful to waste our spiritual opportunities and resources than to waste earthly goods. **There arose a mighty famine.** There is always one afar from God. The world cannot satisfy the soul. **He began to be in want.** Many a lost one who has wasted all feels the want so deeply as to destroy his life. Byron is said to "have died of wretchedness." **To feed swine.** The lowest possible occupation for a Jew. **With the husks.** The pods of the carob tree. The husks of animal pleasures cannot satisfy the soul. **When he came to himself.** Sin is an infatuation, a craze. When the blinded eyes of the soul are opened no man is content to abide in sin; that is, in destruction. **How many hired servants.** The son was now himself a hired servant; so are all sinners, and the service is a hard one. **I will arise and go.** This resolve is repentance, the change of purpose and heart. He is led to it by his sense of need, the burden of sin. **Father, I have sinned.** His change of heart, or repentance, must be followed by confession. **Am no more worthy.** His own claims of worth are gone. He has proved worthless. He is willing to take the humblest place in his father's house. Humility and consecration follow genuine repentance. **He arose and came to his father.** The sinner comes by faith, repentance, and obedience to Christ. The spirit must come. To come he must turn, leave the far country, sinful associations, and enter into spiritual union with Christ by baptism ([Gal. 3:27](#); [Rom. 6:3, 4](#)). **His father ... was moved with compassion.** No sternness, no need of prayers; the father no sooner saw the wanderer coming than he rushed to meet him. How often is it written of Christ, **He had compassion.** So, too, of the Father for the penitent sinner; the father does not even wait for the confession the son had resolved to make. Love cannot wait when it recognizes the purpose. **The father said.** He interrupted the confession of the prodigal. **Bring forth the best robe.** He had returned in rags. The best robe is the white robe of the righteousness of Christ. **A ring on his hand.** A ring with a seal was a symbol of authority, of sonship. **Shoes on his feet.** Servants went barefoot, but the shoes were a symbol of freedom. **Bring the fatted calf.** For a feast of welcome. To make such preparations was common in the simple life of the East. See [Gen. 18:6-8](#). **For my son was dead, and is alive.** See [Eph. 2:1-6](#). It was a spiritual resurrection. **They began to be merry.** Gladness should be manifested by all saints at the repentance of sinners. **Now his elder son.** The Pharisees had complained of Jesus that "he receiveth sinners" ([verse 2](#)). So the elder son complains that the father had welcomed the prodigal. **Music and dancing.** In the dance of Judea the sexes did not intermingle. It was usually performed by hired professional dancers. **He was angry.** So the Pharisees were with Christ

for receiving sinners. So, too, the eminently respectable self-righteous in the church often are still when the publicans and sinners, the despised and outcast, are converted. **His father ... entreated him.** So God in Christ still entreats all such to join in the welcome of the impenitent. It shows his long suffering. **Neither transgressed I.** Here is the very spirit of Pharisaism, a self-righteous spirit. His charges show while nominally with the father, he was far away from him in spirit. **Son.** The father pleads with the envious brother and tries to bring him to a better frame of mind, as Christ pleads with Israel. **All that I have is thine.** “If a son, then an heir, and a joint heir with Christ.” **This thy brother.** If a son, then the returned sinner is his brother. Unless he, too, can welcome him, then *he* is the lost son. “Those who object to all use of fiction must explain, as best they may, this story, for such it is. There is not even an application attached to it; the reader is left to make that for himself. As a representation of redeeming love it has been well called the Gospel in the Gospel. In comparison with others, it is the Crown and Pearl of all parables.”—*Stier*.



Chapter XVI

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Summary —*The Unjust Steward. His Shrewd Forethought. Making Friends with the Unrighteous Mammon. The Scoffing of the Covetous Pharisees. The Rich Man. The Beggar at His Gate. Death. One in Abraham's Bosom; the Other in Hades. The Rich Man's Petition. The Great Gulf. Hearing Moses and the Prophets.*

1–7. There was a certain rich man. The three parables of the last chapter, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son, are a rebuke to the self-righteousness of the Pharisees: the two of this chapter are directed against their covetousness. **Had a steward.** An officer who had charge of his estates. Eliezer was the steward of Abraham; Joseph that of Potiphar ([Gen 24:2–12 and 39:4](#)). A man of business to take charge of the property is still common in the Old World on large estates. The Christian, to whom God has entrusted the earthly care of property that belongs to the Creator, is thus described ([Matt. 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27](#)). **Wasting his goods.** Dishonest; an embezzler. **Give an account.** All will be called to such an account, at death, or sooner. Sometimes, because we have proved faithless, God takes the property out of our charge sooner. Dismissal from God's service, whether at death or sooner, is the consequence of wasting the Lord's goods. **I cannot dig.** He was not accustomed to, or willing to come to, hard labor. **To beg I am ashamed.** He ought to have been more ashamed to prove faithless to his trust. **I am resolved.** “All at once, after long reflection, he exclaims, as if striking his forehead: I have hit it.”—*Godet*. Many a rich man reaches a similar resolve when about to die. **That they may receive me.** He will put his Lord's debtors under such obligations to him that they will give him a home. **He called every one.** The debtors; those that owed rent or on account. **A hundred measures of oil.** Olive oil, one of the commonest products of Palestine. The measure contained about sixty pints. **Take thy bond.** The contract. **Sit down quickly.** In great haste, lest the dishonest transaction might be interrupted. **Write fifty.** The throwing off of fifty measures would be equivalent to several hundred dollars. **Hundred measures of wheat.** The wheat measure was about eleven bushels; the twenty remitted would be 220 bushels.

8. His lord commended the unjust steward. Commended not his faithfulness, but his wisdom in looking out for a home when about to lose his place. The one point taught is a prudent foresight that uses earthly resources to provide for a time when these resources will fail us.

9. And I say unto you. The parable has ended and Christ now makes the application. **Mammon of unrighteousness.** Mammon is equivalent to money, or wealth; called the “mammon of unrighteousness,” not because it is acquired unrighteously, but because most use it unrighteously, treating it as their own, when they are only stewards. What is the use

the Lord charges us to put it to? It is: "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness (riches), that when it shall fail (when you can use it no longer), they shall receive you into eternal tabernacles" (heaven). It is strange that there is any difficulty over this passage, as translated clearly in the Revised Version. The only friends who can receive us into heaven are the Father and the Son. These are, then, the friends we must secure. During life our means must be so used as to please God and to lay up eternal treasure. If we use it as a trust of the Lord we will secure such a friend. Instead of hoarding we must make heavenly friends.

11, 12. If ye have not been faithful. If one is faithless in an earthly trust, how can he expect to receive a heavenly trust? **Another's.** That which belongs to God. All who have property should understand that it is another's. **Your own.** The true riches, because they become a part of our being, the inalienable possession of the redeemed.

13. No servant can serve two masters. See note on [Matt. 6:24](#).

14, 15. The Pharisees ... covetous ... scoffed. They understood the parable as an attack on covetousness and, like the worldly wise, thought his doctrine foolish. **Is an abomination.** Man exalts wealth, but the love of wealth, "the root of all evil," is "an abomination in the sight of God."

16. The law and the prophets. See note on [Matt. 11:13](#).

17. Easier for heaven and earth to pass. See note on [Matt. 5:18](#).

18. Every one that putteth away his wife. See note on [Matt. 5:31](#).

The Rich Man and the Beggar (verses 19–31). A parable, also, showing the consequences of a worldly spirit and the worldly use of wealth. "Here, as in other cognate parables, great wisdom is displayed in bringing the whole force of the rebuke to bear on one point. It is not intimated that this man made free with other people's money, or that he had gained his fortune in a dishonest way. All other charges are removed, that the weight lying all on one point may more effectively imprint the intended lesson. To have represented him as dishonest, or drunken, would have blunted the weapon's edge. Here is an affluent citizen, on whose fair fame the breath of scandal can fix no blot. He had a large portion in this world, and did not seek—did not desire—any other. He spent his wealth in pleasing himself, and did not lay it out in serving God or helping man."—*Arnot*.

19. A certain rich man. Not one whom the world would call great, but eminently respectable; one whom the worldly would admire, while the poor man was one whom the covetous would despise. **Clothed in purple.** The purple was anciently the royal color, the gorgeous hue of the imperial robes, and hence the very term, the *purple*, is still used to signify the royal dignity. **And fine linen.** The finest apparel. **Faring sumptuously every day.** Enjoying not only the most sumptuous fare on the table every day, but every sensual enjoyment. How the world would admire his lot in life!



20. A certain beggar. Beggary, such as is here depicted, is much more common in the East than with us, and, in the absence of any more systematic provision, alms-giving to the poor was insisted upon by the Old Testament ([Job 29:13](#); [Psa. 41:1](#); [112:9](#); [Prov. 14:31](#)). **Named Lazarus.** “Does not Christ seem to you to have been reading in that book where the found the name of the poor man written, but found not the name of the rich? For that book is the Book of Life.”—*Augustine*. **Laid at his gate.** Carried there because unable to walk. At the gate, where so many were passing, would be a favorable place for alms. **Full of sores.** Cutaneous sores are most common in connection with abject poverty.

21. The dogs ... licked his sores. How abject his lot! Helpless, a beggar, glad to get crumbs, the dogs around him licking his sores! Such a lot the world would despise.

22. The beggar died. What became of his body is not stated. It may have been cast into the potter's field. **Was carried by the angels.** Here is one who in his life had not a single friend, and now, suddenly, not one, but many angels wait upon him.—*Luther*. His body may have had no pall-bearers, but angels carried his soul. **Into Abraham's bosom.** The place of rest where Abraham welcomed his children; heavenly bliss. The Jews spoke of those who went to Abraham's heavenly abode as in Abraham's bosom. **The rich man also died, and was buried.** We are to infer that he had a splendid burial; his body was placed in a costly tomb, but where was *he*?

23. In Hades. The abode of departed spirits, and to the wicked, a place of punishment. **Being in torments.** His wealth has failed him; his good things have departed. **Seeth Abraham ... and Lazarus.** A proof of recognition beyond the grave. **Afar off.** Widely apart in condition, character, and space.

24. And he cried. The only instance in the New Testament of prayers to the saints. **Father Abraham.** His trust was in his fleshly descent. He said, “We have Abraham to our father.” **Send Lazarus.** He seems to think that he has some claims on him, in return for his crumbs. **Dip the tip of his finger in water.** He only dares ask the smallest favors. **Tormented in this flame.** “Flame may be regarded as a figurative term, to represent acutest suffering of which a spirit is susceptible by a material image of misery the most dire.”—*Greswell*.

25. Son. Abraham recognizes the fleshly tie. His answer is fatherly, affectionate. **Remember.** Analogy gives us every reason to suppose that in the disembodied state the whole life on earth will lie before the soul in all its thoughts, words, and deeds, like the map of the past journey before a traveler.—*Alford*. **Thy good things.** He was of the number who receive their portion in this life, instead of that good part which shall never be taken from them. He had preferred the world and its rewards, and had obtained them. But he had lost the world to come. *Thy* is emphatic. Earthly possessions and enjoyments were his choice. **Now here he is comforted.** The saved leave all sorrows behind when they leave the earth; the lost leave all their joys behind.



26. There is a great gulf fixed. It is permanent and impassable. There is no bridging over the abyss. Destiny has been decided in life.

27-31. Send him to my father's house. This is introduced. not to show an interest in his brethren, but to call out the reply: **They have Moses and the prophets.** If they would refuse to hear the word of God, they would refuse to repent at the bidding of a ghost. **Neither will they be persuaded, etc.** This was demonstrated in the case of Jesus himself. The Jews refused to accept Christ, though Moses and the prophets testified of him. They asked for a sign, and “the sign of the prophet Jonah,” his resurrection from the dead, was given. Still they refused to repent. Unbelief is due, not to a lack of evidence, but to a rebellious heart. The seat of skepticism is in the moral nature.



Chapter XVII

Various Sayings of Christ

Summary — *Offenders and Offences. The Power of Faith. The Ten Lepers Cleansed. The Kingdom of God. The Coming of Christ. Lot's Wife.*

1, 2. It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come. See notes on [Matt. 18:6, 7](#).

3, 4. If thy brother sin, rebuke him. See notes on [Matt. 18:15–22](#). Observe that kind rebuke, as well as forgiveness, is a duty.

5, 6. Increase our faith. They desire more faith. In the face of the overwhelming odds against them, the general unbelief, and the fact that Jesus would not be the kind of a Christ that they and all the Jews had expected, they felt the need of more faith. **As a grain of mustard seed.** See notes on [Matt. 13:32](#). **Sycamine tree.** A species of the fig. **It should obey you.** See notes on [Mark 11:22–26](#).

7–10. Who is there of you? This parable is drawn from the Eastern usages where the same servant who works in the field often serves at the table. **Gird thyself.** The loose flowing garments needed to be girded up by the belt when one was serving. **We are unprofitable servants.** Our Master owes us no thanks when we serve him faithfully, for we have only done our duty. The heavenly reward to the faithful is of grace, not of debt ([Rom. 11:6](#)).

11–19. As he went to Jerusalem. When is uncertain. If on his last journey, it was when the Lord first departed from Galilee, before his teaching in Perea. **Through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.** From the west to the east, so as to cross the Jordan. **There met him ten men that were lepers.** For account of the leprosy, and the laws of Moses concerning it, see notes on [Matt. 8:2](#). These lepers, excluded from other society, grouped together for company. **Stood afar off.** As required by the law of Moses ([Lev. 13:46](#)). **Go and shew yourselves.** To be officially pronounced clean, a certificate had to be obtained from the priests (see notes, [Matt. 8:4](#)). **They were cleansed.** As they went, an act of faith, they were healed. Not one would have been healed if he had disobeyed. **One of them ... turned back.** To give glory to God, and thanks to Jesus for his salvation. **A Samaritan.** The nine were Jews; one belonged to the hated race. **Where are the nine?** What a striking illustration of the ingratitude of men! One returns, the alien; the other, saved from a living death, are heard no more. **Thy faith hath saved thee.** Saved him by leading him to obedience. His faith had added to it another grace, that of love. His faith had not only saved his body, but he had been born to the new life, his soul was saved.

20, 21. When the kingdom of God cometh. These Pharisees expected a visible, temporal kingdom. **Cometh not with observation.** As a visible, earthly monarchy, like that of David.



Is within you. A kingdom that has its throne in the heart, on which Christ, the King, sits. It has to be formed by yielding our hearts to Christ.

22–24. Ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man. His second coming. The church longs for his appearing. See [2 Tim. 4:8](#). **For as the lightning.** See notes on [Matt. 24:16–18](#). The remainder of the chapter is a condensed and fragmentary report of a part of [Matthew, chapter 24](#).

25–30. See notes on [Matt. 16:21](#) and 24:37–39. Compare [Col. 3:3, 4](#); [2 Thess. 1:7](#); [1 Pet. 1:7](#).

31, 32. See notes on [Matt. 24:16–18](#). **Remember Lot's wife.** By tarrying and looking back, the warning came to flee, she lost her life. So hesitation and delay at this great crisis will be perilous.

33. Whosoever shall seek to save his life. See notes on [Matt. 10:39](#).

34–36. See notes on [Matt. 24:37–41](#).

37. See notes on [Matt. 24:28](#).



Chapter XVIII

Parables Concerning Prayer

Summary —*The Widow and the Unjust Judge. The Pharisee and the Publican. Little Children Brought to Christ. The Young Ruler Seeking for Eternal Life. Going Through the Needle's Eye. The Lord's Sufferings Declared to the Twelve. Blind Bartimæus Healed at Jericho.*

1. They ought always to pray. Prayer is a privilege and a duty. **Not to faint.** Persistence in prayer is requisite to making it effectual. See [Eph. 6:18](#). “God reserves for thee that which he is slow to give thee, that thou mayest learn to entertain a supreme desire and longing for it.”—*Augustine*.

2, 3. A judge. The judges of the East are irresponsible, often unjust, usually delay justice for the sake of bribes. **A widow.** The widow of the East, unless she has powerful friends, is absolutely helpless. In India, she is regarded almost as an outcast. It is only the Bible that proclaims God as the widow's friend. **Avenge me of mine adversary.** That is, redress the wrong I have suffered.

4, 5. And he would not for a while. Because selfishly indifferent. **This widow troubleth me.** What neither the fear of God nor the regard for human rights could do, her persistence accomplished, because her “continual coming wearied him.”

6–8. The Lord said. This is the application of the parable. **Shall not God avenge his elect?** If an unjust, hard-hearted judge can be moved by the persistent prayers of a widow, will not the tender, loving, good Father hear the cries of his children? **Though he bear long.** Rather, as in the Revision, “He is long-suffering over them.” He is long-suffering for them for their own good, and long-suffering towards their enemies in order that they may have opportunity to repent. **Shall he find faith on the earth?** Prayer is the utterance of faith. Prayerlessness is proof of unbelief. The Lord, pained by the unbelief of even his disciples, shows in these words what a burden to him is our unbelief (see [Matt. 17:17](#)).

9. He spake this parable, etc. The persons described in this verse are so much like the Pharisees that we can hardly believe that they were not. Rabbi Simeon, one of them, said, that if there were only thirty religious men in the world like Abraham, he and his son would be two of them; if only two, he and his son would be those; and if only one, that would be himself.

10. A Pharisee ... a publican. The one the type of orthodoxy; the other regarded by orthodox Jews a religious outcast. See notes on [Matt. 3:7](#) and 9:9.

11, 12. The Pharisees stood. Stood forth where he could be seen. **Prayed thus with himself.** Self was the center of his thoughts. **Not as the rest of men.** Pride and contempt of others are manifest. **I fast twice a week.** He enumerates his claims on God. He is very scrupulous about fasting and paying tithes ([Lev. 27:30](#)).

13. But the publican, standing afar off. Remote from other worshipers, like a pariah. **Would not so much as lift up his eyes.** His spirit was so humble and contrite. The Pharisees probably had both hands and eyes lifted up. **Smote his breast.** An act denoting sorrow. **Be merciful to me a sinner.** A humble confession.

14. This man went ... justified. With his sins forgiven. His prayer was answered; not the proud boasts of the Pharisee. “This parable teaches us the spirit that should pervade our prayers. The first parable encourages us to pray, and faint not. The second reminds us how we ought to pray. Both should be often pondered by every true Christian.”—*Ryle*.

15–17. They brought unto him babes, that he should touch them. See notes on [Matt. 19:13–15](#) and [Mark 10:13–16](#). It was the customs of the Jews to bring their babes to the synagogue for the rabbi to lay his hands upon and bless. So says the Talmud.

18–30. And a certain ruler asked him. For notes on the case of the Rich Young Ruler, see [Matt. 19:16–30](#); also [Mark 10:17–31](#). The ruler was probably ruler of a synagogue. See [Matt. 4:23](#).

31–34. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem. See notes on [Matt. 20:17–19](#) and [Mark 10:32–34](#). Luke adds: **All the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished.** For some things written by the prophets, see [Psa. 16:10](#); [22:7, 8](#); [49:15](#); [Isa. 53:1–9](#); [Dan. 9:26](#).

35–43. As he drew nigh to Jericho. This was on his last journey to Jerusalem, a little more than a week before the crucifixion. [Matthew and Mark](#) also give accounts of the healing of the blind beggar. See notes on [Matt. 20:29–34](#). Compare [Mark 10:46–52](#). [Matthew](#) says there were two blind beggars. “If there were two there certainly was one.” [Luke and Mark](#) only name the one who was most active and earnest. [Mark](#) says his name was Bartimæus. For a description of Jericho see note on [Matt. 20:29](#).



Chapter XIX

The Entrance into Jerusalem

Summary —*Zacchæus the Publican. Parable of the Ten Pounds. The Royal Entry into Jerusalem. Weeping in Jerusalem. Cleansing the Temple.*

1. He entered and was passing through Jericho. He had crossed the Jordan at the ford beyond Jericho, and the road from thence to Jerusalem led through Jericho, “the city of palm trees,” the chief city of all eastern Judea. It stood at the mouth of the gap in the mountain rampart, through which the road ascended to Jerusalem, more than 3,000 feet above the plain of Jericho.

2. Zacchæus, ... chief among the publicans. The importance of Jericho and its situation would make it an important center for the collection of the Roman tribute. At the head of the publicans engaged in this business was Zacchæus. He seems to have had supervision of the district. **He was rich.** A very suspicious fact in a member of a class noted for their extortion.

3, 4. Sought to see Jesus. Out of curiosity. **Climbed up into a sycamore tree.** A kind of mulberry fig with low branches. His shortness of stature and the crowd made this necessary if he would see Jesus.

5. To-day I must abide at thy house. Tarry there for the night. Jesus went there, not for congenial society, but because his mission was to seek and save the lost.

6. He received him joyfully. He did not expect such an honor as the Great Teacher would stop with one of a class so despised by the Jews as his own.

7. They all murmured. How often these complaints of Jesus stooping down at the company of sinners are recorded! Now, however, the crowd expected that at Jerusalem his kingdom would be proclaimed, but here he is the guest of the chief agent of the oppressive Roman tribute! Had Christ sought popularity he would never have gone with Zacchæus.

8. Zacchæus stood, and said. The record is silent as what had wrought so great a change. No doubt the Lord had preached to him. **Half of my goods, I give to the poor.** What greater proof of a change of heart! His heart had been on riches; now at once he consecrates one-half to the relief of suffering. **If I have wrongfully exacted.** He no doubt had, if half that is stated of the publicans was true. **I restore fourfold.** Not only what he has taken, but four times as much. No repentance that does not lead to restitution is genuine. “If what thou hast taken wrongfully cannot be restored to those who were wronged, give it to God; the poor are God’s receivers.”

9. Salvation is come to this house. Because Zacchæus has truly repented. **Forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.** Therefore entitled to a place in the kingdom, according to

the narrow Jewish ideas, but also now shown to be a spiritual son of Abraham, born not of the flesh, but of the spirit ([Gal. 3:7](#)).

10. The Son of man is come to seek, etc. Therefore he went to lodge with the publicans and the sinner in order to save.

11. Because he was nigh to Jerusalem. From fifteen to twenty miles away. The crowd thought that when he reached Jerusalem “his kingdom would immediately appear;” an earthly kingdom like that of David. The parable that follows was spoken, in part, to correct that idea.

12. A certain nobleman went into a far country. While this parable is much like that of the Talents ([Matt. 25:14–30](#) and [Mark 13:34–36](#)), it is a different one in many particulars; spoken elsewhere; for a different purpose. **To receive for himself a kingdom.** As Christ would leave the earth and ascend to heaven before he would receive his kingdom.

13. Gave them ten pounds. Each a pound. The Greek term is *mina*, a weight of silver equivalent to about sixteen dollars. **Trade ye till I come.** This was all given to be used. It was given to his servants. It represents whatever ability, whether of wealth or mind, that we have to serve Christ.

14. His citizens hated him. The Jews. After his departure, they still refused to have him for king.

15. When he was come back again. When he returns to reward his servants; his final coming. **Commanded these servants ... to be called.** To give an account. This is done at judgment. Death calls us to account also.

16–19. Thy pound hath made ten pounds. It is the Lord's goods, faithfully used, that has given the increase. The faithful discharge of duty is rewarded by an increased trust and increased honor. See notes on [Matt. 25:19–23](#).

20–23. Lord, here is thy pound. See notes on [Matt. 25:24–27](#), where the case is similar. The lesson is that our abilities must be used for the Lord. It is not enough that we are not positively wicked; we must do good.

24–26. Said to them that stood by. The angels ([Matt. 13:41](#); [2 Thess. 1:7](#); [Jude 14](#)). **To every one that hath shall be given.** To those who have been faithful and efficient shall be given still greater trusts when the Lord comes, but from the faithless will be taken their opportunities forever. The faithless servant is a faithless church member.

27. These mine enemies. This portrays the fate, not of church members, but of those who would not have the Lord reign over them. It embraces all the impenitent. Compare [Matt. 13:49](#); [21:44](#); [25:30](#); [2 Thess. 1:8–10](#).

28–40. Going up to Jerusalem. The ascent begins at Jericho, and about 3,000 feet has to be climbed before the city is reached. The account of the royal entrance into Jerusalem is given in [Matt. 21:1–16](#); [Mark 11:1–11](#), and [John 12:12–19](#). See the notes on Matthew. **At the descent of the mount of Olives.** Where the city and temple burst into view.

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41–44. He saw the city and wept over it. This lament over the wicked city is given only by Luke. In that moment when the multitude is shouting his praises, his heart is breaking over the woes of the city that he knew would slay him. Only in one other place are we told that Jesus wept ([John 11:35](#)), each time over human sorrow. **If thou hadst known in this day.** The day of opportunity and mercy. But their eyes were blinded by unbelief. **The things which belong unto peace.** The acceptance of Christ would have prevented the rebellion against Rome, the destruction of the city, and would have secured heavenly as well as earthly peace. **Thine enemies shall cast a bank about thee.** The Romans threw a wall around the city outside of the walls of defence in order to hem in all the population and to starve them out. **Shall not leave in thee one stone upon another.** The city was utterly destroyed. See notes on Matthew, chapter 24. **Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.** When Christ came to save them from their awful fate.

45–48. He cast out them that sold. An act of kingly authority. See notes on [Matt. 21:12–15](#) and [Mark 11:18, 19](#). **For the people all hung upon him.** His popularity with the people made it difficult for his enemies to carry out their purposes.



Chapter XX

A Day of Conflict

Summary —*Christ's Authority Called For. The Baptism of John. The Parable of the Vineyard. On Paying Tribute to Cæsar. The Sadducees and the Resurrection. Christ the Lord and Son of David. The Hypocrisy of the Scribes.*

1–8. Tell us, by what authority does thou these things. See notes on [Matt. 21:23–27](#). Compare [Mark 11:27–33](#).

9–19. A certain man planted a vineyard. This parable is found in [Matt. 21:33–46](#) and [Mark 12:1–12](#). See notes on Matthew.

20–26. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar? For notes on the question of the tribute money, see [Matt. 22:15–22](#). Compare [Mark 12:13–17](#).

27–40. There came to him certain of the Sadducees. For notes on the Sadducees silenced, see [Matt. 22:23–33](#). Compare [Mark 12:18–27](#).

41–44. How say they that Christ is David's son? See notes on [Matt. 22:41–46](#). Compare [Mark 12:35–37](#).

45–47. See notes on [Matt. 23:5, 6, 14](#). Compare [Mark 12:38–40](#).



Chapter XXI

Discourse on the Last Days

Summary — *The Widow's Mites. The Question Concerning the Overthrow of the Temple. The Woes Coming Upon the Jewish Nation Foretold. The Signs That Shall Precede the Last Day.*

1–4. Saw the rich men that were casting their gifts. For notes on the Widow's Mites, see [Mark 12:41–44](#).

5–33. When shall these things be? This discourse to the disciples on the Overthrow of the Temple, Jerusalem, the Jewish Nation and the Second Coming of our Lord, is reported here, in [Mark, chapter 13](#), and in [Matthew, chapter 24](#). Matthew's account is much the fullest, where see notes. **Not a hair of your head shall perish.** You shall be in the Father's hand, saved, even if put to death, gaining eternally by suffering. **When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies.** [Matthew](#) says: "The abomination of desolation" instead of "Jerusalem compassed with armies." See notes on [Matt. 24:15](#). This was the warning to Christians to flee. In the first attack the Romans, under Cestus Gallus, were beaten off and retreated. The Christians then left the city. **And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles.** It has been ever since its destruction. It has been held by the Romans, the Parthians, the Saracens, the Crusaders and the Turks, but never by the Jews. **There shall be signs in the sun.** See notes on [Matt. 24:27–31](#). **This generation shall not pass away.** See notes on [Matt. 24:34, 35](#). The word *race* instead of *generation* gives the meaning.

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34–36. Take heed to yourselves. The words here, but not the ideas, are peculiar to Luke. See notes on [Matt. 24:37–51](#).

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37. Lodged in the mount ... of Olives. At Bethany, I suppose, on the eastern slope, until the night he was betrayed. See [Matt. 21:17](#).

38. All the people came. All the accounts indicate the intense interest shown by the people in his teachings during this last week. The Lord taught in the temple by day, but spent the nights at Bethany or on the Mount of Olives.

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Chapter XXII

The Last Supper

Summary — *The Rulers Take Steps to Slay the Lord. Judas Bargains to Betray Christ. The Passover Prepared. The Lord's Supper Instituted. The Traitor Pointed Out. Exhortation to the Apostles.*

1, 2. The feast of unleavened bread. The Passover, so called because no leavened bread was eaten during the passover week. **The chief priests ... sought how they might put him to death.** Tried to devise means to accomplish this without exciting the multitude. See [Matt. 26:1-5](#).

3-6. And Satan entered into Judas. He gave himself up to do the work of Satan. See notes on [Matt. 26:14-16](#).

7, 8. And the day of unleavened bread came. Josephus calls both the fourteenth and fifteenth of Nisan, "the day of unleavened bread." I have followed Neander, Tischendorf, Winer, Alford, Ellicott, Erasmus, Grotius, Calvin and others in the view that the Lord's passover was eaten one day before the Jews ate theirs, and that he died about the time that the paschal lambs were slain for the Jews' passover. See notes on [John 18:28](#) and 19:31.

9-13. Where wilt thou that we make ready? On the preparation for the Passover, see notes on [Matt. 26:17-19](#). **A large upper room furnished.** The upper room was usually the guest chamber.

14-20. When the hour was come. There are four accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper: [Matt. 26:26-30](#); [Mark 14:22-25](#); [1 Cor. 11:23-25](#). See notes on Matthew.

21-23. The incident concerning the betrayal mentioned in these verses occurred before the Lord's Supper was eaten ([Matt. 26:21](#)). It seems probable, from [John 13:21-35](#), that Judas left before the supper. On this passage, see notes on [Matt. 26:21-25](#).

24-30. There arose a contention among them. This contention probably arose while they were taking seats for the paschal meal, each seeking the chief place. It was rebuked by the Lord washing their feet ([John 13:3-5](#)). See notes on [Matt. 18:1-4](#). **Benefactors.** This very title has often been conferred on Gentile rulers, as Ptolemy *Euergetes*, "Ptolemy, the Benefactor," one of the kings of Egypt. **Ye shall not be so.** Greatness shall be sought by serving. He is greatest who serves the world best. **I appoint unto you a kingdom.** A kingdom to be secured, not by conquering and ruling, but humility, self-denial, and service. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Thus shall the apostles be entitled to eat at the Lord's table in the kingdom, and to **sit on thrones, etc.** They attained these thrones, but they are spiritual, rather than temporal. See notes on [Matt. 19:28](#).



31–34. Simon, Simon. For the warning to Peter of his Denial of the Lord, see [Matt. 26:31–35](#). Compare [Mark 14:27–31](#).

35. When I sent you forth without purse. See [Matt. 10:9–15](#); [Mark 6:8, 9](#).

36. But now. Now has come a time of trial when all will be against you. **Let him ... buy a sword.** Not to be taken literally, but a striking way of saying that enemies upon every side will assail them.

37. He was reckoned with transgressors. This, quoted from [Isa. 53:12](#), was about to be fulfilled in him.

38. Here are two swords. How they come to be in their possession is not told. **It is enough.** This is a dismissal of the subject, not a warrant for their use. That was rebuked when Peter resorted to one ([Matt. 26:52–54](#)).

39–46. He went ... unto the mount of Olives. See notes on [Matt. 26:36–46](#), for the Agony in Gethsemane. Compare [Mark 14:32–42](#). [Luke](#) alone mentions that **his sweat became as great drops of blood** a fact that portrays, as language could not, the agony of our Lord's struggle.

47–53. Behold, a multitude. For notes on the Betrayal and Seizure of Jesus, see [Matt. 26:47–56](#). Compare [Mark 14:43–52](#) and [John 18:1–12](#).

54–62. The Denial of Peter is recorded here, in [Matt. 26:69–75](#); [Mark 14:66–72](#) and [John 18:15–27](#). See notes on Matthew's account.

63–65. For notes on these indignities, see [Matt. 26:67](#) and [Mark 14:65](#).

66. As soon as it was day. The Lord had already been examined by Annas, and tried and condemned before Caiaphas in the night. To make it legal a meeting had to be held after daylight. See notes on [Matt. 26:57–68](#). **The assembly of the elders.** The Sanhedrim. **Led him into their council.** Before the formal meeting of the body. This is the second time Jesus was before it and the second condemnation.

67. Art thou the Christ? He had already answered in the night and been condemned ([Matt. 26:63, 64](#)). His reply here is a protest.

68–71. Art thou then the Son of God? To this he answered directly, and on this they condemned him. The charge was blasphemy in saying that he was the Son of God.

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Chapter XXIII

The Crucifixion

Summary —*Jesus Brought Before Pilate. Acquitted by Pilate. On the Clamor of Priests Sent to Herod. Silent Before Herod. Sent Again, Arrayed as a King, to Pilate. Examined a Second Time and No Fault Found. Barabbas Demanded Instead of Christ. Pilate Yields and Sends Jesus to Be Crucified. The Weeping of the Daughters of Jerusalem. Between Thieves. Mocked on the Cross. The Penitent Thief. The Death of Jesus. The Burial.*

1–25. The Trial Before Pilate. Described in [Matt. 27:11–35](#); [Mark 15:1–23](#); [John 18:28–19:16](#). See notes on Matthew and John. **Led him to Pilate.** The Sanhedrim, after a private conference, ([Matt. 27:1–10](#)), came in a body to accuse Jesus of sedition. **Forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar.** This was utterly false ([Matt. 22:21](#)). **That he is Christ a king.** This was true, but not in the sense they made the charge. He did not claim to be an earthly king. **I find no fault in him.** This decision was given after an examination of Jesus ([John 18:33–38](#)). In this Jesus explained to Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. **He sent him to Herod.** Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. The Jews in their clamor against Pilate's decision declared that Jesus was of Galilee; so he thought to get out of his difficulty by turning Jesus over to Herod, who was now in Jerusalem to attend the passover. **Herod ... was exceeding glad.** That he might gratify his curiosity to see Jesus. This was the Herod who had murdered John the Baptist. **Herod ... mocked him.** Pilate was a better man than Herod. Though he yielded weakly to the clamor, he was not a trifler. **Herod and Pilate became friends.** Because of Pilate's courtesy in sending Herod a prisoner that belonged to his province. Why they were enemies is not stated. **Nor yet Herod.** These words occur in another effort of Pilate to release Jesus, and imply that Herod had sent word that he found no guilt in the prisoner. **I will therefore chastise him.** This was an effort to make a compromise. To gratify and save the pride of the Sanhedrim he will chastise an innocent man and then let him go. **Release unto us Barabbas.** See notes on [Matt. 27:15–26](#), for the choice of Barabbas rather than Christ.

26–49. The Crucifixion. Compare [Matt. 27:32–56](#); [Mark 15:21–41](#); [John 19:17–30](#). See notes on Matthew. **A great multitude of people, and of women.** This shows that, although awed, Jesus had many sympathizers in Jerusalem. **Daughters of Jerusalem.** These weeping women belonged to the city. **Weep for yourselves.** In this hour of trial his heart is broken for the woes coming upon them in the speedy destruction of Jerusalem. **If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?** A proverb, meaning here, "If the rulers and the Romans crucify the Messiah of the nation, the Hope of Israel, what shall they do to the nation itself?" What they would do was seen in less than forty years. **Father, forgive them.** This prayer for his murderers is reported only by Luke. It was evidently uttered

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just after he was nailed to the cross. What divine love in a prayer springing right out of the depth of his physical suffering! **They know not what they do.** Know not that they reject and slay their own Messiah; know not that, in this act, they doom their city and nation to destruction. “He made intercession for transgressors” ([Isa. 53:12](#)). **They parted his raiment.** The executioners cast lots for it. See [John 18:23](#). **One of the malefactors.** Matthew and Mark represent the malefactors as mocking him. It may be that only one spoke, apparently for both, or that both spoke at first, and then one was silent. **Art not thou the Christ?** That Jesus did not save himself and his companions in suffering seemed to this malefactor to prove that this was not the Christ. **Seeing thou art in the same condemnation.** For sedition and rebellion; the one probably of which Barabbas was leader. Christ was condemned as a seditious person, but the malefactor knew that he had no part. He “had done nothing amiss.” **Lord, remember me.** This prayer indicates faith in Jesus as the Christ, a faith that overcomes the cross, and sees Jesus a victor over death, in his kingdom. Such faith was mighty to save. **To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.** On the cross together, the evil doer, who believed in the Crucified One, shall be with Christ in paradise. He was no doubt a Jew, perhaps knew somewhat of Christ before, and was saved by the power and word of Christ, before, and was saved by the power and word of Christ, as he saved the woman that was a sinner ([Luke 7:48](#)). So he still saves. If we comply with the conditions of his word, as preached by the apostles in the Gospel of the Risen Savior, we will be saved. **There was a darkness.** See note on [Matt. 27:45](#). **Cried with a loud voice.** He said: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.” This was followed by, “It is finished” ([John](#)), and the words here, **Father into thy hands, etc.**

47, 48. See notes on [Matt. 27:54–56](#).

50–56. On *The Burial of Jesus*, see notes on [Matt. 27:57–61](#). Compare [Mark 15:42–47](#) and [John 19:36–42](#). **A counsellor.** A member of the Sanhedrim. **Had not consented to their counsel.** Neither Joseph nor Nicodemus could have been present when Jesus was condemned, and perhaps were not invited. **That day was the preparation.** For the Passover, see [John 19:14](#). This shows that the Jews had not yet eaten their passover.

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Chapter XXIV

The Risen Lord

Summary — *The Women at the Sepulcher. Peter Sees the Empty Tomb. The Lord Appears to the Two Disciples. Jesus Appears in the Midst of the Eleven. The Commission to Preach to All Nations. The Ascension.*

1–12. See notes on [Matt. 28:1–10](#). **Upon the first day of the week.** The Lord's day, our Sunday. The women had “beheld the tomb and how his body was laid” on Friday, then “prepared spices and ointments” in accordance with Jewish burial customs, and “rested on the Sabbath day (Saturday) according to the commandment” ([Luke 23:56](#)), but early Sunday morning came to the tomb on their mission of love. **They came.** Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Joses ([Matt. 28:1](#)), Salome ([Mark 16:1](#)), and Joanna ([verse 10](#)). **The stone rolled away.** See notes on [Mark 16:3](#). They knew nothing of the Roman guard that had been placed there. **Behold, two men.** Angels ([Matt. 28:5](#)). **Remember how he spake ... in Galilee.** See [Matt. 16:21](#); [17:22](#); [Mark 8:31](#); [9:31](#); [John 2:22](#). These women were of Galilee and had heard, or heard of, these words. **They remembered.** They had not before comprehended his words. **Seemed to them as idle tales.** To the apostles. They seemed to have not the slightest expectation of a resurrection. **Then arose Peter.** John was with him ([John 20:1–10](#)). At the tomb John believed.

13. Two of them were going that very day. This account is given in detail by Luke only. Cleopas was one of the two ([verse 18](#)). **Emmaus.** Six or eight miles west of Jerusalem.

15. While they communed. About Jesus and his death. **Jesus ... drew near.** When our thoughts are upon him we are likeliest to enjoy his presence.

16. Their eyes were holden. This was their explanation of not knowing him. Mark says ([16:12](#)) that he was “in another form.”

18. One of them named Cleopas. This was one of the names of the husband of the mother of James and Joses ([John 19:25](#)). **Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know?** Cleopas is surprised that any one in Jerusalem should be ignorant of the marvellous events.

19. What things? Christ asked this, only that they should declare what they believed, had hoped, and their disappointment.

21. We hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel. They *hoped*. They did not now hope. Their hopes were buried.

25. O foolish men. Because “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”

26. Behoved it not the Christ to suffer? See [Isaiah, chapter 53](#), and [Dan. 9:26](#), as well as all the types.



29–32. Abide with us. For the night. **Took the bread and blessed it.** Not as a guest, but as the host. **Their eyes were opened.** They recognized him.

33–35. They rose up the same hour. They could not keep such news until the next day. **Found the eleven.** This is probably the meeting recorded in [John 20:19–23](#). **Hath appeared to Simon.** See [1 Cor. 15:5](#).

36–43. He himself stood in the midst of them. Though the doors were shut ([John 20:19](#)). **See my hands and my feet.** Thomas, who was not present, referred afterwards to these tests ([John 20:25](#)). His body retained the marks of his suffering. **While they still disbelieved for joy.** They felt it was too good to be believed. **He took it, and did eat.** As a proof that it was his bodily presence.

44–49. And he said unto them. Between verses 43 and 44, Luke passes over an interval of weeks, and many appearances of the Risen Christ, to come at once to the event of his Ascension. The Lord, about to send them forth to preach, “opens their mind that they might understand the Scriptures,” and then repeats the Commission, before given in Galilee. He requires that (1) Repentance, (2) Remission of Sins, (3) Shall be Preached in his Name, (4) Unto All Nations, (5) Beginning at Jerusalem. This was literally obeyed on the day of Pentecost. **The promise of my Father.** Of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. **Tarry ye.** They were not to begin the great work until the endowment from on High came.

50–53. He led them out ... over against Bethany. For other accounts of the Ascension, see [Mark 16:19, 20](#) and [Acts 1:1–9](#). **Blessed them.** The last act of the Savior upon the earth was a blessing. **Returned ... great joy.** Their Lord not only lived, but had ascended to his throne. **Were continually in the temple.** Worshiping and teaching. See [Acts 2:46](#). [Verse 53](#) is a link between Luke's Gospel and his Acts of the Apostles.



**The Gospel According to
John**



Introduction to the Gospel of John

The author of the Fourth Gospel was John, the son of Zebedee and Salome, the brother of James, in early life a Galilean fisherman, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ. In less than a hundred years after his death Christian writers living in different quarters of the world, whose writings are still extant, show us that this was the universal belief of the church. Indeed, the testimony to the authorship is stronger than can be furnished that Josephus wrote his Jewish history, that Cæsar wrote his Commentaries, or in behalf of any uninspired writing of antiquity, and would never have been questioned had not a class of rationalistic critics arisen who wished to set aside the lofty views of the personality and mission of the Savior which are so prominent a feature of the Fourth Gospel. We know from [John 21:24](#), that it was written by an eye-witness and by a beloved disciple. There were only three disciples who were admitted to the most intimate relations with Jesus—Peter, James and John. As it was not written by either of the first two, John must be the author. So the early church un-animously testifies. Irenæus, who learned of one who had been intimate with John and who wrote near the middle of the second century, affirms that he was the author. It is credited to John in the canon of Muratori, the first catalogue of the New Testament writings, written a.d. 175. It is also spoken of by Theophilus of Antioch a.d. 175, and by Clement of Alexandria, near the same time, and in the latter part of the second century it was translated into the Syriac and Latin versions of the New Testament. Besides these direct recognitions there are evident allusions to it and quotations from it in a number of epistles and treatises of Ignatius, Hermas, Polycarp, Papias, and others, which belong to the first half of the second century. Indeed, it is quoted within twenty years of John's death.

Place and Time. We do not know certainly when or where the Fourth Gospel was written. Irenæus, who lived in the second century, and who was the religious pupil of Polycarp, the martyr who was educated at the feet of John, declares that it was written at Ephesus, after the other three had been written. Its internal character indicates that it was written outside of Judea, after the fall of the temple, and after certain heresies began to be developed. John was still at Jerusalem a.d. 50 ([Gal. chapter 2](#)); it is almost certain that he did not go to Ephesus until after the death of Paul, about a.d. 67, and it is probable that he did not leave the city of Jerusalem, permanently, until the storm of destruction began to gather, which broke in a.d. 70. As the testimony of the early church is unanimous that his later years were passed at Ephesus and in that region, he probably went there about this date. After this, and before his death, which took place near the close of the century, the Gospel was written.

John, the author, was brought up to his father's calling, and even followed it after he was first pointed to Christ. While he was an “unlearned man” ([Acts 4:13](#)), in the sense that he never attended the rabbinical schools, he had such an education in Hebrew and in the

Scriptures as all respectable Jewish families were wont to give their children. In connection with every synagogue was a school in which children were taught reading, writing, and the rudiments of science. The children of Jewish common people were better educated than those of any other country in the world. Jesus found John among the disciples of John the Baptist, who at once pointed him and his companions to Christ. We next meet him at the sea of Galilee, fishing, and there Jesus gave him a permanent call. From this time onward he steadfastly followed the Master, and with James and Peter, formed an inner circle nearer the Lord. These three, only, witness the resurrection of Jairus' daughter, see the glory of the transfiguration, and the agony of the garden. John and Peter follow Christ, after his arrest, and the first goes openly into the house of Caiaphas, to the trial before Pilate, and to the cross, till all was over. When the news of the resurrection came he and Peter were the first to reach the sepulchre. To him Jesus committed the care of his own mother, while dying on the cross, and it is probable that he remained in Judea to attend to this sacred charge while she lived. From about the time of the overthrow of Jerusalem he changed his residence to Ephesus, where he probably lived until he died, near the close of the first century. The testimony of the early church would place his death after a.d. 98. It was during this later period that he wrote his Gospel, his Epistles, was exiled to Patmos, and there wrote his Revelation.

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The Character of John's Gospel, written after his fellow apostles had gone to rest, differs in some respects from the others. It alone follows the chronological order of events, gives an account of the Judæan ministry of our Lord, shows that his ministry lasted for over three years, gives the account of the resurrection of Lazarus and of the wonderful discourse to the disciples the night that he was betrayed. It omits much with which the church was already familiar through the other Gospels, presents much that they had not recorded, and recognizes certain false doctrines which had begun to be taught. It is the gospel of the *Incarnation*, of Love, and the most *Spiritual* of the Gospels. It alone unfolds fully the great doctrine of the Comforter. The great end, however, that the writer had before him in all he wrote is given in his own words: *These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

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Chapter I

The Beginning of Christ's Ministry

Summary — *The Word Made Flesh. The Witness of John. John's Disciples Pointed to Christ. The Lord Calls His First Disciples. An Israelite Indeed.*

1–3. In the beginning was the Word, etc. The first fourteen verses are introductory. In order to set at rest all controversy the Divine nature of Jesus, John glances, in the first three verses, back to the *beginning*, recorded in Genesis, and affirms: (1) That he who was afterwards manifest as the Christ existed before creation began; (2) that he was present with God; (3) that he was divine; (4) that he was the Word; (5) that by or through him were all things made that were made ([verse 3](#)). The first chapter of Genesis helps us to understand its meaning. God said, “Let there be light,” “Let there be a firmament,” “Let the earth bring forth,” etc., and it was done. God exhibits his creative power through the Word, and manifests his will through the Word. There are mysteries belonging to the divine nature and to the relation between the Son and the Father that we have to wait for eternity to solve. They are too deep for human solution, but this is clear: that God creates and speaks to man through the Word. As we clothe *our* thoughts in words, God reveals his will by the Word, and when that Word is clothed in flesh, as the Teacher of men, we recognize it as Jesus Christ.

4, 5. In him was life. He had life in himself, and hence is a fountain from whence life flows to man. Death could not hold him, because in him is life, and he became “the Resurrection and the Life” for us. **The life was the light of men.** The life that Christ bestows enlightens men. He is the Light of the World. His light chases away the darkness of the earth, though, when John wrote, the darkness did not receive it. Men, in darkness, had eyes and saw not. All history demonstrates that Christ is the Light of the World; every redeemed soul recognizes the fact.

6–8. There was a man sent from God. The writer now speaks of a witness to the Light, John, a man sent from God. He was called to his work from his mother's womb. **The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light.** John came, not so much as a reformer, as a witness. His work, as declared by [Malachi](#), was to be a messenger to go before the Lord. In all his preaching he testified of Christ. He pointed his own disciples to Jesus. **He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness.** An early heretical sect held that John the Baptist was the Messiah. The apostle is explicit, in order to correct this error.

9. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The Revision reads, “There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.” Grammatically, both in the Greek and the English, *coming* may belong to the *light*, or *every* man. We believe that it should agree with light. That was the true or real

Light who, when he comes into the world, enlightens every man. Jesus says ([John 12:46](#)), “I am come a light into the world.”

10, 11. The tenth verse declares: (1) That he *was* in the world, (2) the world was made by him, (3) it did not recognize him. The next verse states (1) that he *came*, personally, to his own. He took upon himself a fleshly form and came to the race to which he was united by fleshly ties; (2) his own received him not. The world is humanity in general, which *knew* him not; his own is the Jewish nation, who *received* him not.

12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. The Revision reads, “Children of God,” which is better. While the nation rejected him, some received him. To such as receive him in every age he gives power to become the children of God. The manner in which he is received is given: **Even to them that believe on his name.** It is not declared that they are made children by believing, but to the believer he gives the “power to *become*” a child. When one believes in Christ, his faith becomes a power to lead him to yield himself to God and to receive the Word into his heart.

13. Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh. The Jews prided themselves on being Abraham's children, and trusted in their blood for salvation. To be a son of God is not a fleshly birth at all, but the spirit of the subject is **born of God**. In [John 3:1–8](#), the Savior explains this birth more particularly.

14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. The Word assumed a human form and became incarnate as the child of Mary. **We beheld his glory.** His Divine glory. See [Luke 9:32](#); [John 2:11](#).

15. John bare witness. At the time of Christ's baptism when the Spirit descended. See [1:33](#).

16. Of his fulness. Of grace and truth. See [verse 14](#). His grace and truth hath blessed “us” (the saints) all. **Grace for grace.** Grace (favor) has been added to grace; one blessing piled upon another.

17. The law was given by Moses. It was not a system of grace, nor could it make men perfect; in contrast with it the system of *grace and truth* (see [verse 14](#)) was given by Jesus Christ.

18. No man hath seen God, with bodily eyes, but he was manifested as the Word, and at last the “only begotten Son hath declared him.” “He that hath seen me,” said Christ, “hath seen the Father. The Father is in me and I in him.”

19. This is the record of John. The writer now plunges at once into his history. He passes by the childhood of the Lord, John's ministry, and comes at once to the time when Jesus, thirty years old, is acknowledged by the Father as the Son of God. **When the Jews sent priests and Levites.** The Jewish rulers, the Sanhedrim, the court or parliament of seventy-one members who ruled Israel. The delegation sent to John was official. His preaching in the wilderness of Jordan had stirred the whole land, and they were sent to ascertain his

character. Matthew, Mark, and Luke use the term *Jews* very seldom, John often, a proof that he wrote far away from Palestine and for Gentiles.

20–23. Some conjectured that John was the expected Christ; others that he was Elijah who was first to come ([Mal. 4:5](#)); others that he was “that prophet,” the one predicted by Moses ([Deut. 18:15](#)); but he declared that he was none of these. When they insisted that he should declare who he was, he quoted [Isaiah](#), and said he was **The voice of one crying in the wilderness**. See note on [Matt. 3:3](#). His work was preparation for the Lord.

24. Were of the Pharisees. See notes on [Matt. 3:7](#).

25. Why baptizest thou then? If he were Christ, or Elias, or “that prophet,” they could understand why he should establish a new religious rite, but if none of these, why should he do so? Their perplexity shows that the baptismal rite was new to them. There is no proof that Jewish proselyte baptism of Gentile converts existed at this period, save the assertion of the Talmud, written two or three centuries after this. Josephus, who wrote in the time of the apostles, is silent about it.

26, 27. I baptize with water. See notes on [Matt. 3:11](#).

28. These things were done in Bethabara. The Revision says *Bethany*, a village whose site is now unknown, on the east bank of the Jordan. Bethabara means “the house of the ford.”

29. The next day John seeth Jesus. Here Jesus first appears, in person, in John's account, who omits all the details given by Matthew and Luke of his earlier life. He was now thirty years old, and came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized of John. This interview was after the baptism ([verse 33](#)), and probably after the Temptation. **Behold the Lamb of God.** Innocent like the lamb, to be offered as a lamb, “led as a lamb to the slaughter” ([Isa. 53:7](#)). The lamb was commonly used as a sin offering ([Lev. 4:32](#)), and when John points to Jesus as *the* Lamb of God he can only mean that God had provided him as a sacrificial offering. **The sin of the world.** Not of Jews only, but of Gentiles. John points to Jesus as the world's Savior.

30. This is he of whom I said. See [verse 27](#). **Was before.** Existed before I was born.

31. I knew him not. Knew not that God had chosen him to be the Christ. He knew, however, that he should be manifested in some way through his baptism.

32–34. I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove. See [Matt. 3:16](#), and notes. It was revealed to John that the Christ would thus be revealed. Indeed it was the anointing of the Spirit that made Jesus *the Anointed*, the Christ.

35. Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples. In [verses 19–28](#), the account is given of the visit of the priests and Levites, sent by the Sanhedrim to John. “The next day” after this, John sees Jesus and points him out as the Lamb of God, giving a discourse of which, in [verses 19–34](#), we have a synopsis. On the “next day” after this, the third day after the deputation of the Sanhedrim, and the second after the return of Jesus

from the wilderness, Jesus stood with two of his disciples. One of these two, we learn from [verse 40](#), was Andrew; the other, we have reason to believe, was John, the apostle.

36. Behold the Lamb of God! On the preceding day John had recognized Jesus in a public discourse as “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” Now he personally points the disciples to him.

38. Rabbi. A term meaning teacher, or master. **Where dwellest thou?** These disciples had followed at the bidding of John. Their question implies a desire to be in the company of Jesus.

39. It was about the tenth hour. Counting from six o'clock, the first hour among the Jews, the tenth hour would be four P. M.

40, 41. One of the two ... was Andrew. Afterwards an apostle. He has the honor of being one of the first two disciples of Jesus. **Findeth his own brother Simon.** Simon Peter. In true missionary spirit Andrew at once and first sought his own brother. **We have found the Messiah.** The Christ promised by the prophets. Messiah is the Hebrew word meaning the same as Christ.

42. Thou shalt be called Cephas. A Hebrew word meaning stone. Peter is the Greek form.

43. Findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. This is the first recorded instance of the Savior calling a disciple to follow him. Philip, it must be borne in mind, is not Philip, “one of the seven,” but “one of the Twelve,” a citizen of Bethsaida of Galilee, and a fellow-townsmen of Andrew and Peter.

45. Philip findeth Nathanael. As we learn from [John 21:2](#), Nathanael was a Galilean, his home being at “Cana in Galilee.” His name only occurs in these two places. He is supposed to have been one of the Twelve, the same one mentioned in the [other Gospels](#) as Bartholomew, which means “son of Tolmai.” The use of the name in [John 21:2](#) favors this hypothesis. **We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.** There was only one to whom this could refer, “The prophet like unto Moses,” the Messiah; and when Philip names Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael is at once skeptical whether the Messiah could come out of Nazareth, an insignificant and despised place.

46. Come and see. That is the best answer to the skeptic. Bring him to Christ, let him consider him, and what he has done for mankind. The strongest proof that Jesus is the Christ is Jesus himself.

48. Whence knowest thou me? Nathanael, who had never met Jesus before, was surprised to hear himself spoken of as one known. **When thou wast under the fig tree.** There was something about this answer that filled Nathanael with astonishment. Under the shade and shelter of the fig tree he had some rare experience that is not recorded, and that he supposed unknown to man. That Jesus knew of it and read his soul startled him and dissipated his unbelief.



49. Thou art the Son of God; the King of Israel. Philip had said, “Jesus, the son of Joseph,” as he supposed, but Nathanael, convinced, declared him the Son of God. This is the first confession of the divinity of Jesus.

51. Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending. Jacob, old Israel, in his dream at Bethel, saw the ladder that reached to heaven with the angels upon it ([Gen. 28:12](#)). Christ is that ladder, the way from earth to heaven, the way heaven sends messages to the world and the way we must go to reach it. Nathanael would be permitted to see that Jesus was the Mediator, that through him the Father speaks to man; that through him there is intercommunication between earth and heaven.



Chapter II

The First Miracle

Summary — *The Marriage at Cana. The Water Made Wine. The Passover. Jesus at Jerusalem. The Temple Cleansed. The Resurrection Foretold.*

1. And the third day. After the conversation with Nathanael. Immediately after it he departed into Galilee (1:43). **A marriage in Cana.** The site of Cana is not certainly known. Dr. Robinson, Giekie and other authorities place it at a ruin now called Kana, twelve miles north of Nazareth. **The mother of Jesus was there.** Reasons are suggested from the narrative that follows for believing that Mary was related to the family. As Joseph is never mentioned as living after Jesus entered upon his ministry, he is supposed to have died before this time.

2. Both Jesus and disciples were called. He now had disciples, those called in the few days before; John, Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael.

3. And when they wanted wine. The Revision says, "When the wine failed." For some cause, perhaps from a larger number of guests than was expected, the wine gave out. In the East, where hospitality is so lavish, this would cause great mortification. **The mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.** The solicitude of Mary could hardly be expected from one not a relative, but why she appeal to Jesus? In part, because it was natural speak to him in her perplexity, and in part, likewise, because she hoped he would meet the difficulty.

4. Woman, what have I do to with thee? These words in our language sound harsh and almost rude, but the term rendered *woman* was respectful and gentle (John 19:26). This language, partly a rebuke, to Mary, shows very plainly that the Catholic fiction of Mary being immaculate, the "Queen of Heaven," and "the Mother of God," is all nonsensical. **Mine hour is not yet come.** The hour of his full manifestation, as the divine King of Israel.

5. Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. She evidently understood from the manner, if not the words, of his reply that he would relieve the difficulty.

6. There were set there six water-pots of stone. These water-pots were to supply water for the washings usual at feasts (see Mark 7:4). The Jews were regarded ceremonially *unclean* if they did not wash both before and after eating. See notes on Matt. 15:2. The pots each held about twenty gallons.

8. He saith, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. "He that had made wine that day in those six water-pots does the same every year in the vines. For as what the servants put in the water-pots was changed into wine by the operation of the Lord, just so what the clouds pour forth is changed into wine by the operation of the same law.—Augustine.



9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted. The ruler of the feast, and the *governor of verse 8th*, are the same. It was customary to choose, sometimes by lot, a president who regulated the whole order of festivities.

10. Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine. The language of the ruler is sportive, but still he states a custom. The best wine was offered when the appetite of the guests was sharpest and most critical. **Have well drunk.** Not intoxicated, but have drunk considerable. Satan gives his good wine first; so the drunkard finds it; so did the prodigal son. Afterwards he gives the bitter; red eyes, pain, hunger, wretchedness. **Thou hast kept the good wine until now.** What meaneth Christ making wine? In Palestine there were three kinds of wine: 1. Fermented wines, which, however, were very unlike our fiery liquors, and contained only a small per cent of alcohol. These were mixed with two or three parts of water. The fermented, at first mild, and then diluted with water, was only intoxicating when used in enormous quantities. 2. The unfermented juice of the grape. 3. An intoxicating drink called “new wine” in [Acts 2:13](#). Whedon says: “We see no reason for supposing that the wine of the present occasion was that upon which Scripture places its strongest interdict ([Prov. 20:1; 23:31; Isa. 22:13](#)), rather than that eulogized as a blessing ([Psa. 104:15; Isa. 55:1](#)). Even adopting the view that it was fermented wine, it was totally unlike the fiery and undiluted drinks sold as wines in saloons, used in many families, offered at hotels and wine parties, and even poured out at communion tables. In the use of the usual wine of Palestine there is not the slightest apology for drinking as a beverage the alcoholic drinks which are the curse of our times. With regard to them the only safe rule is “to touch not, taste not, handle not.”

11. Manifested forth his glory. This was the first supernatural manifestation of his divine power; that he by whom all things were made controlled the powers of nature. **His disciples believed on him.** They already believed, but their faith was made firmer.

12. After this he went down to Capernaum. From the hilly region of Cana to the low-lying shore of the Sea of Galilee. **His mother and his brethren.** Catholics and some Protestants have held that these “brethren” were not brothers in the flesh, but kinsmen. The phrase, “his brethren,” occurs nine times in the Gospels, and once in Acts. The natural interpretation is always that they were his brothers, sons of Mary. Two places ([Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3](#)) mention his sisters. Had it not been for the dogma that Mary remained a virgin, a dogma that has no foundation in the Scriptures, it would never have been doubted that these “brethren” and “sisters” were her children.

13. The Jews' passover was at hand. See [Exodus, chapter 12](#), for institution of the passover. It was celebrated yearly at Jerusalem. This is the first that the Lord attended after he began his ministry, and of this attendance there is no mention in the other Gospels.

14. Found in the temple. In the Court of the Gentiles, which was within the temple walls. **Those that sold oxen and sheep and doves.** These were for the sacrifices. The great

crowds who came to Jerusalem at this time could not bring victims, and the traffic in oxen, sheep, kids and doves became enormous. It would have been proper enough if it had been conducted at stockyards, but the priests made a monopoly of it and installed it right in the temple. The Court of the Gentiles, “a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:15–19), was filled with cattle, ordure, and the din of traffic. **The changers of money.** Every Jew paid a half-shekel annually to the support of the temple (Exod. 30:13), but Gentile money was the coin in usual circulation, and this was refused at the temple. These money brokers, agents of the priests, furnished Jewish coin at a heavy charge. Edersheim says that this traffic alone cleared the priests what would be equivalent to about \$300,000 a year.

15. Made a scourge of small cords. Rather as a symbol than for use. **Drove them all out.** He had the right to cleanse his Father's house and here first asserts his authority. The traffickers fled before his glance, awed by a superhuman majesty.

16. Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. How often still the Father's house is so desecrated! This cleansing was a different one from that which occurred three years later at the close of his ministry (Matt. 21:12).

17. The zeal of thine house. Quoted from Psalm 69:9.

18. What sign? The Jewish officials demand some sign that would demonstrate that he had authority over the temple.

19–22. Destroy this temple. His own body. The sign that he would give the Jewish nation was his Resurrection. The Jews did not understand him, nor his own disciples, until after he rose from the dead. **Forty and six years.** It had been forty-six years since Herod the Great began the reconstruction of the temple, and it was not yet entirely completed. When Jesus was on trial before the Sanhedrim, these words were brought up as blasphemy.

23. Many believed. The miracles wrought that they saw at this time are not recorded. They are alluded to again in 3:2. These believed that he was a man sent from God, but did not trust in him as the Christ. The nature of their belief is stated in 3:2.



Chapter III

Christ and Nicodemus

Summary — *The Ruler Seeking Jesus by Night. The Necessity of a New Birth. The Birth of Water and of the Spirit. The Son of Man to Be Lifted Up. The Love of God for Man. Condemnation for Unbelief. John at Ænon. John's Testimony.*

1. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus is named three times by John, and not elsewhere; here, in [chapter 7:50, 51](#), where he protests against condemning Jesus unheard; and in [chapter 19:38, 39](#), where he aids Joseph of Arimathea in the burial of Jesus. He was a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrim (a ruler), and a rabbi ([verse 10](#)).

2. The same came to Jesus by night. He probably chose the night in order to escape observation. He did not dare encounter the hostility of the priests, filled with rage over the cleansing of the temple, and yet he wished to know more of one whom he believed to be sent from God. **Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God.** Nicodemus confesses, not only his belief, but that of his fellow Pharisees and rulers. The miracles of Jesus convinced them, even if they would not admit it, that he was a teacher sent from God. He came for information, and Jesus recognized it in what follows.

3. Verily, verily, I say unto thee. This form of expression was often upon the lips of Jesus to give emphasis to an unusually solemn and weighty declaration. See [Matt. 5:18](#). It occurs twenty-four times in John. **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** The term translated “again” is rendered “anew” in the Revision, which is better. It is the great doctrine, so fundamental in the Gospel, of Regeneration, a new Birth, being made a new creature, the same doctrine spoken of in [chapter 1:12, 13](#). Nicodemus, like all Jews, supposed that all who were born as children of Abraham would, as Abraham's seed, be citizens of the kingdom, but Jesus shows him that no one can be a new creature in Christ Jesus unless he is born anew. We are born naturally into the kingdom of nature, to live the natural life; if we enter the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of grace, it must be by a new birth. The doctrine that a man can bury his old sinful life, and begin a new one with the freshness of youthful hope, is foreshadowed in the Old Testament ([Isa. 1:18; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26](#)), and taught in the New Testament ([Rom. 6:8; 8:3; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15, 16](#)).

4. How can a man be born again when he is old? The question of Nicodemus indicates his surprise, skepticism and misapprehension of what Jesus meant.

5. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus does not reply directly to the question of Nicodemus, but proceeds to give a more explicit statement concerning the new birth. One must be born of water and of the



Spirit. Whatever this may mean, it will be admitted by all (1) that no one is a member of the kingdom of God until he is born again; (2) that the Savior declares the impossibility of one entering who is not born of water and of the Spirit. All agree that the birth of the Spirit refers to the inward, or spiritual change that takes place, and all candid authorities agree that *born of water* refers to baptism. So Alford, Wesley, Abbott, Whitby, Olshausen, Tholuck, Prof. Wm. Milligan, the Episcopal Prayer Book, the Westminster Confession, the M. E. Discipline, and M. E. Doctrinal Tracts, and also the writers of the early Church all declare. Alford says: "All attempts to get rid of this have sprung from doctrinal prejudices." Abbott says: "We are to understand Christ as he expected his auditor to understand him. John the Baptist baptized both Jew and Gentile as a sign of purification by repentance from past sins. Nicodemus would then have certainly understood by the expression, 'born of water,' a reference to this rite of baptism."

7. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The necessity is implied in the word kingdom. No one born a citizen of England can become a citizen of the United States without complying with our naturalization laws. The kingdom of God has its naturalization laws, and there is no other way of entrance than to be born of water and of the Spirit. We may not understand all the mysteries of the new birth, any more than we do those of the natural birth, but we can understand what has to be done and what is necessary. Two things are needful: the spirit must be renewed; we must be baptized.

8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Most commentators have held that this means: "As the wind moves mysteriously, so does the Spirit, and it breathes upon whom it will, effecting the inward change called the birth of the Spirit arbitrarily." This view I believe due to a wrong translation, sanctioned, not by Greek, but by current theology. Let it be noted that: (1) Exactly the same Greek term is rendered "wind" and "Spirit" in this verse. It is a violation of all law that the same word should experience so radical a change of meaning in the same sentence. (2) That the word (*pneuma*) is not translated "wind" elsewhere, although it occurs scores of times in the New Testament, but is always rendered "Spirit." (3) Another word in the Greek, *anemos*, is usually used to represent "wind." (4) The erroneous idea creates a confusion of figures. It makes Christ to say: "The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is (not the Spirit, but) every one born of the Spirit." It affirms of him who is born just what is affirmed of the wind, a thing the Savior never did. These facts are sufficient to show that the rendering "wind" is wrong. All we have to do is to translate *pneuma* here, as is done in the latter part of the verse and elsewhere in the New Testament. The verse then reads: "The Spirit (*pneuma*) breathes where it pleases and thou hearest the voice thereof, but canst not tell whence it comes nor whither it goes. So (by hearing its voice) is every one born of the Spirit" (*pneuma*). The meaning is: The Spirit breathes where it wills and you recognize its manifestation by its voice; by the

words spoken by men of God as the Holy Spirit gives them utterance. You cannot tell whence the Spirit comes to whither it goes, but you can hear its voice when it does come. So, by hearing the voice of the Spirit, is every one born of the Spirit. He who receives by faith the communications of the Spirit is born of the Spirit. The birth of the Spirit is not the same thing as the gift of the Spirit. To those who are born of the Spirit is given. “*Because ye are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father*” (Gal. 4:6). Hence, in harmony with the above view, Peter says, “Being born again, not by corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.”

10. Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? The question implies that Nicodemus was one of the doctors of the law. These made very arrogant claims of superior knowledge.

11. We speak that we do know ... ye receive not our witness. “Ye” includes Nicodemus and all Jews who failed to confess him; “we” includes himself and those who should testify of him by the Spirit.

12. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not. He had spoken of the things that belonged to the kingdom of God on earth, of the new birth. If Nicodemus could not understand and believe this, how would he receive testimony concerning the heavenly kingdom, God, and eternal glory?

13. And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down ... the Son of man which is in heaven. This implies: (1) That he existed before he appeared on earth. (2) That heaven was his true abode. (3) That, on earth, his spirit was in communication with heaven.

14, 15. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. The reference is to Numbers 21:4–9. As the bitten Israelites were healed by looking upon the brazen serpent lifted on high, so the world in sin is saved by looking to Jesus lifted up upon the cross.

16, 17. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, etc. There is no sweeter verse in the Bible. It declares: (1) That God is love. (2) That he loved the world instead of hating it. (3) That he so loved that he gave his Son. The Son did not come to appease the Father’s wrath, but the Father sent him because he loved so well. (4) That he came to keep men from perishing.

18. He that believeth on him is not condemned. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Faith in Christ is essential to salvation, because it is the power that leads to obedience to him. **Is condemned already.** “He that believeth not shall be damned.” The unbeliever condemns himself. He is lost and refuses to be saved by Christ.

19, 20. This is the condemnation. That men refuse the light. Usually it is not evidence, but an honest heart and a sincere desire for truth, that are needed in order to faith. All kinds of evil doers hate the light.



21. He that doeth truth. Truth has to be lived. He who lives it, lives an honest life sincerely desiring light, will come to the light.

22. Came into the land of Judea. Left Jerusalem and went into the country districts. **Tarried ... and baptized.** The first intimation that Jesus administered the baptismal rite. He did it through his disciples ([John 4:2](#)).

23. And John was baptizing in Ænon near Salim. The site was first identified by Lieut. Conder, of the British Palestine Exploration. He found a village of *Ainun* near another named Salim, not far from the Jordan, northeast of Samaria, with, as he says (*Tent Work*, p. 92), “the two requisites for the scene of baptism of a large multitude;—an open space and abundance of water.” Prof. McGarvey, who visited it, says: “Pools, well suited for baptizing are abundant.” **Because there was much water there.** This explains, not why John preached at Ænon, but why he baptized there. “Much water” was essential to baptism in New Testament times.

25, 26. There arose a question ... about purifying. The Revision says “a Jew,” probably a Pharisee who associated baptism with ceremonial purification. From the fact that John's disciples mention Jesus, it is evident that his name came up in the discussion.

27–29. Ye yourselves bear me witness. They complain of the fact that Jesus baptized and was very popular at this time, but John refers to the witness he had borne ([1:20, 29](#)), and affirms that each is fulfilling the work “given him of heaven.” **He that hath the bride.** The bride is the Church; the bridegroom is Christ. John, “the friend of the bridegroom,” already rejoices in the prospect of the union of the Bridegroom and Bride.

31. He that cometh from above. Christ, who is, therefore, above and over John.

32. No man receiveth his testimony. So few at that time that those who received were as nothing in contrast with the others.

36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. Eternal life and eternal death turn upon trust in Christ. He who believes on the Son with a heartfelt, obedient faith, a faith that trusts all and surrenders all to the will of Christ, is born again and “hath eternal life.” The faith that saves is a faith that moves us to come to Christ.



Chapter IV

Jesus at Sychar

Summary —*At Jacob's Well. The Woman of Samaria. The Question of Scared Places. God to Be Worshipped in Spirit. The Samaritans Hear the Lord. Jesus Departs to Galilee. The Nobleman's Son Healed.*

1–3. When therefore the Lord knew, etc. These verses tell why Jesus ended his ministry in Judea, for the present, and departed into Galilee. The Pharisees were becoming jealous of his increasing influence and the time had not come for an open conflict.

4. He must needs go through Samaria. Because it lay right between Judea and Galilee.

5. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria. Samaria was the district, embracing the ancient city of Samaria, which lay between Judea and Galilee. The district of Samaria comprised the country formerly occupied by the tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh. When the Ten Tribes were carried to Babylon, the Assyrian king sent in other tribes to occupy the country. These mingled with the Jews left in the country, partly adopted the Jewish worship, but were contemptuously rejected by the Jews when the latter returned from the Captivity. From this time the enmity between the two races was almost bitter, and they had no dealings (see [verse 9](#)). **Sychar.** This place was the ancient Shechem, so famous in the early history. It was forty miles north of Jerusalem, and was situated between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the Mounts of Blessing and Cursing ([Joshua 8:30–35](#)). Here Jacob built his first altar ([Gen. 33:18](#)); here Joseph was buried in the land given him by his father ([Joshua 24:32](#)); and here also the covenant of Israel was renewed with amens to the blessings and curses, after Joshua had conquered Canaan. It was afterwards called Neapolis, and at present a village called Nablous exists with a population of two thousand, about two hundred of whom are Samaritans and preserve their ancient worship. **Near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.** In this parcel Joseph was buried when Israel came up out of Egypt, his bones having been carried with them in accordance with his dying wish. His tomb is still shown and it can hardly be doubted that his bones really rest in the place pointed out.

6. Now Jacob's well was there. It is still seen by the traveler, cut through the solid rock, between eight and nine feet in diameter, and about seventy-five feet deep, though partly filled with rubbish. **Jesus ... wearied ... sat thus on the well.** The wells were usually curbed around with stone and covered. On this curb the Savior sat sheltered from the sun at noon, the sixth hour being twelve o'clock.

7, 8. There cometh a woman of Samaria. A Samaritan woman of the city of Sychar. Why she should come so far from the city for water is a matter of conjecture.

9. How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me? She saw by his dress, appearance, and the direction whence he came that he was of the Jewish race. The antipathy between the Jews and Samaritans was so bitter that they were never wont to ask any hospitable rite. The woman's reply is not a refusal of the Lord's request, but an expression of astonishment that a Jew should ask a favor of a Samaritan.

10. If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink. The great gift of God is not water, not even peace of soul, but Christ himself, God's "unspeakable gift," "God gave his only begotten Son." Had she known, the Savior declares, **Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.** Observe: (1) That Christ asks a favor in order to confer a greater one. (2) The well and the water suggest the thirst of the soul and the waters of life. **Living water.** Water of life. The woman thought he meant running water.

11. Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, ... whence then hast thou that living water? She was deeply impressed by his manner and his words, but she fails to rise above the material meaning of his words.

12. Art thou greater than our father Jacob? The question indicates still further her dawning conviction of the greatness of the stranger. It was from Joseph, the son of Jacob, that the Samaritans claimed descent. Jesus spoke of giving living water; Jacob, their great ancestor, had given this well.

13. Whoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. Her own experience would confirm his words. Nothing earthly satisfies long.

14. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. The water of which he speaks is a gift which he gives to humanity. It is not given to him, but is his own gift. His language is always that of the Son of God. He says, "I am the life;" "Come to me, ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" "I am the bread of life;" "He that believeth on me shall never thirst."

15. Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not. The mysterious words of the Jewish stranger she cannot yet understand, but she is deeply stirred, and one thing seemed plain—if she could have this water she would thirst no more.

16. Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman has asked for the water; before she can receive it she must be fully conscious of her sinfulness. Hence Jesus makes a demand that will recall her past life.

17. I have no husband. The words have their designed effect. She has a man, but not a husband.

18. Thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. She had been married five times; the easy divorce laws of the age, permitting a "divorce for any cause," would allow many changes without the death of either party. Some of her hus-

bands may have died; a part were almost certainly divorced. Her sixth alliance did not have even the apology of such a marriage.

19. Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Every word that Jesus had uttered had excited her wonder more and more, and when he lifted the curtain off her life, she was convinced at once of his superhuman knowledge.

20. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Partly to turn attention from her sinful life, and partly to have him settle a great controversy, she appeals to him to say where men ought to worship God. The Jews went up to Jerusalem to the temple. The Samaritans built their temples on “this mountain,” Mt. Gerizim. Note that the woman worshiped there because “our fathers” did. The “fathers” were wrong. Many now keep up infant sprinkling and other corruptions because their “fathers” practiced them.

21. The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem. Now comes the announcement of one of the grandest truths revealed by Christ, that the *place* is immaterial; that true, spiritual worship is essential.

22. Salvation is of the Jews. In the controversy between the Jews and Samaritans, the former were right on the great issue. The Samaritans worshiped, but knew not what they worshiped, because they rejected the prophets who would have directed them.

23. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The time is at hand, says the Lord, when a worship of forms, or at holy places, will not meet the demands of the Father. *He must* be worshiped with the heart, in spirit and in truth. Spiritual worship can be offered in any land, wherever the soul can humble itself before God.

24. God is a Spirit. Rather, “God is Spirit.” This declaration is fundamental. Since he is Spirit, he must receive spiritual worship, and is everywhere present.

25, 26. I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ. Her heart had been made lighter with the great hope of the world. The words of Jesus Christ carried her thoughts to that hope. He had told her much; the Messiah would tell her all things, and give light on every dark question. She perhaps began to suspect that Jesus was the Messiah. The admission that Jesus makes, **I am he**, is the first recorded.

27. Upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman. His disciples had left him alone at the well, while they went to the village of Sychar to buy food. They wondered that he should talk with a *woman*, and especially with a *Samaritan* woman. It was considered by the Jews indecorous to talk with a woman in public, and the rabbins held that to talk with such an inferior creature was beneath the dignity of a doctor of the law. This illustrates the state from which woman has been lifted by the Gospel.



29. Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did. He told her some things about her own life, and conscience had told her more. She felt that all was known to him, and naturally exaggerates by saying, “He told me all my life.”

32. I have meat to eat that ye know not of. “Man shall not live by bread alone.” The Lord who could go forty days in the wilderness without food, in the exaltation of the soul caused by his baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit, would forget the hunger of the body also, when he was pouring out the water of life to a poor, thirsty soul.

33. Hath any man brought him ought to eat? They cannot think of spiritual food, heavenly manna, bread of life. Yet, long before, [the prophet](#) had spoken of this food and had said, “Ye that have no money, come, buy bread, and eat.”

34. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. “Meat” in the Scripture means, not only flesh, but any kind of food. The Savior declares that to do the will of God is food to him. It is enjoyment and strength. It does not weary, but refreshes.

35. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Harvest began about the middle of April in Palestine. The time when the Savior spoke would then be about the middle of December. But the harvest of souls was ripe already. **Lift up your eyes.** No doubt he pointed to the Samaritans now flocking out to see him ([verse 39](#)).

36. He that reapeth receiveth wages. The figure is kept up. The reaper in the harvest fields receives wages, and so shall those who reap the harvest of souls; not earthly pay in money, or fame, or position, but the happiness of doing the noblest work, and beyond, the crown of life shining with stars.

37. One soweth, and another reapeth. This was a common proverb, growing out of constant human experience, true of worldly and spiritual things. How often has the patient pastor sowed, and then the evangelist has reaped in a meeting the results!

38. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour. The verb “sent” is past, and refers to some event before the present incident. The disciples had baptized multitudes, “more disciples than John” ([chap. 4:1](#)); so many that John's disciples reported “all men come unto him” ([chap. 3:26](#)). They had baptized these ([4:2](#)), reaping the fruit of John's labors.

40. So when the Samaritans were come. They insisted that he should tarry with them. A strange invitation for a Samaritan village to give to a Jew. It was also a strange thing for a Jewish teacher to accept the invitation.

41. Many more believed because of his own word. They saw and heard for themselves.

42. Know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. To the woman Jesus had said that he was the Christ. Now, by his teachings, many months before Peter's confession, the Samaritans pronounce him the Christ, the Savior, not of Jews only, or Jews and Samaritans, but of the world.



46. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick. The Greek word translated “nobleman” is *Basileukos*, from *Basileus*, a king, and implies one connected in some way with royalty. It may have been Chuza ([Luke 8:3](#)), Herod's steward.

47. Besought him that he would ... heal his son. Note that: (1) The nobleman has already “faith as a grain of mustard seed” in Jesus; (2) that faith moves him to seek the aid of Jesus; (3) to make sure of his help he comes in person, instead of sending servants; (4) while he thought he could heal his son, he did not comprehend that it could be done unless Jesus came to where he was; (5) he thought it would be too late if the son died before his coming. His faith was very imperfect.

48. Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman, in his sore distress, had some faith, caused only by the fame of the “signs and wonders” wrought. His faith was still imperfect, far below the holy trust of the Samaritans. He is the type of a class whose belief depended on outward signs.

50. Go thy way; thy son liveth. These words were spoken like the Son of God. There was no hesitation; no doubt. The manner of the Lord at once carried conviction to the heart of the sorrowing father.

The miracle is a notable instance of our Savior not quenching the smoking flax, just as his reproof of the Samaritan woman was of his not breaking the bruised reed. The little spark of faith in the breast of this nobleman is lit up into a clear and enduring flame for the light and comfort of himself and his house.—*Alford*.



Chapter V

Jesus in Jerusalem

Summary —*At Bethesda. The Man with the Infirmity Healed. The Jews Complain That the Sabbath Was Broken. The Jews Seek to Slay Jesus. He Rebukes Them. Predicts His Own Death and Resurrection. Also the Resurrection of All. The Testimony of John; of Moses.*

1. There was a feast of the Jews. Probably the second passover attended by the Lord after his ministry began. Such is the view of Irenæus, Eusebius, Lightfoot, Neander, Gresswell, Andrews and Dr. Wm. Milligan.

2. There is at Jerusalem ... a pool. Its supposed site is still shown, but is uncertain. **Five porches.** Shelters for the sick.

3, 4. In these lay a great multitude. All that follows the word “withered” in the third verse and all the fourth are wanting in the best MSS., and are evidently an interpolation.

5. And a certain man was there. With many others who thought the water had a healing power. His infirmity was probably paralysis.

6. Wilt thou be made whole? Jesus observed him and asked the question to arouse his attention.

7. I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool. His answer reveals the ideas that prevailed. The water was agitated at intervals, probably by an intermittent spring, and they supposed that the first one to enter after would receive the benefit. Only one could be healed at a time. No doubt many were, even without a miracle. In nervous diseases, faith is the great healing power.

8. Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. Then came the command to rise and walk. He spoke with an authority that compelled obedience.

9. The man was made whole. Observe the process: (1) Christ addresses the man; (2) he commands; (3) the man *obeys*. It is the obedience of faith. (4) In the act of obedience he is healed. Christ is the healer, but he is healed by the obedience of faith.

10. The Jews therefore said unto him. “Therefore” points to the fact that he was carrying his bed on the Sabbath day. The term “the Jews” does not refer to the people, but to the authorities. John always uses it to signify, not the multitude, but the rulers. The man was officially stopped and questioned. The bearing of burdens on the Sabbath was forbidden, not only by Jewish tradition, but by the law. See [Exod. 31:13](#); [Jer. 17:21](#) and [Neh. 13:15–19](#).

11. He that made me whole said unto me. The defence of the man is that he was ordered to do it. He knew not who had healed him.

14. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. His own sins, thirty-eight years before, had brought on this infirmity. What was their nature we are not informed, but we know that often our fleshly ills can thus be accounted for.

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15. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus. The second time he saw him he learned that it was Jesus.

16. The Jews persecute Jesus. The word is literally rendered “pursued Jesus.” At once they hunted Jesus and attacked him. They did not at first seek to slay him. This is omitted in the Revision and does not appear in the old MSS. But the officials now come to Jesus to learn why he has done this act.

17. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. The answer of Jesus to his accusers goes to the very root of the matter. The basis on which the Sabbath rested was that God had ceased his creative labors on the seventh day. Jesus shows that God's rest was not idleness. The Father had continued his works of love and mercy. He worked in these works right on till Jesus came; “now,” says the Son, “I work as my Father works. There is no suspension on the Sabbath of works of benevolence and mercy.” The Father's example is the pattern given to direct man.

18. Because he not only had broken the Sabbath. The Pharisees were horrified, not only at what they deemed the breaking of the Sabbath, but at the high ground on which the Lord placed his defence. **But said also that God was his Father.** This high claim seemed to them blasphemous.

19–21. Then answered Jesus. To their charge of blasphemy. He shows that there is the closest co-operation between the Father and Son. What the Father does the Son will do, even to the extent of giving life to the dead.

22, 23. That all men should honour the Son. Three “fors” occur in the [20th, 21st and 22d verses](#), all stating the exaltation given to the Son.

24. Hath everlasting life. The conditions of eternal life are: (1) Knowledge of the Son; (2) belief upon him; trust in him. These are necessary before he can be accepted.

25–27. The dead shall hear the voice. Those spiritually dead, as well as those in their graves. They shall hear, and the Son will bestow upon them eternal life. For the Son hath, by the will of the Father, life in himself and can bestow it. He is also judge, **because he is the Son of man**, a judge who shares the nature of the judged.

28–31. Marvel not at this. That he should execute judgment. Those in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth to judgment; the good, to the resurrection of life; the evil, to the resurrection of damnation; the one to life eternal, the other class to condemnation. **Can do nothing of myself.** Apart from the Father.

32. There is another that beareth witness of me. John is meant.

33. Ye sent to John. See [1:19–38](#).

36–38. I have greater witness. His works given of the Father, the Father's voice at baptism, and the Scriptures, which are the Father's word. **Have not his word abiding in you.** If they had they would believe upon him of whom that word did speak.

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39–41. Search the scriptures. Rather, as in the Revision, “Ye search the Scriptures” for eternal life. Yet they were full of testimony of Christ. Yet they turned away from him who is the life of whom their Scriptures spoke. **I receive not honour from men.** This perhaps is a reply to some expression of disapproval on their part.

42, 43. I know you. He read their hearts. **If another shall come.** Some false Christ.

44. How can ye believe? This verse shows that unbelief is due to the moral condition.

45–47. There is one that accuseth you. Moses, whose testimony they failed to accept. If they rejected the testimony of Moses, whom they professed to reverence, how could they believe him of whom Moses spoke?



Chapter VI

Christ, the Bread of Life

Summary — *The Five Thousand Fed. The Multitude Seek to Make Jesus a King. Jesus in the Mountain Alone. The Disciples in the Storm. Jesus Comes to Save in the Storm. The Discourse in the Synagogue of Capernaum. The Bread of Life.*

1. After these things. Not immediately after, but at a later period. It was probably nearly two years after the miracle at the pool of Bethesda. **Jesus went over the sea of Galilee.** The scene of his ministry had changed from Jerusalem to the inland lake, or sea, around which he loved to linger. John cites the fact that it was also called the Sea of Tiberias. The latter name was then better known to Gentile readers.

2–13. And a great multitude followed him. The miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, which follows, is the only miracle of the Savior recorded by all the four Gospels. It is found in [Matt. 14:13–21](#); [Mark 6:30–44](#); [Luke 9:10–17](#). From a comparison of the accounts we learn that it took place after the death of John the Baptist, and hence as late as the third year of our Lord's ministry. For notes see [Matt. 14:13–21](#). We gain from John the information that it occurred near the passover, that is, in the early spring, about one year before the death of the Savior. **Gather up the fragments that remain.** God does not allow wastefulness. Nature wastes nothing, not an ounce of matter. It is the waste of man that causes want. There is food enough for all. The waste of our nation is appalling;—\$800,000,000 per year in liquor; \$200,000,000 on tobacco, besides all the extravagance of life. Christ bids us save; save the fragments. It is by wasting the fragments that the great wastes occurs.

14. This is of a truth that prophet. The long expected prophet, foretold in [Deut. 18:15, 16](#), and referred to by the delegation sent to visit John the Baptist ([John 1:21](#)). This expected prophet was to be the king of Israel, the head of the kingdom of God on the earth. In other words they said: "This is the Christ."

15. Perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king. Convinced that he was Christ, they sought to proclaim him king, to raise his standard, and establish his government. To escape their well meant efforts Jesus retired to a mountain alone. We learn elsewhere that he went to pray.

16–21. His disciples ... entered into a ship. For notes on this storm on the sea, and the Lord coming to his disciples in the storm, see [Matt. 14:22–31](#). Compare [Mark 6:46–54](#). **It is I; be not afraid.** This is the gospel message of *peace*, on the ground—the simple ground—"It is I." Christ's presence is peace to the soul. How often has he to speak this word of encouragement, even to his own! almost always when they are brought suddenly, or in an unusual way, face to face with him!



22. The day following. The day after the miracle, when five thousand were fed, and after the night storm on the sea of Galilee. “The people who had stood on the other side and been fed,” remained awhile because there were no other vessels, and the more willingly, because they saw that Jesus had not gone with his disciples.

23. There came other boats from Tiberias. Tiberias was the largest city on the sea, built by Herod, and named after Tiberius Cæsar. Herod Antipas usually occupied it as his capital.

24. Came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. As they did not see the Lord longer on the eastern shore, they sought him at the place where he made his home.

25. Rabbi, when camest thou hither? He had not crossed the sea with his disciples; he had not come with them; how and when did he come? The day was the Sabbath, they had sought him in the synagogue, the question was asked there, and the discourse that follows was spoken there (see [verse 59](#)).

26. Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles. The Savior reveals to them the true motives which induced them to seek him. Henry says: “Not because he taught them, but because he fed them; not for love, but for *loaves*. Thus do all who seek in religion secular advantages and follow Christ for the sake of secular preferments.” People are more clamorous for earthly bread, than anxious concerning food for their souls.

27. Labour not for the meat which perisheth. The Savior does not prohibit laboring for food, but making the acquisition of food and worldly things the leading object of life. He means: Do not manifest a chief anxiety for bodily food, for the food that perishes with the using, but rather seek **the meat which endureth unto everlasting life**. The food of the soul; the Bread of Life. **Him hath God the Father sealed.** Sealing is the mark of approval, of authority. A legal document must bear the seal of the State to give it force. The Father had commissioned, authorized, and stamped his seal upon the work of the Son. His miracles were a *divine seal*.

28. What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? These seekers of Christ are eager for more information. He had bidden them work for the food of eternal life. What works then shall they do that they may please God and receive the divine gift?

29. This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They are startled by hearing that to please God the first requirement is faith in Christ. This is “the work of God” that pleases him. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” It is not *works*, but one work, that is required, a faith that would enable them to lay hold upon him who is the Bread of Life. From such faith would spring a Christlike life.

30. What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? He had pointed to himself as the object of faith, making his claim, such as had never been made by mortal man. He had spoken of his seal, or sign. They ask now for a sign.

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31. Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness. He may have fed a few thousands on the day before, but what was that to feeding of the whole host of Israel for forty years in the wilderness? Is he as great a leader as Moses, in whose time the manna fell?

32. Moses gave you not that bread from heaven. It was not Moses, with whom they were disposed to compare him, who furnished the manna in the wilderness, but the Lord ([Exod. 16:15](#)). He still feeds the Israel of God on its way to the heavenly Canaan. **My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.** The true bread is for the soul instead of the body. It satisfies the soul's hunger and keeps it alive. The Father gives it by sending the Son, the true bread of Life. Of the true bread the manna was a type.

33. The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven. He here defines the marks of the true bread: (1) It comes from heaven; (2) It bestows life upon the soul and sustains it; (3) It is for the world, not for a single race.

34. Lord, evermore give us this bread. One cannot fail to see the resemblance to the case of the woman of Sychar. Compare the Lord's teachings there ([John chap. 4](#)) on the Water of Life.

35. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. They ask for this bread. He answers, it is here; I am that bread. The work of God is that you receive it by believing upon him whom he hath sent. **He that cometh to me shall never hunger.** He that cometh shall not hunger; he that *believeth* shall not thirst. It is thus shown that faith is the power that brings us to Christ. We come to him by believing.

36. I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. They had asked a work in order that they might believe, which was a confession of their unbelief. They ask for the bread of life, but they can only partake of it by believing in him. He therefore points out the one obstacle to obtaining what they had asked for.

37. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me. Christ here, as elsewhere, shows that the power is of the Father. The Jews may reject him, but all whom the Father gives, of every race, will come to him. Christ is God's gift to men, but the believers are his gift to Christ. "The gift of the Father must not be understood of a predestinating decree. Here, and in other passages, when we read of God giving his Son to his people it is the moral and spiritual state of the heart that is thought of under the word. This state of heart by which they are induced to listen to the voice of Jesus is due to God alone.—*Schaff*. God's chief agencies for preparing the heart are his providences, Christian influences, and "the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God."

38. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will. Christ will refuse none who come to him; all such are given by the Father and he came to do the Father's will.

39, 40. This is the Father's will. The Father's will is that "every one who sees the Son and believes upon him," thus coming to, following and abiding in him, shall have eternal life, and that in the resurrection day Christ shall raise him from the grave. These verses

show, (1) That there is not any secret decree of election. The will of the Father applies to every one who believes upon the Son. (2) The condition of eternal life is a faith that leads to and appropriates Christ; that makes him the Lord of the soul. (3) Christ hath brought to light immortality. He is the “resurrection and the life.”

44. No man can come to me, except the Father ... draw him. Their obstinacy and unbelief ([verses 41, 42](#)) called out this. Two things are needful to come to Christ, the human will to come and the divine drawing (see [John 5:40](#); [Matt. 23:37](#); [Rev. 22:17](#)). God “draws” by the gospel. “It is the power of God unto salvation” ([Rom. 1:16](#)). If our will consents, so that we yield to the drawing, we will come to Christ.

45. They shall all be taught of God. Thus God “draws,” and those who have *heard and learned, come to Christ*.

46. Not that any man hath seen. They are drawn by hearing the word, not by seeing.

50. May eat thereof, and not die. Eternally. The Bread of Life, our Crucified Lord, is appropriated (*eaten, made our own*) by faith.

53–56. Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood. Appropriate these by faith. Whosoever by faith trusts in the death of Christ and is “baptized into his death” ([Rom. 6:3](#)), spiritually partakes of the body and blood of Christ. So does he also who eats in loving remembrance of him the emblems that represent his body and blood. [Verse 63](#) shows that his words must be taken in a spiritual rather than a literal sense. **My flesh is meat indeed.** Food indeed; for the soul, hence partaken of by faith. **Dwelleth in me.** See [Rom. 6:1–8](#).

57. The living Father. Who is the fountain of all life.

58. This is that bread. Himself. He probably laid his hand upon himself as he spoke.

59. These things said he in the synagogue. In the ruins, called Tel Hum, supposed to be those of Capernaum, are found those of a synagogue known to have been erected in the Herodian period by its style of architecture. There is ground for believing that this is the one erected by the centurion that “loveth our nation” ([Luke 7:5](#)), and in which Christ spoke.

60. This is a hard saying. About eating and drinking his flesh and blood. They could not comprehend.

62. If ye shall see the Son of man ascend? He points forward to a greater marvel than the one that now staggered before them, the Ascension of the Son of man.

63. It is the spirit that quickeneth. We may paraphrase this verse thus: I shall ascend to heaven so that my body cannot be literally eaten; the flesh literally profits nothing. It is the spirit that makes alive. The spirits of men must feed upon me by faith, that they may be made alive. My words are spirit and life. He who feeds upon them will be made alive.

65. No man can come unto me. See note on [verses 44, 45](#).

66. Many of his disciples went back. They stumbled over the remarkable declarations of this chapter. They had no genuine faith.



68, 69. To whom shall we go? If *we* should turn from Christ, to whom should we go? Peter's confession here is of the same purport as that at Cæsarea Philippi.

70. One of you is a devil. A demon, in the original; diabolical, or under the influence of the evil one.

Notice in this remarkable discourse the progressive thought: (1) In [verse 33](#) the Lord announces the Bread of God that giveth life to the world. (2) In [verses 48, 50](#) He declares that he is the Bread of Life. (3) [Verses 6:51–56](#) show that the Bread of life must be eaten by partaking of his flesh and blood. (4) [Verse 63](#) shows that this is done spiritually, by the spirit feeding upon his life and words.



Chapter VII

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles

Summary — *The Unbelief of the Brethren of Jesus. He Goes to the Feast of Tabernacles. He Teaches in the Temple. The Discussions Among the People. The Pharisees Send Officers to Take Him. The Last Day of the Feast. The Report to the Officers.*

1. After these things. The events narrated in the last chapter. About six months of the ministry in Galilee intervened between the feeding of the Five Thousand and the Feast of Tabernacles. During this interval the Lord kept away from Judea on account of the enmity of the authorities there.

2. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. It fell in the month Tizri, covering part of September and of October, and lasted for a week. It was one of the three feasts that all Jews were expected to attend.

3. His brethren said unto him. His brothers. [John 2:12](#). **Depart hence, and go into Judea.** A long time had passed since he had been at Jerusalem, and these brethren wished him to show his mighty powers there.

4. If thou do these things. These brethren still were doubters. He differed so from their idea of the Christ that they could not understand him, and they hoped that at Jerusalem he would be made manifest. They afterwards became believers.

6. My time is not yet come. For the full manifestation of himself. This required his death and resurrection.

7. The world cannot hate you. Because then it would hate its own, but it hated him because he rebuked its sins. They were of the world; he was not.

8. I go not up yet. He does not say that he will not go, but he will not go *yet*. He did not wish to go in the great multitude of pilgrims that were en route, as there were reasons why he should go quietly.

10. But as it were in secret. After the crowds had gone, so that he could travel privately. The multitudes hung upon him and had sought to make him a king. In Galilee he was very popular at this time. His popularity intensified the enmity of “the Jews.”

11–13. The Jews sought him. “The Jews” in John almost always means the ruling class at Jerusalem. **The people** means the masses of the Jewish nation. The people were divided in opinion, but dared not express themselves **openly** until they saw what course *the Jews* would take.

14. About the midst of the feast. The middle. It lasted eight days in all. Jesus seems to have appeared unexpectedly in the temple, engaged in teaching.

15. How knoweth, etc.? The Jewish rulers were astonished at his learning, since he had never attended the great schools of their doctors.

16. My doctrine is not mine. This is an answer to the question of [verse 15](#). His knowledge came not from man, but from God.

17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine. The Common Version is ambiguous. The Revision is clear: **If any man willeth to do, etc.** The difficulty is in the way of the Jews recognizing the teaching of Jesus as divine, was that they were not willing to do God's will. This spirit of disobedience is the source of most, if not all, skepticism. Unbelief is due, not to the head, but to the heart. He who in his heart says, "Thy will be done, give me light and I will walk in it," will find that Christ is just the teacher demanded by his soul, and that the gospel meets his soul's want. Jesus will so meet the wants of his soul that he will be satisfied and will know the doctrine, that it comes from him who made the soul. The great German poet, Heine, was a scoffer until old and tortured with chronic disease. Then he said: "I have discarded my proud philosophy and learned to trust in the consolations of religion." He had no more outward evidence than before, but his heart had changed.

19. Did not Moses give you the law? Yet they were seeking to kill him in violation of the law which they professed to keep.

20. The people answered. Not "the Jews," but the masses. They did not then know that the rulers were seeking his death, and hence rebukes such a suggestion. **Thou hast a devil.** Such a mistake must be due to the whisper of a demon, they thought.

21. I have done one work. He goes back to the cause of the enmity of the rulers, the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day, about eighteen months before (see [chap. 5](#)).

22–24. If a man on the sabbath day, etc.? The argument is this: You blame me for healing an impotent man on the Sabbath; yet you break the Sabbath to circumcise a child if the eighth day after its birth falls on the Sabbath. You say that the law of circumcision was given to Abraham, is older than the Sabbath law, and must be kept if the Sabbath is to be broken. Now the law of love and mercy is older than Moses; why find fault if it is kept on the Sabbath? They should judge righteously, instead of by outward appearances.

25–29. Some of them of Jerusalem. Citizens who understood the purposes of the rulers, of which the visitors were ignorant. **Do the rulers know, etc.?** As they did not seize him according to their purpose, the question arose what had changed the mind of the rulers. Had they found out that he was the Christ? **Howbeit we know ... whence he is.** The Jews had an idea, due probably to [Dan. 7:13](#), that when the Messiah came no one would know from whence he came. **Ye know whence I am.** This is a reply to their assertion that they did. If they really did they would know that he came from God. They did not even know God, or they would know him whom God sent.

30. They sought to take him. "They of Jerusalem" angered because he said they did not know God. This was the attempt of a mob, not an official act.



31. Many of the people believed. Not intelligently, but that he was a teacher sent from God, and possibly the Christ. Compare [3:1, 2](#).

32. The Pharisees heard. The bitterest enemies of Christ. When they heard that the people were believing, they thought it time for action, so **the Pharisees and chief priests**, that is, the Sanhedrim, sent officers to seize him. This was an official act, the *first* official attempt of the Sanhedrim to take Jesus. They had purposed it before, but had not taken action.

33–36. Yet a little while I am with you. Aware of the counsel of the rulers, he foretells his death and return to heaven. **Where I am, ye cannot come.** Not while on earth, neither after life is over, if they die in their sins ([8:21](#)). The Jews did not comprehend his words, plain as they are to us.

37. In the last day. Probably the eighth day, possibly the seventh. The eighth was a day of holy rest added to the seven days of the feast. **If any man thirsteth, let him, etc.** Jewish writers say that water was brought every day of the feast in a golden pitcher from the pool of Siloam and poured upon the altar. It is thought that it was when this water was poured out that Jesus cried out, and pointed to the living water.

38. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said. Notice that “believing” corresponds to “coming” in the [preceding verse](#), showing that faith is the means that brings us to Christ. The reference is not to any single passage, but to the spirit of the Scripture, notably such passages as [Isa. 55:1](#); [58:11](#); [Psa. 36:8, 9](#). **Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** Christ is the living water; he who believes upon Christ has Christ formed within him, and hence must become a fountain to dispense the living water whatever he goes.

39. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. This declaration of John makes the [second chapter of Acts](#) the best commentary on the [preceding verse](#). Luther says: “So St. Peter, by one sermon on the day of Pentecost, as by a rushing of water, delivered three thousand men from the devil's kingdom, washing them in an hour from sin, death and Satan.” **Because Jesus was not yet glorified.** Let it be noted, (1) That the Holy Spirit was not given until after the death and ascension of Jesus. (2) The disciples of Christ did not become “fountains of living water” until the Holy Spirit was sent. This marks Pentecost as the beginning of the preaching of the gospel authoritatively by his disciples.

41–44. Others said, This is the Christ. Others asserted that he was the Christ. The opponents denied this, and based their opposition, not upon his character, or his teaching, but upon the fact that he came from Galilee. They did not know that he was born at Bethlehem, according to the prophecies ([Micah 5:2](#)). **The seed of David.** See [Isa. 11:1](#); [Jer. 23:5](#); [Psa. 89:36](#).

45. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees. These were the temple police, Levites under the direction of the chief priests. In [verse 32](#) we are told that the chief priests, instigated by the Pharisees, had sent the officers to arrest him.

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46. Never man spake like this man. The only answer the officers could make to the demand why they had not carried out orders was, “Man never spake like this man.” The multitude had not overawed them, but the words of Christ.

47, 48. Then answered the Pharisees, ... Have any of the rulers, etc.? The Pharisees charge the officers in language of scorn. By rulers are meant the Sanhedrim. In the matter of deciding on the claims of the Messiah they hold that the judgment of the “rulers” must be decisive. They were not probably aware that Nicodemus was really a secret believer, and that another “senator,” Joseph, would reveal himself at the proper time.

49. This people ... are accursed. The argument was “Not the Sanhedrim, but the rabble are the believers upon him. They are utterly ignorant of the law and are accursed. On account of their ignorance they are easily led astray.”

50–52. Nicodemus. See [John 3:1](#). **Dost our law judge, etc.?** Of course it did not, but for him to say a word in defense of justice brought the charge that he was a follower of the Galilean. **Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.** The rulers in their rage make a false statement. Jonah ([2 Kings 14:25](#)), Elijah ([1 Kings 17:1](#)) and Nahum ([Nah. 1:1](#)) were all of Galilee.



Chapter VIII

Christ Teaching in Jerusalem

Summary — *The Woman Taken in Adultery. The Light of the World. The Father's Witness. Freedom by the Truth. Abraham's Seed. The Son of Man before Abraham.*

1. Went unto the mount of Olives. For the night, as he was wont to do the last week of his life.

3. The scribes and Pharisees. The scribes were theologians. They brought this woman to Jesus for trial to see what he would decide, and to criticise him. They wished grounds for charges ([verse 6](#)).

5. Moses ... commanded. See [Deut. 22:22](#), and [Lev. 20:10](#).

6. Jesus stooped down, and ... wrote. As though to say he understood their purposes and would pay no attention to them. This is the only time in the New Testament that our Lord is described as writing.

7–9. He that is without sin among you. When they persisted, saying, *What sayest thou?* he *said* what was an awful rebuke. They knew that he knew their lives, that they were as guilty as the woman they had brought. They forgot the demand of Moses ([Deut. 17:5–7](#)) that the witnesses should cast the first stone, and his answer was like a bolt of lightning. Covered with shame, when he stooped and wrote again, they **went out one by one**.

11. Neither do I condemn thee. Here is mercy. **Go, and sin no more.** Here is admonition; the condition of her final pardon. He is very merciful, but does not excuse sin.

12. I am the light of the world. He then began his discourse to the people assembled. See notes on [Matt. 5:14](#) and [John 1:7–10](#).

13, 14. My record is true. The Pharisees disputed this. Ordinarily the testimony of a man that he is sent from God is insufficient. He may be deceived, or a deceiver. But Jesus could not be deceived, for he knew all things; nor a deceiver, for he was Truth. Besides, he had other testimony ([verse 18](#)).

15. Ye judge after the flesh. According to appearances. **I judge no man.** He lets their lives and consciences judge them.

17. It is written in your law. [Deut. 19:15](#). Observe Jesus says not *our*, but *your* law.

18. The Father ... beareth witness. By the prophets, by the works that Jesus does, by his voice at the baptism, and by John the Baptist.

19. Where is thy Father? Asked in scorn, because he said “the Father beareth witness of me.” **If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father.** The knowledge of Christ leads to a knowledge of the Father. See [John 14:8](#).

20. These words spake Jesus in the treasury. Of the temple. See notes on [Mark 12:41](#) and [Luke 21:1](#).



21. Whither I go, ye cannot come. Because they shall *die in their sins*, and he will return to heaven, where the sinner cannot enter.

22. Will he kill himself? They understood that he referred to his death, but parried the thought that he would die at their hands. Their words were partly mockery.

23, 24. I am from above. He shows more clearly that he returns to heaven, where they never can enter on account of their sins. This leads them to ask:

25. Who art thou? No doubt asked with a sneer; hence, he only refers them to his past words.

28. When ye have lifted up the Son of man. Lifted him up on the cross. His “lifting up” would be the means of breaking down unbelief. We can see how this was verified. In fifty days after he was lifted up three thousand believed in a single day, and the work of faith went on until the civilized world acknowledged him as King.

29. The Father hath not left me alone. The Father was with him. He was with him and in him. He was “the brightness of the Father's glory.” He did **those things that please him**, and God was with him.

30. Many believed. That he was a divine teacher.

31. If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed. They “believed on him,” but their faith was not yet made perfect by obedience. Hence he adds the condition of discipleship. Their belief must move them to accept his word and obey it. There is a condition, *continue in my word*; a promise, *shall be my disciples*.

32. And ye shall know the truth. Disciples are learners. Their object is to know the truth. The way to know the truth is to obey the truth. **The truth shall make you free.** The Gospel obeyed, *frees*—frees from the yoke of Satan, from spiritual task-masters, from fear, fills the soul with hope and the free spirit of a son who serves the Father from love.

33. We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage. They trusted in their blood, rather than in obedience to the God of Abraham. Their proud language was false. Their nation had been in bondage for over six hundred years to Babylon, to Persia, to Macedon, to Syria, to Rome. They were also in bondage to sin.

34. Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. According to his custom, Christ makes no direct argument in reply, but states a truth and leaves them to apply it. The sinner is the slave of sin. See [Rom. 7:9–24](#).

35. The servant abideth not in the house for ever. The servant has no claim to remain continually in the same family, but may be changed at will. The son can remain because he is a son. The Jews, servants of sin, would soon be expelled from the Lord's house.

36. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. If you would be free indeed you must have the freedom that the Son bestows, and become children. In order to fully comprehend the figure, read [Gal. 4:19–21](#).

37. I know that ye are Abraham's seed. According to the flesh, but not according to the spirit. Abraham had no such spirit as they.

38. I speak that which I have seen with my Father. Jesus was the Son; he had dwelt in the Father's house. They had the spirit of Satan, and hence were, spiritually, his children.

41. Ye do the deeds of your father. Satan.

42. If God were your Father, ye would love me. They made this claim ([verse 41](#)). Their hatred of the Son was proof that they were not God's children.

43. Ye cannot hear my word. Cannot receive it because Satan has your hearts, and is your father.

44. Ye are of your father, the devil. There are two households: that of God, composed of his children; and that of the devil, composed of his children. All who hear the voice of Christ become God's children by adoption ([Rom. 8:15-17](#)), and all who refuse to hear him, do so because they belong to the devil's household and hear his voice. They "will do the lusts of their father." **He was a murderer from the beginning.** He caused the first murder, moves those who do murder, and those who seek to kill Christ are of his spirit.

46. Which of you convinceth me of sin? He points to his sinless character as a proof that there can be no falsehood in his words.

48. Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? They resort to the language of passion and vituperation. Of all men they hated the Samaritans most, and hence this charge. They next accuse him, not of having a devil, but of being possessed with a demon, or evil spirit.

49. I honour my Father. He passes by in silence their first charge; the second he shows cannot be true, for he honors his Father, which a demon could not do; and yet the Jews dishonored him, while he honored the Father.

50. I seek not mine own glory. He cared little therefore for their abuse, and sought not to defend himself.

51. If a man keep my word, he shall never see death. Here again is a condition and a promise. Notice (1) Its universal character. *If any one*, Jew or Gentile, male or female, bond or free. (2) The condition: *Keep my words*. By obedience we are not only freed, but enter into life. (3) *Shall not see death*. Death of the body is not reckoned death, but merely the gate through which the believer enters upon a more perfect life. The real death is that of the soul.

53. Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Their argument is: They that heard the word of God are dead, and shall they who have heard thee not die? Their question is asked in scorn. Compare [John 4:12](#).



54. If I honour myself, my honour is nothing. They had just asked: Whom makest thou thyself? The Father, who honoreth him, will settle that question by his resurrection from the dead and exaltation.

56. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day ... and was glad.. Saw it in promise by prophetic vision; whether or not “Abraham was greater,” he rejoiced in the hope of the revelation of Christ.

57. Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? It had been about 2,000 years since the time of Abraham. Jesus did not say he had seen Abraham, but they pervert his words.

58. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. A solemn and official declaration, preceded by “Verily, verily.” The utterance is a remarkable one. It does not merely assert that he *was* before Abraham, but before Abraham was, I AM. It identifies with the I AM of the Old Testament. Divinity has no past tense, no future tense, but always the present.

59. They took up stones to cast at him. They regarded his language blasphemy. If he had been only a man it would have been.



Chapter IX

The Man Born Blind

Summary —*Are Physical Misfortunes Judgments? Sometimes for the Glory of God. The Blind Man Healed. The Pharisees Examine Him. They Excommunicate Him for Honoring Christ. He Confesseth Christ.*

1. He saw a man which was blind from his birth. Like most such unfortunates in the East, he was a beggar ([verse 8](#)).

2. Master, who did sin? Many of our misfortunes and physical ills are brought on us either by our own sins, or are inherited from parents and caused by their sins. The disciples ask if the blindness is a judgment, and who caused it? They were, perhaps, not aware that he was blind from birth.

3. Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents. Jesus does not affirm that they were sinless, but that their sins were not the cause of the calamity. We are not justified in asserting that the sufferer is a sinner. Job, Christ, Paul, and the whole army of martyrs disprove it. **But that the works of God should be made manifest in him.** By his miraculous cure the work of God shall be made manifest. It is the work of God to believe on Christ ([John 6:29](#)), and the blindness of this man was the occasion of faith being produced, not only in him, but others. Thus Christ shows a nobler use of suffering. “The Father chasteneth every son whom he loveth.”

4. The night cometh, when no man can work. The works of God are to be made manifest in the blind man; Christ must work those works while the short day of life lasteth. His night of death was near. Nor is ours far off.

5. I am the light of the world. He opens the blind eyes of both the body and the soul. We see morally, because he has given us light.

6, 7. Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. It was Christ's rule to require an act of faith. Hence, instead of bidding him to see, he sent him to Siloam to wash the clay from his eyes. Siloam is a rock-hewn basin fifty-three feet long, eighteen wide, and nineteen deep, fed by a spring. It is named in [Isa. 8:6](#) and [Neh. 3:15](#), and can still be seen in Jerusalem.

13. They brought him to the Pharisees. It was a notable event that demanded investigation. Hence they brought him to religious men of great influence.

14. It was the sabbath day. Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. We have found in the case of the miracle at the pool of Bethesda how they were angered by any apparent violation of the day.

15, 16. This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. The Pharisees questioned the man, learned that his eyes had been smeared with spittle, and then declared



that Jesus had broken the Sabbath. Even this was a violation, not of the law, but of their tradition. See notes on [Matt. 15:2](#) .

17. He said, He is a prophet. A little while before he had said that “a man called Jesus” healed him; now he declares that “he is a prophet;” a little later he is prepared to receive him as the Son of God. His convictions constantly deepened.



22. Because they feared the Jews. The rulers. They knew that it was agreed to excommunicate any one who confessed Christ. Hence they said, He was born blind, he now sees, you must ask him how he was cured. He is of age. To be cast out of the synagogue was an awful punishment to a Jew. It put him on a level with the heathen.

24. We know that this man is a sinner. Because he healed on the Sabbath.

30–33. Herein is a marvellous thing. It was also a “marvellous thing” that one who was a blind beggar a few hours before should now expound theology to the very men that “sat in Moses' seat” and show a better knowledge of the spirit of the Scriptures than the great ecclesiastics. Without the power of God no man could open the eyes of one born blind.



34. They cast him out. If they could not answer his arguments they could excommunicate him. This they did. Observe that this miracle was officially investigated by the enemies of Christ, and they were compelled to admit it. The judicial investigation showed that he was born blind, that he was cured, and that Jesus gave him sight.

35–38. Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Jesus sought the poor excommunicated man, revealed himself to him and was confessed. The man had lost the world, but found Christ. Observe that he believes with the heart, confesses with the mouth, and shows his faith by his homage.

39. For judgment I am come into this world. The coming of Christ, the Light, reveals human hearts. Publicans and sinners were made to see, while “Jews” and Pharisees, who claimed to be enlightened, were left in darkness, because they closed their eyes. Those blinded are those who would not see.

40, 41. Are we blind? The Pharisees ask this. They were not blind by necessity. They could see if they would. Hence they were responsible. Had they been without opportunity they would have no moral responsibility, but as they had opportunity to see and claimed to see, their **sin remaineth**.



Chapter X

The Good Shepherd

Summary — *The Sheepfold. The Shepherd of the Sheep. The Hireling. The Feast of Dedication. The Jews Seek to Stone Jesus. He Teaches Beyond Jordan.*

1. He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold. The sheepfold is a figure of the church, the door into which is Christ. The sheepfolds of the East are large enclosures, open to the sky, but walled around with reeds or stones or brick in order to afford a protection against robbers, wolves, and other beasts of prey. There is a large door at which the shepherd enters with the sheep.

2. He that entereth in by the door. The one who comes in by the door is the shepherd. The figure is very plain to those familiar with Eastern sheepfolds. The door is for the shepherd and the sheep, while those who get in otherwise are robbers who seek to prey upon the sheep.

3. To him the porter openeth. The gatekeeper whose business is to guard the entrance. This servant was furnished with arms to fight off intruders, but the shepherd he would let in. It is not certain that Christ intended to make the porter a figure of any spiritual thing, but if so, he would represent God, who has decided who shall enter through the door. **And the sheep hear his voice.** This is true to the letter. The sheep in the East are so tame and so trained that they follow their keeper with the utmost docility. He leads them forth from the fold just where he pleases. The Eastern shepherds *lead* their sheep, while in our country we *drive* them. **He calleth his own sheep by name.** This corresponds exactly with the facts of Eastern shepherd life. They give names to sheep as we do to horses, cows, and dogs. "Passing by a flock of sheep," says Mr. Hartley, "I asked the shepherd to call one of his sheep. He instantly did so, and it left its pasturage and its companions, and ran to the shepherd with a promptitude and signs of pleasure that I never witnessed before."

4, 5. The sheep follow him: for they know his voice. Also literally true in the East as all travelers testify, but a **stranger they will not follow**, because his voice is strange. So true is it that when a traveler has changed dress with the shepherd for an experiment, they still have followed the disguised shepherd's voice and refused to listen to the voice of a stranger in the garb of their own shepherd.

6. This parable spake Jesus unto them. The Greek word rendered here "parable" is not so rendered elsewhere. It is rather a simile.

7. I am the door of the sheep. [Verses 1–5](#) speak of shepherds in general. These shepherds enter into the fold and go out by the same door as the sheep. Christ is that door; *the Door*

of the sheep, the one door for all, both sheep and shepherds. There is no other way in, for “there is no other name, under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

8. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers. Abbott holds that the idea is, “All who came, not entering through the door, but claiming to be before me, having the precedence, independent of me, are thieves and robbers.” This seems to harmonize with the context, and is probably the Savior’s meaning. He included the Jewish rabbis, the Greek philosophers, the pretended prophets, and the “Infallible Pope.” These all refuse to bow to his authority. **But the sheep did not hear them.** The true sheep.



9. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved. Christ is at once the door, the shepherd and the pasture. His pasture is the bread of life and the water of life.

10. The thief cometh not, but to steal. All those who enter otherwise than by the door wish to prey upon the flock.

11. I am the good shepherd. This title, applied to Jehovah in [Psa 23](#), and in [Ezek. 34:12](#), Christ here applies to himself. The mark of the good shepherd is *that he giveth his life for his sheep*. In that unsettled country the shepherd had often to defend his flock.

12. But he that is a hireling ... leaveth the sheep, and fleeth. It is not the bare fact of a man receiving pay that makes him a hireling. “The laborer is worthy of his hire.” He is a hireling who would not work were it not for this hire, and who works where the hire is highest rather than where he can do the most good.

16. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. Not Jews, of whom his followers then were, but Gentiles who would soon be called to him. These would hear his voice, enter through the door, into the same fold as the Jewish Christians, so that there would be “one fold and one shepherd.” There is only one Church and one door into it, and one Shepherd over it.

18. I lay it down of myself. His life. He gave himself for man of his free will. He laid it down on the cross; he took it up when he rose from the dead. Abbott says of the lesson in [these eighteen verses](#), “I understand this lesson to be a parable with a double application. First, Christ compares the Pharisees to shepherds, himself to the door, and declares that those only are true shepherds who enter through the door; that is, through Christ and his authority. All others are thieves and robbers. Then he changes the application and declares himself the good shepherd whose praises David and Isaiah sung, and indicates the nature of the service that he will render unto his sheep by giving for them his life.”



22. It was ... the feast of dedication. Two months after the last incidents, which occurred at and shortly after the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Dedication occurred in December, was not divinely appointed, but was instituted by Judas Maccabæus in b.c. 164, to commemorate the purification of the temple after it had been defiled by the Syrians. Jesus took the occasion to teach the people that came together. There is no proof that he observed it.

23. Walked ... in Solomon's porch. A long covered colonnade that was a part of the temple.

24. The Jews ... said. The ruling class. They came, not for information, but to secure ground for accusation.

25. I told you, and ye believed not. See [John 5:19; 8:36, 56, 58 and 9:36](#).

26. Ye believe not, because ye are not my sheep. Not from lack of proof, but from a lack within themselves. If, as his sheep, they would follow (hear and obey), they would recognize him.

28. I give unto them eternal life. To his sheep. Eternal life means, not eternal existence, but eternal bliss. God hath made the soul deathless, but it may exist in banishment from heaven.

29. No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. The sheep who hear his voice and follow him ([verse 27](#)). This is the condition of their safety. If they comply with it God's grace will save them from the adversary.

30, 31. I and my Father are one. Are so united that the Father is pledged to keep the sheep of the Son. These words the Jews held to be blasphemy, and sought to stone him. Compare [8:52](#).

33. For blasphemy. Because he said he and the Father were one.

34–36. Is it not written in your law. In [Psa. 82. I said, Ye are gods?](#) It was there addressed to judges. Christ's argument is: If your law calls judges gods, why should I be held guilty of blasphemy for saying that I am the Son of God? **Sanctified.** Set apart.

39. Therefore they sought again to take him. A few moments before they would have stoned him by mob violence ([verse 31](#)), but when they had cooled somewhat they sought to arrest him.

40. And went away again beyond Jordan. He had been nearly three months in Jerusalem, a very stormy ministry. Twice efforts were made to mob him ([8:59; 10:31](#)); twice, to arrest him ([7:32, 45; 10:39](#)). His time would not come yet for three months, till the next passover, and he retired from the storm for a season. In the other gospels there are recorded a number of the incidents of his ministry beyond the Jordan.



Chapter XI

Lazarus Raised from the Dead

Summary —*Lazarus Sick Unto Death. Jesus Sent For. Lazarus Dead and Buried When He Comes. The Resurrection and the Life. Lazarus Comes Forth at the Word. Many Jews Believe. The Sanhedrim Takes Counsel Against Christ. The Prophecy of Caiaphas. The Passover at Hand.*

1. A certain man ... named Lazarus. He is not named in the other Gospels, though his sisters are. **Bethany.** About two miles east of Jerusalem, on the eastern slope of Mount Olivet. **The town of Mary, etc.** John speaks of the sisters as well known in the church. They had been named by [Luke](#), who wrote before him.

2. It was that Mary. As there are several New Testament Marys, John points out this one by the well known incident of the anointing described in [12:1-11](#).

3. His sisters sent unto him. Unto Jesus who was now beyond Jordan. In their distress they turn to the Lord.

4. This sickness is not unto death. That is, death shall not prevail, but God shall be glorified by his rescue from death.

6. He abode two days still in the same place. Because his work there was not yet done. He was in Perea; Lazarus was at Bethany in Judea.

9, 10. Are there not twelve hours in the day? This is his answer to the protest of his disciples against going to Judea again, where the Jews seek his death. He sees his course clearly and is walking in the day.

11-16. Our friend Lazarus sleepeth. Jesus before called death a sleep, because it was only a temporary slumber. **Let us also go, that we may die with him.** The Jews were so hostile when they left Jerusalem that they expect him to be put to death.

19. Many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary. Jews from Jerusalem, of which Bethany was a suburb. As "Jews" in John's usage means the ruling classes, the fact that they came shows that the family of Lazarus was influential. These came to "comfort;" that is, to sit with and talk to the mourners. The mourning was kept up thirty days.

21. If thou hadst been here. Martha's faith made her believe that Jesus would have healed Lazarus, but even she did not expect him to call back from the grave one already buried.

23. Thy brother shall rise again. She takes this as an allusion to the final resurrection.

25. I am the resurrection, and the life. Christ makes the grand, striking declaration that he is the Resurrection and the Life, words that never could have fallen from the lips of a sane mortal. They mean that he is the power which opens every grave, gives life to the sleepers, and calls them forth to a new existence; that the life that endows men with eternal



being is in him and proceeds from him. In the light of his own resurrection they mean that when he burst open the tomb he did it for humanity and in him humanity has won the victory over death.

26. Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Those dead, who believed in him, shall be raised and live, and those living who believe, shall never perish. Death will only be a change to a better existence.

27. I believe that thou art the Christ, etc. He asks about her faith. She responds by the good confession that embraces all, Martha's creed, Peter's creed, the true "Apostles' creed," the only creed of the Apostolic church.

28–30. Called Mary her sister secretly. The Lord had evidently directed her to do this, for she said, "The Master calleth for thee." At once, with a promptitude that shows her joy, Mary arose and hastened out of the town to the place where the Lord still tarried.

31. She goeth to the grave to weep there. The message to Mary was secret. When she suddenly arose and left hurriedly, the only explanation that suggested itself to the Jews was that she had gone to weep at the tomb, a custom of Jewish women.

33, 34. He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. The word rendered "groaned" undoubtedly means "was indignant," and is so rendered in the margin of the Revision. Jesus was deeply moved by the grief of Mary, but the hypocritical weeping of the Jews who followed her, and who were acting according to the rules, filled him with indignation.

35. Jesus wept. The shortest verse in the Bible and one of the most touching.

36, 37. Behold how he loved him! Some of the Jews were touched by the evidence of tender affection. Others, remembering the healing of the blind man right there at Jerusalem, asked if he could not have saved Lazarus from death.

38. Jesus ... cometh to the grave. Graves in Palestine were caves in the rock, either natural or cut, and the mouth was closed by a great stone. Such graves are still seen there. For references to graves, see [Gen. 23:9](#) and [35:8](#); [1 Kings 2:34](#); [Isa. 14:15](#) and [22:16](#); [Matt. 27:60](#); [John 19:41](#).

39, 40. Take ye away the stone. The large stone that closed the entrance, and which several persons would be required to remove. The practical Martha suggests that decomposition has begun, not understanding his purpose.

41, 42. And Jesus lifted up his eyes. The Son always sought to honor the Father and to show that the Father was in him as he was in the Father. **I thank thee that thou hast heard me.** Constantly in communion with the Father, he had the Father's answer already and assent to what he was about to do. **Thou hearest me always.** Even in Gethsemane, when the cup was not taken away.

43. He cried with a loud voice. A suggestion of the "voice like the sound of many waters" ([Rev. 1:15](#)), at which all who are in their graves shall come forth ([1 Thess. 4:16](#)). It was the voice of authority.



44. And he that was dead came forth. The earth had never beheld a more wonderful or startling sight. At once the sleeper arose, came forth, bound with his grave clothes, with the napkin still upon his face that had been bound under his jaw to keep it from falling. The lookers-on, astonished, dazed, were only recalled to themselves when the Lord bade them, "Loose him and let him go." He spoke as the Divine Word, and death obeyed. As he cried to Lazarus, *Come forth*, so shall he speak with the voice of an archangel to all that are in their graves, and they shall come forth and live.

45, 46. Many of the Jews ... believed. They could not doubt after such a display of Divine power. There were, as usual, two classes. The others went and reported to the Pharisees.

47. The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council. The Sanhedrim met at once. The crisis was an alarming one. Unless something was done the nation would follow Jesus.

48. The Romans will come. Their idea was that if the nation followed Jesus there would be rebellion against the Roman authority, and the Romans would, as a result, destroy Jerusalem, the temple, and their ecclesiastical authority. This was done a generation later by the Romans, but what led to it was the *rejection* of Christ, not his reception.

49. Caiaphas, being high priest that year. The year the Savior died. He was a Sadducee, crafty, cruel, sensual, had been high priest for fifteen years, and was deposed three years later. **Ye know nothing at all.** Don't understand what the crisis requires.

50. That one man should die. His proposition is to slay one man, Jesus, rather than have the Romans come and destroy the whole nation for making Jesus King.

51, 52. This spake he not of himself. He thought he spoke of himself, but without his knowledge, God used the lips of the high priest for a prophecy. It "did behoove Jesus to die," in order to save, not that nation only, but that **he should gather together in one the children of God.**

53. From that day. From that day his death was the official decree of the Sanhedrim.

54. Jesus therefore walked no more openly. He avoided them until his "hour was come," and retired to Ephraim, a city sixteen miles northeast of Jerusalem on the borders of the wilderness.

55. The Jews' passover was nigh. It was only a few weeks before the passover that he went to Ephraim. **To purify themselves.** From ceremonial uncleanness. See [Exod. 19:10, 11](#).

56. They sought for Jesus. He was in the thoughts of all men now.

57. The chief priests and the Pharisees. The Sanhedrim had commanded that any man who could direct them to Jesus should bring word. The hostility that began three years before,



on the Lord's first visit after his ministry began, had now fully ripened, and the "hour was at hand."



Chapter XII

The Royal Entrance into Jerusalem

Summary — *The Feast at Bethany. The Anointing by Mary. The Anger of Judas. The Purpose to Put Lazarus to Death. The Entrance into Jerusalem. The Greeks Seeking Jesus. “The Hour Is Come.” The Voice from Heaven. The Son of Man to Be Lifted Up. The Cause of Unbelief.*

1. Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany. From the other Gospels we learn that he went from Ephraim beyond the Jordan and came back through Jericho with the great company of Galileans who came to attend the passover. The supper at Bethany was Saturday evening before he was crucified.

2–9. There they made him a supper. For notes on this supper and the anointing, see [Matt. 26:6–16](#). Compare [Mark 14:3–11](#) and [Luke 7:36–50](#). **Then saith one of his disciples.** Judas Iscariot. **Three hundred pence.** Silver to the amount of \$45, equivalent to about \$300 now, owing to the change of values. **Against the day of my burying hath she kept this.** Before a week he was to be in the tomb. It was customary to anoint dead bodies for burial. **Much people ... came.** From Jerusalem to Bethany.

10, 11. The chief priests consulted. Lazarus was a living proof of the Divine power of Christ, and they wished him out of the way.

12–15. On the next day. Sunday. For notes on the entrance to Jerusalem, see [Matt. 21:1–11](#). Compare [Mark 11:1–11](#); [Luke 19:29–44](#).

19. The world is gone after him. The Pharisees observed the vast crowds that attended him and were filled with alarm. The city was filled with commotion ([Matt. 21:10, 11](#)).

20. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. Among those who came to worship were Greeks, members of the Gentile division of the race which embraced all that were not Jews. These were not Jews who spoke the Grecian language and lived in Greek countries; those are called in the original Greek *Hellenistoi*. We find the latter in the Jerusalem church in large numbers. See [Acts 6:1](#). These who sought to visit Jesus were *Hellenes*, a term only used of the Greek race. It is probable that they belonged to the large class of “devout Greeks,” met elsewhere by Paul, who were sick of heathenism and were attracted by the grand Hebrew revelation of the unity of God. On this great national occasion they had accompanied Jews settled abroad as they returned to worship in the city of David.

21. The same came therefore to Philip. The name Philip is Grecian, as well as Andrew, and those of the seven deacons of [Acts, chapter 6](#). It is not unlikely that Philip was a Jew born among the Greeks, who spoke the Greek language. **We would see Jesus.** They wish to find out more about the great teacher from Galilee.

22. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew. Andrew was also of Bethsaida, and he and Philip seem to have been inseparable friends.

23. The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. The answer of Christ may have been to Philip and Andrew, and the Greeks may have heard and understood it. The substance is, that the time of his glorification had come and that glorification would draw all men, Greek, Gentiles as well as Jews, to him.

24. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. This statement, prefaced by the verily, verily, that gives solemn emphasis, enforces a great truth. The grain of wheat may remain in the granary for a thousand years and be preserved, but it is useless there. It neither reproduces, nor is food. It is when it falls into the ground and undergoes dissolution, that it brings forth fruit. It is fruitful by *giving itself up*. So, too, Christ must give himself up. His death was needful in order that he might impart life to the nation. There is a lesson here for disciples who would “bear much fruit.”

25. He that loveth his life shall lose it. He announces a principle that underlies all exaltation. He gave his life and found eternal exaltation; the grain gives its life and lives a hundred-fold; those who consecrate their lives, give them up for others, dedicate them to their holy work, will live eternally.

26. If any man serve me, let him follow me. This is Christ's direct answer to the Greeks. His service is to be rendered, not by secret interviews, but by obeying him, for so the word “follow” is to be understood.

27. Now is my soul troubled. It is the shadow of the cross and the tomb. The best comment on this verse is to compare it with the account of the agony in the garden. Here he exclaims: **Father, save me from this hour.** There, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Here, he adds: **But for this cause came I unto this hour.** There, “Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.” Here the perfect resignation that follows the struggle in his soul is in the prayer, “Father, glorify thy name.”

28. Then came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it. At Gethsemane the angel came to strengthen him; here the Father's voice speaks in approval. Three times the Father's voice was heard from the sky: *first*, when Christ was buried in Jordan, a type of his own burial; *second*, when Moses and Elijah talked with him on the holy mount about his death; *third*, when he had his struggle of soul in view of death portrayed here, and triumphed. **Will glorify it again.** God had glorified his name by the wonders wrought by Jesus; he would glorify it by his resurrection, his exaltation, the scenes of Pentecost, and the triumphs of the church.

29. An angel spake to him. All heard the sound of the divine voice, but it was not clear to all what it was.

30. This voice came not because of me. He had already won the victory before the voice came. It was rather to confirm the faith of his disciples, who still stumbled over the prospect of his death.

31. Now is the judgment of this world. Now, “this hour,” the “hour” referred to in [verses 23d and 27th](#), the hour for which he had come into the world, the hour of the cross; that was to be the hour of judgment, the *crisis*, which should determine who should rule the world. The cross became a throne. It gave him the crown. **The prince of this world be cast out.** The cross cast him out, dethroned him; he is now a usurper and shall finally be cast into the lake of fire.

32. If I shall be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. Lifted up, *first*, to the cross; *second*, from the grave; *third*, to heaven and the eternal throne.

34. We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever. The multitude were perplexed. Their idea of the Messiah was an eternal king. Now he spoke of death.

35. Yet a little while is the light with you. He refuses to answer their questions directly, but imparts to them needed truths. The light was then present with them. Let them seek the light and walk in it while they had opportunity. The opportunity might soon pass away and the darkness come.

36. Believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. That they might receive the light of the Light of the world they must believe on him.

37. Yet they believed not on him. They had a kind of intellectual faith, but were filled with doubts when they could not understand. There was no real trust.

38. The saying of Esaias the prophet, etc. See notes on [Matt. 13:14–16](#). They were blinded because they closed their eyes, and God's law is that those who *will* not see, *shall* not see.

42. Among the chief rulers also many believed. Members of the Sanhedrim. We have the names of two, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. See [19:38, 39](#). **They did not confess him.** For fear of excommunication. The Pharisees had decided to excommunicate those who did. See [9:22](#). The two rulers just named afterwards became bolder.

47, 48. I judge him not. He shall sit on the throne of judgment, not to condemn the world he came to save. The words he left in the world will decide the destiny of every man. All shall be “judged by the things written in the books” ([Rev. 20:12](#)).



Chapter XIII

The Lord Washes the Disciples' Feet

Summary — *The Passover Meal. The Lord Washes the Disciples' Feet. The Traitor Pointed Out. The Departure of Judas. The Discourse to the Disciples. Peter Warned.*

1. Now before the feast of the passover. Immediately before, just as Christ was about to sit down with his disciples to the paschal feast. **Jesus knew that his hour was come.** The scenes of this hour were in immediate view of the cross. On the next day the Lord was crucified.

2. Supper being ended. The Revision says, "During the Supper." It is likely that Christ arose near the beginning of the feast, washed the feet, and then sat down again to the feast. See [verse 12](#). **The devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, etc.** The devil planted the seed, but the soil of his heart was ready. The devil has no power except where there is preparation for him. The covetous disposition of Judas had prepared the way.

3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands. It was with a full consciousness of his divinity, of his divine power and majesty, of the glory that he had and would enjoy with God, that he stooped to the menial office that he was about to fill.

4. He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments. Shortly after they had sat down to the table, he arose, laid aside his outer robe, girded a towel upon him, and began the lowly office of washing the feet of twelve men, without a word of explanation. Something more than ordinary must have caused so remarkable an act. The fact that the cause has been lost sight of, has caused many to misunderstand the significance, and to think the Savior was instituting a church ceremonial, rather than giving a deep, practical, spiritual lesson for all ages. I will endeavor to explain the circumstances: (1) The disciples still expected the immediate manifestation of the kingdom. When they sat down to this Supper they felt it was a kind of state occasion, and a strife arose among them for precedence. Each wanted the "chief seat at the feast." An account of this unseemly controversy over the old question, "Who should be greatest?" is found in [Luke 22:24–30](#). (2) Their sandals had been laid off according to custom. They sat down to the table with dry and dusty feet, but no one brought water to wash their feet, an eastern duty of hospitality made necessary by their hot, dusty climate. No apostle volunteered to attend to the office, the duty of a servant. (3) Then, while they were filled with their ambitious, envious feelings, and had engaged in strife right at the Lord's table, after waiting long enough to have it shown that no one would condescend to the menial, but needful duty, the Lord, full of conscious divinity, arose, girded on the towel, and began the office. A rebuke to their ambitious strife, far more powerful than words could have spoken: such a rebuke that never again do we see a hint of the old question, "Who should be greatest?" It was Christ's answer to their unseemly conduct, and a lesson to those



Christians “who love the pre-eminence” for all time. It said, “Let him that would be greatest become the servant of all.”

6. Lord, dost thou wash my feet? The language of Peter is that of confusion, of astonishment and of remonstrance. The emphasis is on the word *thou*.

8. If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Washing, with the Jews, was a symbolical act, signifying purification from uncleanness. That Christ referred to more than a washing with water was understood by Peter as is evident from his reply. Christ could only wash with blood the obedient.

10. He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet. We must seek the spiritual meaning. He who is once cleansed by the blood of Christ only needs, after this, to come to Christ for partial cleansing; for the forgiveness of the special sins that make him unclean.

12. Know ye what I have done to you? They knew the act, but did they comprehend its meaning?

13, 14. Ye call me Master and Lord. Ye ought to follow the example of humility, self-sacrifice, and service to others, that your Lord sets you. Instead of seeking the pre-eminence, disputing concerning the seats of honor, and shrinking from humble service to each other, ye should follow my example.

15. For I have given you an example. Christ gave an *example*, not a church ordinance. It is our duty to follow the example and render the same kind of service to fellow Christians. To make his example a ceremonial and follow it literally would be to lose its spirit. Note the fact that not once else where is it referred to in the New Testament as a church ordinance, and only once mentioned at all. In [1 Tim. 5:10](#), it is named as a mark of a godly widow. Nor is there any mention of it as a church ordinance until the fourth century. The lesson is that he who would be greatest must be always ready to serve others in a spirit of humility and self-sacrifice.

17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. Know what things? Of course they knew that Christ had washed their feet. But did they know what he meant? The meaning is clearly, “If ye understand the meaning of my act, happy are ye if ye exemplify the same spirit in your lives.”

18. I speak not of you all. One is a traitor. He is not included in the beatitude just pronounced in the [17th verse](#).

19. I tell you before it come ... to pass. That he is about to be betrayed.

21–28. Troubled in spirit. Because a traitor was present among the apostles. For the exposure of Judas, see notes on [Matt. 26:21–25](#). Compare [Mark 14:18–21](#). **There was leaning on Jesus' bosom.** It was the custom to recline on a couch, leaning on the left elbow, at table. John, who was immediately before Jesus, would be almost at his bosom. **Whom Jesus loved.** It was John's joy that Jesus loved him. The disciples did not know who would be the traitor. At Peter's request, John, in a low tone, asked Jesus. He gave a sign, and when

John saw him dip a piece of bread into the sop of bitter herbs, always on the passover table, and give it to Judas, he knew he was meant. **Satan entered into him.** He gave himself up at once to Satan's purpose. **That thou doest, do quickly.** Judas understood what these words meant, but no one else.

30. Went immediately out. It is probable that the Lord's Supper was instituted, at this point, after Judas went out. It was, as we learn from Matthew, after the *passover*. Matthew's order (see [Matt., chap. 26](#)) is as follows: (1) The Passover; (2) the Exposure of Judas; (3) the Lord's Supper. This is John's order, save that he omits, because well known, to record the origin of the Lord's Supper here, and simply tells of the departure of Judas.

31. Now is the Son of man glorified. His weary ministry is about ended, and he is to ascend his throne. His glorification begins at the cross.

34. A new commandment. The commandment to love was not new, but such love as Christ commanded was new.

35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples. The love and self sacrifice of Christians has done more to extend the name of Christ than argument. In the early ages, heathen were wont to say: "See how these Christians love one another."

36–38. Simon Peter said. For notes on Peter's Denial, see [Matt. 26:31–35](#). Compare [Mark 14:29–31](#); [Luke 22:31–34](#).



Chapter XIV

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

Summary — *Belief as a Solace of Troubled Hearts. The House of Many Mansions. Christ the Way. Christ the Manifestation of the Father. Asking in Christ's Name. How to Find the Father. The Test of Love. The Benediction of Peace.*

1. Let not your heart be troubled. Just before him was Gethsemane, the betrayal, the denial, the mock trial, the scourging and the cross; but with these in full view, such are the wonders of his love that he does not think of himself. He does not ask comfort, but he gives it. His heart is full of the sorrow of his disciples over his departure. **Believe also in me.** They had believed in him, but they were so confused over the prospect of his death and departure, they stumbled. He bids them to believe in him as they believed in God; to trust him even if they did not comprehend; to walk by faith rather than by sight through the darkness of that hour. To understand these words, the confusion, sorrow and despair of his disciples over his death must not be forgotten.

2. In my Father's house are many mansions. By the "Father's house" is meant the heavenly abode. He is about to return there, from whence he had come. **I go to prepare a place for you.** If the separation was to be an eternal one, he would have forewarned them. Rather, he goes before to prepare a home for them where they can all be together. The departure of Jesus was needful to open an entrance to them and use.

3. I will come again, and receive you unto myself. The reference is not to Christ's return from the grave, but to a return from heaven, the second coming of the Lord, which is a part of the Christian faith. Compare [1 Thess. 4:17](#); [Phil. 1:23](#).

6. I am the way, the truth, and the life. This is said in reply to Thomas. Without him there would be no Way revealed; no divine and saving truth, no immortal life. **No man cometh to the Father, but by me.** Not only can no one enter the Father's house without him, but no man can come to the Father on earth so as to enjoy his favor. "There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved."

7. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. The great truth declared is that the way to study God and know him is to know Christ. **From henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.** From the cross. On the next morning they would see Christ dying. From the sepulcher would burst forth upon their minds a new revelation of the character and mission of the Son.

8. Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Philip fails to comprehend that the Father was to be seen in Christ, and when the Lord declares that henceforth they have seen the Father, he at once requests such a revelation.

9. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Philip wanted a literal sight of God with the natural eyes, when God incarnate had been present with him for three years, manifesting the mind, the purity, the saving power, the fatherly tenderness, the unutterable love of the Father.

10. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? There was the completest union of the personalities of the Son and the Father. We may never on earth comprehend fully its nature, but we can understand it to be so complete that he was the manifestation of God in the flesh ([Col. 2:9](#)).

12. Greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father. Those who believe shall have power given to do works, in some respects greater; not greater miracles, but to effect greater moral and spiritual revolutions. At the time of his death, as far as we know, he had only about five hundred disciples, but he “went to his Father” and “shed forth the things seen and heard” on Pentecost, and the eleven apostles converted three thousand in a single day.

13, 14. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. What *man* would dare to make such a promise? It will be noted, that in order to enjoy the fullness of these glorious promises we must, (1) Believe. They are limited thus in [verse 12](#). Without faith it is impossible to please God. (2) We must *ask in his name*, or, in dependence upon the merit and intercession of Christ. (3) As shown elsewhere, we must come with a spirit of complete submission to the Father's will, feeling that his will is best, and saying in our hearts, “Thy will be done.”

15. If ye love me, keep my commandments. Keeping the commandments will be the result if we love him. The Revision gives the true idea. Obedience is the fruit of love.

16. I will pray the Father. Rather, “request.” The Greek word is not the one used when we are bidden to pray. The creature *prays*; the Son *requests*. **He shall give you another Comforter.** The Holy Spirit; the Helper. The latter word more nearly expresses the idea of the Greek term than the word “Comforter.” **Abide with you for ever.** The Lord had been with them over three years, but is about to depart. Henceforth he will abide with them, not in person, but by the Holy Spirit that he shall send. Through this agency he will be with his people “always.”

17. The Spirit of truth. So called, because he leads into all truth, and speaks the truth. See [17:19](#); [1 Cor. 2:4](#); [1 Thess. 1:5](#). He also bears witness of the truth. See [Acts 2:4](#); [5:32](#); [Heb. 2:4](#). **Whom the world cannot receive.** Because he only dwells in a heart prepared for him by faith and obedience. “God gives the Holy Spirit to them who obey him” ([Acts 5:32](#)). See also [John 7:38](#).

18, 19. I will not leave you comfortless. They shall not be left desolate by his departure, because “he will come again” to be with them always, in the Spirit. He will be a living Savior, and they will have his life.



20. At that day ye shall know. “That day” began on Pentecost. There was no more doubting after the Holy Spirit was sent. “That day” still comes to every soul that wholly surrenders to the will of Christ (7:17).

21–23. He that hath my commandments, etc. The conditions on which Christ will be present in each soul, seen, and enjoyed, are here given: (1) One must love Christ; (2) so love him that he will obey from the heart his commandments; (3) this loving, obedient soul will be loved of the Father; (4) Christ will love him; (5) both the Father and the Son will manifest themselves to him; (6) this manifestation is by their coming and abiding in him through the Helper.

26. The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost. More correctly, Holy Spirit. **He shall teach you all things.** A special promise to the apostles, which fitted them to preach the Gospel authoritatively and leave behind them the records of the New Testament.

27. Peace I leave with you. A parting benediction. That night he was to be seized and taken from them.

28. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice. A gentle rebuke. Their desire that he should not go away was due, in part at least, to selfish motives.

30. The prince of this world cometh. The worldly powers of which Satan is prince.

31. That the world may know that I love the Father. His obedience in the hour of trial demonstrated that he so loved the Father that he sought not his own, but the Father's will.



Chapter XV

The True Vine

Summary — *The Vine and the Branches. Bearing Fruit. Glorifying the Father. The Greatest Love. The World's Hatred. The Cloak for Sin.*

1. I am the true vine. The scene must be kept in mind. The Lord and his disciples had just eaten the last supper. He had said, “Arise, let us go hence” (14:31). They had risen, but were still standing in the room. On the table, from whence they had just risen, was the “fruit of the vine,” and the Lord had said he would never drink it again upon the earth. In the Old Testament, the Vine is often used as the type of Israel, planted and tended by the Almighty as the husbandman. See *Isa. 5:1; Psa 80:8–16; Jer. 2:21*. Israel, however, had proved a wild and fruitless Vine. Instead of it, therefore, Christ had now been planted by the Father as the True Vine.

2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away. As the husbandman cuts off the unfruitful branches of the vine, so the Father severs the unfruitful branches from his Son. Judas, an unfruitful branch which did not have the life of the Vine, had just been severed and had gone forth. **Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it.** The husbandman prunes and dresses the branches in order that they may be more healthy and fruitful. The Father cleanses, purifies, frees from sin, all who become branches of the True Vine.

3. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. The spoken word is the instrument appointed by God for the cleansing of the soul. The word tells us what to do in order that we may be cleansed from sin.

4. Abide in me, and I in you. The idea is, Abide in me that I may abide in you. Christ abiding in us is dependent on our abiding in him. We abide in him by keeping his words, or having his “word abide in us” (verse 7), and all who “keep his sayings” (14:23) will have Christ abide in their souls. **No more can ye, except ye abide in me.** We are dead, fruitless branches, without the Christ-life. The whole history of the world demonstrates that fruitfulness is only found in union with Christ.

5. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He has already declared (verse 1) that he is the True Vine, but he had not before declared that every disciple is a branch of the Vine. Observe that, not denominations, but church members, are the branches. The disciple, without Christ, **can do nothing**. Paul declared, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered. The lifeless, fruitless branches in the vineyard are lopped off and carried out, and wither and are burned. So, too, any one who does not abide in Christ, is severed from the Vine, and *they* (the angels



at the great day; not *men*, as in the Common Version. See Revision) cast them into the fire and they are burned.

7, 8. Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. The condition of this blessed promise is that we abide in the Vine, by having Christ's words abide in us. **Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.** The best comment on this is the Savior's injunction, "Let your light shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, shall glorify your Father who is in heaven."

10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love. He abode in the love of the Father by a life of perfect obedience. So we must abide in his love.

11. These things have I spoken ... that my joy may remain in you. Strange words, that one about to be crucified should speak of his joy! His joy was union with and presence of the Father. He had "anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." He desired his disciples to have that joy, the constant consolation of the sense of the presence of Christ.

13, 14. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. The highest human exhibition of love that earth has ever seen was this. Christ was about to exhibit this highest type of human love by dying for his friends. He did even more, as Paul shows us in [Rom. 5:6](#), he died for his enemies, something that man had never done.

15. I call you not servants; ... I have called you friends. Christ's disciples serve him, but their service is not bondage, but that of love. Hence, they are friends instead of servants.

16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you. Each one of the eleven apostles present had been chosen, called, by the Lord, from among his disciples. They did not choose him, but he them, in order that they might bring forth abundant fruit in the conversion of the world.

18. If the world hate you. *The world* is the unregenerate portion of mankind. It hated and slew the Lord. It has never loved his disciples. Satan is its prince.

20. They will also persecute you. The servants must expect similar treatment to that given the Master. The long roll of Christian martyrs shows how this has been verified.

21. For my name's sake. That name, so sweet to the saved, is a hateful thing to his enemies. Jewish persecutors bade Christians to teach no more *in the name*; Gentile rulers bade them blaspheme *the name* or die.

22. If I had not come ... they had not had sin. Certain conclusions follow: (1) The degree of our sin is measured by our opportunities; (2) increased opportunities bring a consciousness of sin; light in the room enables us to see the dirt; (3) *the sin* of sins is the rejection of Christ. Since he came there is **no cloak**, no covering, no excuse. Those who refuse Christ die in their sins, because they will not part from them.

24. If I had not done, etc. The proof of his divine mission was such that they were left without excuse. **Hated both me and my Father.** The Jews claimed to love God, but when



God, manifest in the flesh, appeared, they hated him. The hatred of Christ is the hate of God.

26. When the Comforter is come. See the [preceding chapter](#). **Shall testify concerning me.** See [16:13–15](#).

27. Ye also shall bear witness. The apostles had been “with him from the beginning,” and knew all the facts. If he was true, they knew it; if he stilled the waves and raised the dead, they knew it; if he rose from the tomb, they knew it. They bore witness to him by word and left their words to us. They bore witness by life, gave up all for him and died for their testimony. Such testimony is the strongest human testimony ever offered to any fact.



Chapter XVI

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Summary — *Persecution Predicted. The Comforter to Come. He Will Reprove the World of Sin; of Righteousness; of Judgment. Will Guide into All Truth. Sorrow and Rejoicing. Overcoming the World.*

1. These things have I spoken. The warnings found in the [14th and 15th chapters](#). They were given beforehand lest they should stumble. To be forewarned would be a help to their faith amid the dark scenes of the next few days, and in the persecutions that would come later.

2. They shall put you out of the synagogues. Excommunicate you. The first persecutions were Jewish. **Whosoever killeth you, etc.** Even so Saul of Tarsus thought while persecuting the saints. Fanaticism has always held the slaughter of those who are deemed heretics to be praiseworthy.

3. These things will they do, etc. Had they known Christ, or the Father, and received the Holy Spirit, they could not do thus.

4. These things I said not unto you at the beginning. He had made his instructions as they were prepared to receive them, lesson by lesson.

5, 6. Now I go my way to him that sent me. To the Father, by way of the Cross, the Sepulcher, the Resurrection and the Ascension. **None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?** They had asked this question, but in the stupefaction of their sorrow they had ceased to ask.

7. It is expedient for you that I go away. What seemed then a crushing sorrow was a real blessing. His mission could never be accomplished unless he went away. **For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.** While Christ was present in person, in bodily form, the Holy Spirit, the representative of the Godhead, could not come. Christ, as King, must send him, and on the day of Pentecost Peter declared, “He hath shed forth the things ye do see and hear.”

8. Will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The Revision more correctly renders, “Will convict the world in respect of sin.” There are three points concerning which the world would be convicted, concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit would effect these important results through some means. If we would understand the methods we have only to turn over to the fulfillment of these predictions recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. In [Acts 2:38](#), the Holy Spirit fell upon eleven apostles and they spoke as “the Spirit gave them utterance.” The words that they spoke were the words of the Holy Spirit. In the record of what was said by the mouth of Peter, we find that the Spirit convicted (1) of sin, in that those who heard had rejected the Lord of life and glory;



(2) of righteousness, in that it was demonstrated by the manifestations of that hour that God had exalted the Lord whom they had condemned to his own right hand; (3) of judgment, in that they were assured of the “wrath to come,” and warned to “save themselves from this untoward generation.”

9. Of sin, because they believe not on me. In naming sin, the chief of all sins is singled out. All sin springs from unbelief. To destroy sin, the heart of man must be pierced with the sword of the Spirit. Hence, the aim of the Spirit on Pentecost, and always, is to destroy unbelief.

10. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father. Human tribunals convicted him of blasphemy, because he said he was the Son of God, and put him to death. God exalted him to a throne, thereby showing that the condemnation was wrong and that he was righteous. Of this the Holy Spirit bore witness in words and by miracles.

11. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. In [chapter 14:30](#), he declared, “The prince of this world cometh.” It was the prince of this world, the spirit of the world, Satan, as the ruler of the world, who slew him. When Christ rose from the dead, and all power was given into his hands, this was a judgment in the court of the universe against the prince of the world.

13. When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. He is about to go away and his own personal teachings will be ended, but those things that he desires them to know will be taught them still. The Spirit of truth will guide them into all truth.

14, 15. He shall glorify me. “All things that the Father hath are mine,” and the Spirit “shall receive of mine and shew it to you.” “These three are one;” a striking illustration of the unity of the Godhead. They are so united that what proceeds from one proceeds from all.

16, 17. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me. On the morrow he would die, be buried, and for “a little while” they would not see him; then he would rise, and for another “little while,” a space of forty days before “he went to his Father,” they would see him while he remained on the earth. When he ascended to his Father, they, in a spiritual sense, would “see him coming in the kingdom of God.”

20. Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. How sad were the broken-hearted disciples, as they wept at the tomb! At the same time their enemies were gloating over their triumph. Soon all was changed, for **your sorrow shall be turned into joy.** The glad news came, “The Lord is risen!” Then they heard that “all power was his,” saw him ascend into heaven, and “returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

22. Ye now therefore have sorrow. Are in travail, but soon there shall be a birth, “the First Born of the new creation” from the tomb.

23, 24. In that day. After the Kingdom comes on Pentecost. **Ask the Father in my name.** We must come to God through him. His is “the only name.” Before, when they

prayed, he told them to say, "Our Father," etc. Now they must pray in the name of the ascended Lord.

25. Spoken in proverbs. In figures.

31, 32. Do ye now believe? The disciples had just asserted that they did, because they thought they understood him, but before morning their faith would give way and, instead of clinging to him in the hour of trial, they would leave him alone.

33. I have overcome the world. In this world his disciples would be persecuted and have sorrow, but he bids them **Be of good cheer.** The world can only afflict for a season; it is a conquered world; Christ has overcome it.



Chapter XVII

The Lord's Prayer for His Disciples

Summary — *The Prayer of Christ That He May Be Glorified. The Disciples to Whom the Word Was Given. The Prayer, Not for the World, but for Them. That They May Be Sanctified. The Prayer for Saints in All Ages. That They May Be One. For Unity, That the World May Believe.*

1. These words spake Jesus. This prayer, so solemn and so tender, would never have been recorded had it not been intended for our study and profit, but I approach it with a feeling that it is almost too sacred for the usual verbal and textual criticism. It is the overflow of the full soul of the Lord in devotion to the Father, a fitting close to the wonderful discourses beginning in [chapter 13](#); offered in the Upper Room, just before the Lord led his disciples out into the moonlit night, on the way to Gethsemane. This is the real *Lord's Prayer* of the sacred Word; the prayer of [Matt. 6:9–13](#), is the *disciples'* prayer, taught to them by the Lord. In order to drink in its spirit, we must realize that the Lord stands at the foot of the cross, is about to suffer, and before the separation from his disciples and the agony and shame of the cross, he goes to the Father in their behalf and in his own. **Father, the hour is come.** “The hour” of the great sacrifice, of the tragedy of the cross, the hour for which Christ came into the world, had now come. **Glorify thy Son.** He was about to stoop to shame. Had he been left in the tomb, the shame would have been complete. Christ not only prays that he shall be “lifted up,” but that he may so “drink the cup” that the cross itself shall be a glory.

2. As thou hast given him power over all flesh. This shows how the Son is to be glorified. It is by “giving him all power in heaven and earth,” and “committing all things” to him, raising him from the dead so that “he should give eternal life.”

3. This life is eternal, that they might know thee, etc. The knowledge of God as manifested in Jesus Christ is the first requisite to salvation and life eternal. The key to that knowledge is faith and love.

4. I have glorified thee on the earth. He had done this because he could say, “I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do.”

6. I have manifested thy name to the men which thou gavest me, etc. In the first five verses he had prayed for himself. Now he prays for his disciples. The apostles are especially meant.

9. I pray for them. The apostles. The prayer from [verse 9 to verse 19](#) is for these. **I pray not for the world.** Not at this time; he came into the world to save it, and we are not to conclude that he would never pray for its conversion and welfare. Now, however, his petition is confined to the apostles, the little band who are hanging upon his words.



10. I am glorified in them. Christ's glory here upon the earth is manifested by his disciples.

11. I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. He now goes to the Father; these are left behind to preach the gospel, establish his kingdom, manifest his glory. Hence, he pleads that he may “*keep them* through his name,” or power and love. He especially pleads that they may be kept “one,” united as the Father and the Son.

12. None of them is lost, but the son of perdition. God had given him twelve; he had kept them in the name of the Father, and only one was lost, Judas, the traitor, the son of perdition, which the Scripture had predicted. See [Psa. 41:9](#).

15, 16. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world. The world had hated the Master and was about to slay him, because he was not of the world. So it would hate the apostles, who were not of the world, and seek to slay them; he does not pray that they should be taken out of the world, for they have a work to do, but that the Father would keep them from the power of the evil one.

17, 18. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. To sanctify is to render holy, or to consecrate. Those sanctified are saints. The means of canonization is not a Pope, but the *truth*; and, lest some should mistake, Christ adds, “Thy word is truth.” He prays for their consecration by the power of the word in their hearts. Every disciple should be thus consecrated, but the means is not a miraculous work of grace, but the reception of God's word into our hearts and the complete surrender to his will spoken in his word.

19. For their sakes I sanctify myself. He did this when he came into the world, when he made it his meat to do the Father's will, and when he gave himself to death. We sanctify ourselves when we “present our bodies as living sacrifices.”

20. Neither pray I for these alone. We enter upon the third section of the prayer, that for all disciples in every age.

21. That they all may be one; ... that they may be one in us. This is a prayer for the unity of the saints. The Lord all through this discourse has shown the intimate union between the Father and himself. The Father is in him and he in the Father, all that is the Father's is his, and his is the Father's. They have no separate will, kingdom, or interests. Such a union is demanded among the disciples of Christ. Such union is impossible while they are divided into various denominations, with separate work, property and interests, separate churches, colleges, papers and missions. Denominationalism is utterly opposed to this prayer, and every apologist for it is disloyal to the spirit of the prayer. Nor is it fulfilled in any church where there are factions, where “all are not perfectly joined together, of the same mind and the same judgment.” If Christ abides in the heart, the one life will draw all who have Christ formed within them into one family. This unity is needful, and for it the Lord prays, **That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.** It must be a union that the world can see



and recognize. It is therefore an organic union, one Body as there is one Lord. There is no other source of skepticism so fruitful as church quarrels and sectarian divisions.

22, 23. The glory which thou gavest me I have given them. God gave Christ the glory of Sonship and this resulted in their unity. So Christ gives to his disciples the glory of becoming the sons of God ([John 1:12](#); [1 John 3:1](#)). This glory, the adoption and gift of the Spirit, ought to effect that they be **one as we are one**. We cannot pray this prayer of Jesus and have the party spirit or labor to build up sectarianism. In the spirit of love we should oppose it, and labor to destroy sectarian names, creeds, organizations and interests. As the Son and the Father are one, have one work, one kingdom, one spirit, one interest, so must all that are Christ's. We must "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." There is "one body" and "one Spirit," as there is "one Lord."



Chapter XVIII

Jesus Betrayed and Condemned

Summary —*Jesus in Gethsemane. Judas and the Band. The Lord Seized. Peter Uses the Sword. Christ Before Annas. Peter Denies His Master. Christ Sent to Caiaphas. Delivered to Pilate. His Kingdom Not of This World. Barabbas Chosen Instead of Christ.*

1. He went ... over the brook Cedron. It flows through the valley east of Jerusalem between the city and the Mount of Olives. They went to Gethsemane.

2–14. Judas ... knew the place. For notes on the Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus, see [Matt. 26:47–58](#). Compare [Mark 14:43–54](#); [Luke 22:47–54](#). **They went backward, and fell to the ground.** This statement of John is omitted by the other gospels. As Christ answers them, either his majesty and their own terror so impressed them, that, awed, they fell backward to the earth, or his divine power was exerted to prostrate them. Then the Lord submitted himself “as a lamb to the slaughter,” and his power is not again exerted until he rises from the tomb, except to heal the smitten servant of the high priest.

15–27. For the trial of Jesus before Caiaphas and the denial of Peter, see notes on [Matt. 26:57–75](#). Compare [Mark 14:53–72](#); [Luke 22:54–71](#).

28–40. For notes on the trial before Pilate, see [Matt. 27:1–25](#). Compare [Mark 15:1–15](#); [Luke 23:1–25](#). The first examination was at the house of Annas, where an officer had smitten Jesus. Then Annas sent him to Caiaphas. Still later he was tried before the Sanhedrim (see [Matt. chap. 27](#)) and condemned. Then he was led from Caiaphas to Pilate's judgment hall. **The judgment hall.** The praetorium, or official hall of the Roman governor. **Lest they should be defiled.** These Jewish leaders, filled with the hate of Christ, and ready to secure his judicial murder by the foulest means, were yet so scrupulous that they would not enter the house of a Gentile lest “they should be defiled” (see [Deut. 16:4](#)), so that they would not be able to eat the passover. The Pharisees held that contact with a Gentile, or to enter his house was a source of defilement. Hence, this deputation of the Sanhedrim waited without, and Pilate “went out unto them” to ascertain their business. Men can be very religious and yet great sinners. **That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled.** Had the Jews been allowed to put Christ to death, he would have been stoned, as Stephen was, by a mob in Jerusalem, stoning being the usual Jewish method of execution, but he had “signified what death he should die” ([John 12:32](#), and [Matt. 20:18, 19](#)) and had declared that he should be crucified.

36. My kingdom is not of this world. It would be hard for Pilate to form any conception of a kingdom not of this world, a kingdom of which the subjects did not fight with carnal weapons to defend its king, or to extend its borders. He was a soldier and the representative of a monarch whose power rested on the sword. But such a kingdom was Christ's. It was not of this world, did not spring from it, was heavenly in its origin, and hence his servants



would not fight that he should not be delivered to the Jews. (1) Christ's kingdom is supernatural, not of human origin. It is in the world, but not worldly. (2) It is maintained, not by carnal weapons, but by spiritual and moral means.

37. Art thou a king then? If Christ has a kingdom he must be a King.

38. What is truth? Pilate's inquiry was not answered in words, but Truth sat embodied and bound before him. Some have held that this question of Pilate's was asked in scorn. His conduct through the trial shows that he was deeply impressed, and it is probable that the question was asked from a deep curiosity to hear more from so marvellous a teacher.

39–40. Ye have a custom. See notes on [Matt. 27:15](#). He was eager to comply with the custom in order to release an innocent prisoner, but he had not measured the depths of the Jewish hate which could demand, instead, a robber and a murderer.



Chapter XIX

The Crucifixion

Summary —*Jesus Scourged. The Crown of Thorns. Pilate's Acquittal. The New Charge of the Jews. No King but Cæsar. Crucified at Golgotha. The Garments Parted by Lot. The Women at the Cross. The Mother of Jesus Committed to John. It Is Finished.*

1–16. For notes on these verses, see [Matt. 27:19–33](#). Compare [Mark 15:15–22](#); [Luke 23:20–31](#). John gives a few additional features. **Behold the man!** Jesus had been scourged, and then, bleeding and torn, was crowned with thorns and a purple robe thrown around him, and led out before the people. Pilate, it is probable, hoped to arouse pity. **Crucify him.** The response was this savage cry. Pilate then declared, **Take ye him, etc.** This is his formal acquittal of the charge of sedition and rebellion that they had made. He had committed no crime against Roman law. Hence, if punished, it must be by their law. **We have a law.** Failing in their purpose, they now fall back on their charge of blasphemy: “He made himself the Son of God.” **Whence art thou?** This statement arouses the fear of Pilate. He had never seen such calm dignity and majesty before. Could this prisoner be divine? When Jesus is silent, Pilate reminds him that he has power to crucify or release. **Thou couldst have no power against me, etc.** Jesus breaks the silence and at once assumes the position of Pilate's judge. He declares that Pilate could have no power over himself unless it were given him. Christ submitted because it was the Father's will that he should drink the cup. Poor, helpless Pilate was not so great a sinner as the Jews, who might have known better, who were filled with devilish hate, who were now forcing Pilate to the crime. The words of Christ are really words of compassion. **If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.** This means that he will be accused before Cæsar's tribunal of winking at treason. The Cæsar then on the throne was Tiberius, dark, suspicious, cruel in character. Such a charge from the representatives of the Jewish nation at Rome would probably prove fatal to Pilate; would certainly end his career as a public man. The risk was too great. He would rather sacrifice an innocent man than to sacrifice himself. Hence he at once surrenders. **It was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour.** John marks the exact time when this remarkable judgment was rendered. It was about six o'clock in the morning, on Friday, the day of preparation for the passover. Mark says that the crucifixion began at the third hour, nine o'clock, as the Hebrews began to count at six. John wrote many years later, after Jerusalem had fallen, among people who began to count at midnight, as did all the Roman world, and he therefore used their language and called six o'clock the sixth hour, as we do, rather than the first hour as the Hebrews did. Christ and his apostles had eaten the passover already. How then could it be that was the preparation day? Amid conflicting views, I can only give what seems to me the best solution: (1) It is certain that Christ ate a meal the evening before in the Upper



Room which was called a passover. (2) It is certain from [John 18:28](#) that the Jews had not eaten the passover at that time. (3) It seems clear to me that Christ, anxious to eat this passover (see [Luke 22:15](#)), ate it in advance of the usual time, in order that he, the true Paschal Lamb, "Our Passover" might be offered on the same day that the passover was eaten. The priests hurried the trial and execution of Jesus so that they might proceed to the preparation for the passover that evening. As the Lord's supper was anticipatory of the suffering on the cross, so was the Lord's last passover. The question has difficulties, but this view has fewer than any other. **We have no king but Cæsar.** They had not now. They had rejected the divine King, had chosen Barabbas instead, for life, and now make choice of Cæsar as their king instead of the Lord's Anointed. To Cæsar's tender mercies they committed themselves, and in about a generation Cæsar will trample them in the wine press of wrath. The choice they had made sealed the fate of their city and nation.

17–30. See notes on [Matt. 27:33–66](#). Compare [Mark 15:22–47](#); [Luke 23:33–46](#). I note some additional features given by John. **His mother's sister** The mother's sister is not here named. In [Matt. 27:56](#), the parallel passage names Salome, the mother of James and John, as one of the four women; hence, it is generally supposed that Salome was the sister of Mary and the aunt of Jesus. **Woman, behold thy son!** In his mortal agony, Jesus does not forget his bereaved mother, but commits her to the care of John, her nephew, it is supposed. His love shines forth in the sufferings on the cross.

31. Because it was the preparation. For the passover. See [verse 14](#). **That sabbath was a high day.** A double Sabbath, both the weekly Sabbath and a passover Sabbath. It was usual Roman custom to leave crucified bodies on the cross, but out of deference to their wishes Pilate consents that the legs of the victims should be broken in order to hasten death, so that the bodies might be taken down and buried. The legs were crushed with a hammer like a sledge and the shock would bring speedy death.

34. Pierced his side. Finding him lifeless, the soldiers did not break his legs, but to make sure of death thrust a spear into his side. **Came out blood and water.** The water, with clots of blood, can be accounted for only the previous rupture of the heart and the flow of blood into the *pericardium*, or outer sack of the heart, where it would separate very rapidly into water and clots of blood. Hence, it seems certain that the immediate physical cause of the death of Christ was rupture of the heart.

36, 37. That the scripture should be fulfilled. See [Exod. 12:46](#); [Zech. 12:10](#).

38–42. For notes on the Burial, see [Matt. 27:57–66](#). Compare [Mark 15:42–47](#); [Luke 23:50–56](#). **There came also Nicodemus.** This is the third mention of him. See [John 3:1](#) and [7:50](#). Both he and Joseph were members of the Sanhedrim. Only John mentions that he aided Joseph in the burial.

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Chapter XX

The Resurrection

Summary — *The Women at the Sepulcher. Peter and John See the Empty Tomb. Mary Magdalene Seeth Jesus. The Lord Appeareth to the Disciples. After Eight Days Appeareth to the Eleven. The Confession of Thomas. Why “These Things” Were Written.*

1–18. See notes on [Matt. 28:1–8](#). Compare [Mark 16:1–8](#); [Luke 24:1–11](#). **Cometh Mary Magdalene.** She was not alone. Mary, the mother of James and Joses, and Salome were with her. Their object was to place spices about the body of Jesus. **She runneth.** To Peter and John to tell that the tomb is empty. **Simon Peter ... went in.** John looked in, but Peter went in. The grave clothes were carefully folded and laid aside. **Mary stood without ... as she wept.** She still supposed that the body was stolen, until the angels were seen. **Saw Jesus standing.** The first sight of the risen Lord. The first to see him was the loving Mary. **Touch me not.** She was probably about to clasp his feet. She is told to discharge a higher duty: to go to the brethren with the glad story.

19. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week. John particularly marks the time of this important event. It is the third or fourth appearance of the Savior upon this memorable day, and the first one to the apostolic body. By a comparison with [Mark 16:14–16](#) and [Luke 24:36](#), we learn that at the moment of his appearance they were discussing the story of the resurrection of which many refused to be convinced, so incredulous were they.

20. He shewed unto them his hands and his side. The Lord showed his wounds to convince them beyond a doubt that it was not a fantasy or an apparition. A week later he shows his wounds to Thomas. The resurrected body still bore these proofs of his suffering and love. Sixty years later, when John, at Patmos, saw the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, he beheld “a Lamb as it had been slain.” Perhaps our Lord in glory continues to bear the marks of the cross. Perhaps these will forever, as we gaze in glory, remind us of the story of our redemption.

21. Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. This is the Great Commission, more fully developed in Galilee a little later, and finally completed on Mt. Olivet, just before the Lord ascended. The Lord had trained the apostles for three years in order to fit them for this important work.

23. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, etc. It will be seen at once, by a comparison with [Matt. 16:19](#), that the keys then promised to Peter are now given to all the apostles, and all have similar power to open and shut, to remit sin, and to bind. The meaning is plain when we consider, first, the charge that the Savior was making, and, secondly, look forward and see how that charge was carried out; or, in other words, observe



the apostles “remitting sins” and retaining them. It is the Great Commission to preach the gospel that the Savior gives for the first time in [verse 21](#). It is with reference to carrying out that Commission that he speaks in [verse 23](#). It was in order that they might present the terms of that Commission infallibly to the world that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was imparted, of which there is a foreshadowing in [verse 22](#). The great end of that Commission was to declare to men “repentance and remission of sins” in the name of Christ. The following facts are manifest: (1) The Savior gave to his apostles his Commission that they might make known his will. (2) He bade them preach “remission of sins.” (3) He gave them a measure of the Holy Spirit, and bade them wait until “endued with power from on high” by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (4) When the Holy Spirit fell, they spoke as it “gave them utterance” ([Acts 2:4](#)). (5) They then declared, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the terms on which “sins could be remitted.” To anxious sinners they answer, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins.*” Here, then, they, directed by the Holy Spirit, “remit” and “retain” sins by declaring the terms on which Christ will pardon. Thus, also, they do in their preaching recorded through the Acts of the Apostles the very thing that the Savior gave them power to do. This power was not imparted to a hierarchy, nor to any ecclesiastical body, but to the apostles, and was fulfilled by them in declaring to the world the conditions of pardon and condemnation under the Commission of our Lord.

24. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them. Didymus, which means the Twin, is the Greek for the Hebrew name, Thomas. He was one of the twelve.

25. He said unto them, ... I will not believe. At some time during the week they meet him and tell their joyful story, but he meets it with skepticism.

26. After eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. It was on the second Sunday after the resurrection; the second Lord's day in the history of the world.

27. Reach hither thy finger. Turning to the skeptical Thomas, he asks him to apply the tests that he had declared would be necessary before he could believe. His compassion for the unbelief of Thomas shows the patient tenderness of the Savior with the difficulties of an honest seeker.

29. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. Thomas “saw” (he did not need to handle) and believed. We have not seen, but nevertheless believe upon the same Lord. Upon us he pronounces a special blessedness, because we walk by faith instead of sight.

30. Many other signs truly did Jesus. Not near all that occurred, either before or after the resurrection, is recorded. Each of the evangelists records some features that the others omit, and they each reveal the fact that they only outline the wonderful story.

31. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, etc. This is the object of all the gospel histories. They aim to so reveal Christ as to produce faith in him. He is the one object of belief. He is the Christian's creed. Faith in him, a faith that takes him as the Christ, saves the soul. All who have such faith wrought by the word of God will "have life through his name."



Chapter XXI

The Risen Lord at the Sea of Galilee

Summary —*The Disciples Fishing in Galilee. Jesus Seen on the Shore. The Miraculous Draught of Fish. Lovest Thou Me More Than These? Peter's Manner of Death Foretold. If He Tarry Till I Come.*

1. After these things. Compare [Matt. 28:7](#); [Mark 16:7](#). **Sea of Tiberias.** Another name of the Sea of Galilee. The disciples had been commanded by the Savior to gather in Galilee ([Matt. 28:7](#)).

2. There were together. Seven disciples are named, most of whom, if not all, belonged to that very neighborhood. Nathanael is named in [John 1:45](#). The rest were apostles, and many suppose that Nathanael was also; the same as the one called “Bartholomew,” which only means “the son of Tholmaius.” Nathanael is thought to have been the son of Tholmaius.

3. Simon Peter saith, ... I go a fishing. His old calling.

4. When the morning was now come. The Revision is correct: “When the day was now breaking.”

7. It is the Lord. Until the net was thus filled, the Lord was not recognized in the dim light. John first knew him. **Two hundred cubits.** About one hundred yards.

12, 13. And none ... durst ask him, Who art thou? The disciples knew that it was the Lord, but there was something in his mien, his majesty, his altered appearance, that amazed them, filled them with awe, and prevented them from asking questions that they were curious to know.

14. The third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples. John does not say that this was the *third appearance* of Jesus, but the third time he had showed himself to the *disciples*, or apostles, for that is the sense in which disciples is here, and often, used. The first time was his appearance to the ten apostles, on the evening of the day of the resurrection ([John 20:19](#)). The second was to the eleven (Thomas was now present) one week later ([John 20:26](#)).

15. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? At the close of the feast, the Lord turned to Peter with this question, one that he repeated twice. On the night of the betrayal, when Christ intimated that his disciples would forsake him in the trial he was about to suffer, Peter spoke up and asserted that though all others forsook him he would never forsake him. What Christ had said might be true of the rest, but he was so loving, faithful and true, that he would die for him. Yet before the cock crow of the next morning he had thrice denied that he knew Jesus, even with his oaths. Such was the collapse of the confident disciple who “loved the Master better than these” other disciples. Since that fall, Christ had met with Peter among the rest of the disciples, but had not referred to this subject, but now

has come the time for a restoration of Peter. Hence, he probes him with the question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" That question would at once recall to Peter his boastful claim, his awful fall, and would pierce him to the heart. He no longer claims that he is the truest of the apostolic band, does not even affirm confidently, but answers, "Thou knowest my heart; thou knowest that I love thee." Then said the Savior, **Feed my lambs.**

16. Feed my sheep. A second time the Lord probes Peter with the question. Let it be noted that he does not call him *Peter*, "the rock," any longer. So frail a disciple could only be called Simon. The Christ again commissions him to work, "Feed my sheep." Not only the lambs, but he may look after the sheep of the fold, watch over the disciples of the Lord, young and old. Three times Peter had denied the Master; three times the Master questions his love; three times he gives him charge concerning his work. The questioning was painful, Peter was grieved, but the grief was wholesome, and Peter's whole subsequent life bore proof of the discipline. His rashness was forever gone.

18. When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself. Peter had denied his Master to save his own life. Now that he is reinstated in the old confidence and charged with the Master's work, he is told that he will be called on to die for it. He will be girded, not with a girdle, but with bonds, and he shall be led where he would not, unto death.

19. By what death he should glorify God. [These two verses](#) can only be understood as declaring that Peter should die the death of a martyr. John wrote after Peter's death, and may be understood as affirming that he did thus "glorify God." The universal testimony of the ancient Church is that he did thus die. It is asserted that Peter was crucified, a fact that is probable, as he was not a Roman citizen. **Follow me.** He had once forsaken Christ through fear of death. Now, with a prospect of violent death before him, he is bidden to resume the Master's work and to follow him. He did this, from this time, faithfully.

22. If I will that he tarry till I come. This is spoken of John, and the words have caused much discussion. They surely convey the idea that John would remain on the earth, after the other apostles depart, until the Lord came once more. He did linger long after all the other apostles were gone. It is the testimony of church history that he did not die until about the close of the first century, many years after the other apostles were at rest. He *tarried*; did the Lord come to him? At least sixty years after the Lord spoke these words John was an exile on the isle of Patmos. There on the Lord's day he writes: "I heard a great voice," and "I saw one like the Son of man," blazing in such glory that, filled with awe, he "fell at his feet as dead." Then follow these words of the Savior, the seven letters, and the visions of Revelation. Here was a visible coming and John tarried until that coming. He alone of the Twelve saw the Lord, after his ascension, once more on the earth.



23. Went this saying abroad. At the time John wrote these words he did not understand just what the saying might mean.

24, 25. We know that his testimony is true. Many suppose the last two verses were added by another hand than John's, perhaps by the elders of the church at Ephesus, where John wrote, who give their endorsement to his record. **I suppose.** An opinion of the endorsers, or rather a hyperbole. It is added to show how little comparatively of the words and works of that wonderful life have been recorded.



**The
Acts**
of the Apostles



Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles

The Object.— The fifth book of the New Testament begins where the first four end. These have recorded the life, words and acts of our Savior from his birth to the Cross, the tomb, the resurrection, and the Great Commission. They leave the apostles and the nucleus of the apostolic church waiting in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father which they must receive in order to endue them with power from on high needed for the work of preaching the Gospel of the Risen Lord. The historian of Acts begins with the Ascension, then portrays to us the waiting and praying disciples, ready to begin the great work as soon as they shall receive the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then when the signal was given that all things were ready by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, he enters upon the record of how the apostles and apostolic men preached the gospel under the Savior's commission, how sinners were made saints, how the church was founded, and how it was built up, nurtured and trained by the apostles. Acts is the history of apostolic evangelization, the book of conversions, the first book of ecclesiastical history.

It has been forcibly stated by Dean Howson that Luke declares in his preface that he had in his former treatise (the Gospel) given account “of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up,” while in Acts, he “reveals to the world what the same Jesus, having ascended into heaven, and being exalted to the right hand of God, *continues 'to do and to teach,'* not any longer within the narrow confines of Palestine, or during the few years of an earthly ministry, but from his royal throne in his imperial city, the heavenly Jerusalem; and what, there sitting in glory, he does and teaches, by the instrumentality of apostles, apostolic men, and apostolic churches, in all ages of the world; and what he will ever continue to do and to teach from heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven after his ascension, even till he comes again in glory to judge both quick and dead.” This view of the purpose of Acts is not to exalted, as will be seen, when we bear in mind that the apostles were forbidden to begin their work until endowed by the Holy Spirit which was “shed forth” by the Lord from his throne on high, and then, “spake as the Spirit gave them utterance,” acting in all things under the immediate guidance of the Spirit. Thus, they became simply the agents of the Lord, led, directed, preaching and speaking as they were directed from on high. All that the Lord continued “to do and to teach” thus through them has been recorded as examples to his followers in all times, from which they cannot lightly depart without disloyalty to the King.

The Author.— The preface shows that it was written by the same author as the third Gospel, which has been ascribed by the church in all ages to Luke, and in the first canon of the New Testament Scriptures he is named as the author. Eusebius places it as Luke's among those books that were *never* disputed in the church, and it is quoted by the earliest Christian writers, such as Polycarp, who was a companion of the apostle John. It is also attributed to

Luke by Irenæus in the second century, a hearer of Polycarp, who was a hearer of John. We learn from Acts itself that it was written by a companion of Paul, and one who attended him to Rome. His Epistles inform us that Luke was an attendant upon his imprisonment in that city.

Time and Place of Writing.— Acts could not have been completed before the year a.d. 63, as it is continued at the time at which Paul had closed his second year of imprisonment at Rome, which is placed in that year, and it must have been completed before the year 68, as it makes no mention of his death, which did not occur later than that year. The closing chapters were no doubt written in Rome, as Luke was there in attendance upon Paul (Col. 4:14) but it is probable that the greater portion might have been written during the two years' imprisonment of Paul in Cæsarea under the immediate direction of the great apostle. While the two years of Paul at Rome were busied with epistles to the churches, and preaching the gospel in Rome, the records are silent how his time was occupied while confined at Cæsarea. It would be impossible for such a man as Paul to be idle, and as his friend had full access to him, there is strong reason to believe that at this period Luke, his constant companion, under his direction, not only prepared his Gospel, but by the aid of such men as Philip the Evangelist, who had his home in Cæsarea, and Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, aided by the records preserved in the church at Jerusalem, prepared the history of Acts to the period of the departure to Rome. From the apostles themselves, no doubt, were obtained the accounts of the ascension, the preaching and founding of the church on the day of Pentecost, the acts of Peter, the dispute between the Hellenists and the Hebrews, the martyrdom of Stephen and of the Apostle James. And there was also the information which he could obtain from the Church of Cæsarea; in that city he met with Philip the Evangelist, (Acts 21:8,) and perhaps also with Cornelius, the devout centurion. From this source he would derive his information concerning the evangelistic labors in Samaria, the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the visions made to Peter and Cornelius, and the particulars connected with the death of Herod Agrippa. That portion of the history in which Paul is the principal figure would require no other source of information than the great apostle could furnish himself.

The Outline.— I. *Preaching the Gospel "in Jerusalem" and Judea.* (1) Preparation for the work (1:1–26). (2) Events of Pentecost (2:1–47). (3) The Church unfolding in miracle and endurance of persecution (3:1–4:37). (4) The Church unfolding in penal power (5:1–16). (5) The Church in the second persecution (5:17–42.) (6) The Church forming its economy (6:1–8). (7) The Church in last struggle and dispersion (6:8–8:4). II. *Preaching the Gospel "in Samaria" and about Palestine.* (1) The deacon Philip evangelizes Samaria (8:5–25). (2) The new Apostle of the Gentiles called (9:1–30). (3) Gentile induction; new Christian center, Gentile Antioch (10:1–11:30). (4) Desolation of Jerusalem Church by Herod; its avenging (12:1–25). III. *Preaching the Gospel "in the Uttermost Parts of the Earth".* (1) Paul's first

mission from Antioch (13:1–14:28). (2) Jerusalem Council on Circumcision (15:1–34). (3) Paul's second mission from Antioch (15:35–18:23). (4) Paul's third mission from Antioch (18:23–21:17). (5) Paul in council with James—Arrest—Sent to Cæsarea (21:18–23:35). (6) Paul's two years at Cæsarea (24:1–26:32). (7) Paul *en route* for Rome; at Rome (27:1–28:31).



Chapter I

Summary — *The Preface. The Promise of the Father. The Command to Witness in Jerusalem, and in All Judea, and Unto the Uttermost Parts of the Earth. The Ascension. The Charge of the Angels. The Week of Prayer. The Fate of Judas. The Choice of an Apostle.*

1. The former treatise. Luke's Gospel. **Theophilus.** See note on [Luke 1:3](#). Luke, whose history of *Acts* is really a continuation of the history of his *Gospel*, very naturally refers to the former.

2. Through the Holy Ghost. Jesus received the Spirit without measure, and all he did was in the Spirit. He also imparted a measure of the Spirit, before he ascended, to the apostles to help them in their work ([John 20:22](#)). **Commandments.** The Great Commission. ([Matt. 28:18–20](#); [Mark 16:15, 16](#); [Luke 24:49](#)).

3. To whom he shewed himself alive. He is a living Savior. Otherwise he could no more be a Savior than Socrates, Buddha, or any other sage. **After his passion.** Suffering on the cross. **Seen of them forty days.** At various times during forty days. Eleven appearances are recorded. There were probably others. **Pertaining to the kingdom of God.** His church, about to be established on the earth.

4. Commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem. Because, right in the citadel of his enemies, where he had been slain, the Risen Lord was to be first proclaimed, his Gospel preached, the Holy Spirit shed forth, and his kingdom established. Because, too, the prophet ([Isa. 2:3, 5](#)) had declared that Jerusalem should be the place where the Gospel should be first preached. **But wait for the promise of the Father.** [Joel 2:28](#); [Zech. 2:10](#); [John 14:16](#); [15:26](#); [Matt. 3:11](#). They must wait for the Spirit, that they might speak, on the great day of the inauguration of the kingdom, as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance ([Acts 2:4](#)). The conditions of citizenship in the kingdom must be spoken by the Spirit.

5. John truly baptized with water. They had received John's baptism; they were now to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. **Not many days.** Only ten days after these words were spoken.

6. Wilt thou at this time, etc.? They still held to their old ideas of a worldly restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Their only question was, "Wilt thou restore it *now*?" After the Holy Spirit was given, this delusion was dismissed, and they understood that Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

7. It is not for you to know. This was a reproof, not only to them, but to those in all ages who seek to know "the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

8. Ye shall receive power. Not temporal power, such as they dreamed of, but spiritual and moral power. **Shall be witnesses unto me.** Testify of him of their personal knowledge. They all *knew* personally of his life, his miracles, his death, his resurrection, and the Great

Commission. There could be no mistake. Their witness is true, unless they were deceivers. **In Jerusalem.** First, in the headquarters of Judaism, the capital of their own country, the place where the Lord was crucified; then in an ever-widening circle from that center; in Judea, then in Samaria, then to the uttermost parts of the earth. This order was followed exactly. It should always be followed in our efforts to evangelize the world.

9. He was taken up. See [Luke 24:51](#), and the notes there.

11. Ye men of Galilee. The apostles were mostly, if not all, Galileans. **This same Jesus ... shall so come.** The cloud received him from their sight. He shall come in the clouds of heaven ([Dan. 7:13](#); [Matt. 24:30](#); [26:24](#)).

12. Then returned they ... from the mount called Olivet. See [Luke 24:50](#). The place of ascent was near Bethany. A church now stands on the supposed place. **A sabbath day's journey.** "The traditions of the elders" defined the distance that might be traveled on the Sabbath. It was a little less than a mile. Bethany is nearly two miles, but Luke here is stating the distance of the Mount of Olives from the city.

13. Went into an upper room. A guest chamber on the second floor. **Where abode.** All the apostles are named except Judas Iscariot, who had fallen away and was now dead.

14. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. The latter clause is omitted in the Revision. They were waiting for the "promise of the Father," and the time was spent in worship. There were ten days of prayer, the best preparation for the Pentecostal blessing; an example to all churches which seek an ingathering of souls. **With the women.** Especially those women who had followed and ministered to the Lord, lingered at his cross, and at his tomb. **Mary.** This is the last time she is named in the sacred history. Tradition reports that she lived until the near the time of the overthrow of Jerusalem. **His brethren.** The sons of Joseph and Mary. One of them, James, was afterwards the James of Jerusalem and the author of the Epistle of James. See [Acts 15](#); also [Matt. 13:55](#). They were unbelievers six months before ([John 7:5](#)), but now believed. James had seen the risen Lord ([1 Cor. 15:7](#)).

15. And in those days. The interval of ten days. **Were about a hundred and twenty.** This was the number of disciples at Jerusalem, but not all who were then disciples. See [1 Cor. 15:6](#).

16. This scripture must needs have been fulfilled. [Psa. 69:26](#).

18. This man purchased a field. He returned the bribe money to the priests, who used it to purchase the potter's field. Peter here intends to say that his money bought the field. The Greek verb rendered "purchased," has the form that means "caused to be purchased." **Falling headlong.** [Matt. 27:5](#) says he hanged himself. Peter tells some additional particulars, which Matthew omitted. He probably hanged himself on a tree projecting over the precipices of the Valley of Hinnom, and afterwards, on account of the rope or limb breaking, fell headlong with such force as to burst his body open on the jagged rocks. This is the traditional account of his death.

19. That field is called. The field bought with the bribe money of Judas. He came to such a bloody end that this, and the origin of the purchase money, gave the field its name.

20. His bishoprick let another take. [Psa. 109:8](#). His office. This is, rather, an application of the spirit of the Psalm, than its exact words. It sets forth the desert of persecutors.

21, 22. Must one be ordained to be a witness with us. These verses set forth the necessary qualifications of an apostle. In order to be a *witness*, he must have been a disciple of John, left him in order to follow Jesus, attended his ministry, and seen him after his resurrection. He must be able to testify of all these as an eye witness.

23. They appointed two. Not the apostles, but the brethren, men who met these conditions, then cast lots between them in order that the Lord might make the choice. The two men named are not mentioned elsewhere.

24. They prayed. That the Lord might choose between them. A choice of men for any responsible church work ought to be made with earnest prayer. It is likely that one of the apostles offered the prayer, all joining in the petition.

26. The lot fell on Matthias. Some have held that the choice of Matthias was unauthorized and that he was never accepted as an apostle. The reasons for this view are that he is not named again, and Paul was finally chosen as an apostle. To this it may be replied: (1) Neither are more than half the other names in the apostolic band again mentioned, Thomas, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, for example. (2) Paul was not an apostle to the Jews, but to the Gentiles, and hence, not one of the Twelve. (3) There is no hint anywhere in Acts, or elsewhere, that the selection of Matthias was not recognized. (4) In [Acts 6:2](#), “the twelve” are spoken of, and he must have been one of “the twelve,” for Paul was not yet converted. These facts show that such speculations as those referred to above are without foundation.



Chapter II

The Day of Pentecost

Summary —*The Disciples Gathered Together. The Baptism of the Spirit. The Apostles Speak as the Spirit Gives Utterance. The Gospel Heard in Many Tongues. The Theory of the Scoffers. Peter's Sermon. The Prophecy of Joel Fulfilled. Christ and the Resurrection Preached. The Jews Convicted of Crucifying the Lord. The Inquiry of Convicted Sinners. Peter's Reply. Three Thousand Baptized. Continuing in the Apostles' Doctrine. The Progress of the Church.*

1. When the day of Pentecost was fully come. The entire period between it and the passover, the waiting period of the disciples, was filled full. Pentecost, one of the three great annual festivals of the Jews, lasted only one day, was on the fiftieth day from the morrow after the passover Sabbath ([Lev. 23:15–22](#)). The Savior, crucified on Friday, was in the tomb on the passover Sabbath, and rose on Sunday, the day from whence the count began. The Sunday following would be the eighth day, and the fiftieth day would fall on Sunday, the first day of the eighth week. Hence, the ancient church observed Pentecost on the first day of the week. For fuller discussion, see Meyer, Howson and Milligan on this passage. All agree that Pentecost came on Sunday. Pentecost was the feast of the grain harvest ([Exod. 23:16; 34:22, 23](#)), and was also held by the Jews to be the anniversary of the giving of the law. **They were all ... in one place.** Not only the apostles, but the hundred and twenty disciples. They probably had an intimation that the promised day had come.

2. There came a sound. As this day, the day of the founding of the church, was to be a day of signs and wonders, the shedding forth of the Spirit was made perceptible to all. The sound was heard, the tongues of fire were seen, the word was spoken in many languages. **It filled the house.** The mighty sound. At the same time the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, their spirits baptized in the Spirit.

3. There appeared unto them cloven tongues. Luminous tongues sat on each of them, “parting asunder” (Revision), or “distributing themselves” (margin). Meyer says that the idea is that they parted and distributed themselves on those present. These tongues symbolized the fact that the kingdom now inaugurated was to conquer by the spoken word, by the sword of the Spirit.

4. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. All the disciples present. To be *filled* implies that the human spirit within was overwhelmed by, or immersed in, the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit was not a sprinkling, but an outpouring that overwhelmed the human spirit. **Began to speak.** This was the “Beginning.” See [Luke 24:47 and Acts 11:15](#). **With other tongues.** In the languages of all the different countries from which Jews had come up to Pentecost. Many would be unable to understand the Hebrew dialect of Judea in that period, and hence, they must be preached to in the tongue of their own country if they un-

derstood. That the gospel on this, the first day the Great Commission was ever preached, was preached in all tongues, symbolized the fact that it is for all nations. **As the Spirit gave them utterance.** They were not allowed to preach the Great Commission until now, in order that every word uttered on this day might be the word of the Spirit, not of man. The words were to be spoken to an audience, not of those in Jerusalem only, but to our whole race in all time, in order to show how sinners are to be saved under the gospel.

5. There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men. Devout Jews who had come up to the great feast of Pentecost. The Jews were already scattered in many nations, but foreign Jews were wont to flock to the great national feasts. Some, too, had come to end their days at Jerusalem. **Under heaven.** From all quarters of the world. Jews, in foreign lands, attended Pentecost in larger numbers than the other feasts, because the time of year favored travel.

6. The multitude came together. Led by the sound (Revised Version) and the marvellous events. **Speak in his own language.** Of the foreign country in which he had been reared.

7, 8. Are not all these who speak Galileans? Most of the disciples to this time were. The Galileans were not generally learned men, yet now all hear, every man his own tongue.

9. Parthians. The long list of nations embraces the various races embraced in the *we* of [verse 8](#). Parthia was east of the Tigris. **Elam** was an ancient name of Persia. **Media**, another part of the Medo-Persian empire, east of the Tigris. **Mesopotamia** was the seat of Babylon. These four countries just named were thickly populated with Jews descended from those carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. **Cappadocia.** A Roman province not far from the Black Sea. **Pontus.** A province south and east of the Black Sea. **Asia.** The Roman province of which Ephesus was the capital. All the “seven churches” were in the province called “Asia.”

10. Phrygia and Pamphylia. Parts of what is called Asia Minor. **Egypt.** The great African province where many ten thousands of Jews had their home. **Parts of Libya.** Of Africa. **About Cyrene.** A great Grecian city on the coast west of Egypt. It is said that one-fourth of the population of Cyrene was Jewish. **Strangers of Rome.** Roman Jews sojourning at Jerusalem. **Proselytes.** Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism.

11. Cretes. From the island of Crete. **Arabians.** Many Jews dwelt in the desert lands south and east of Palestine, all called generally Arabia.

13. Others mocking. Some were amazed and bewildered; others, stubbornly skeptical, scoffed and suggested that the speakers were drunk. **New wine.** More exactly, sweet wine, a wine made by soaking raisins, pressing out and fermenting the juice, which was very intoxicating. Most wines of Palestine had very slight intoxicating qualities.

14. Peter, standing up. In the name of all the apostles. Jesus had said ([Matt. 16:19](#)) that Peter should receive the keys of the kingdom, and they are now to be used to open its doors. **With the eleven.** Eleven other apostles besides himself. He now begins the first gospel sermon. He and the apostles now begin their witness to Christ.

15. These are not drunken. It was only the third hour, nine o'clock. The Jews at their festivals seldom ate before this hour, and as their drink was taken at a meal, could not be drunken.

16. This is that which was spoken. He turns to their prophets for an explanation. **By the prophet Joel.** Who lived about 800 b.c. See [Joel 3:1-5](#).

17. It shall come to pass in the last days. The phrase "Last days" was used by the Jews to denote the last dispensation, that of Christ. See [Isa. 2:2. I will pour out of my Spirit.](#) A figurative expression to indicate abundant gifts of the Spirit. **On all flesh.** On all races, not on the Jews alone. **Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.** "To prophesy" in the New Testament means to communicate religious truth by divine authority, as well as to foretell the future. The prophecy was fulfilled in the inspired speaking on Pentecost and afterwards, as well as by the daughters of Philip ([Acts 21:9](#)). It will be seen that both sexes are included. **See visions ... dream dreams.** Such visions as that of Peter at Joppa. Such dreams as that of Paul at Troas, where he saw the Macedonian asking him to "Come and help us."

19. I will shew wonders in heaven. Peter not only quotes that part of the prophecy of Joel which was applicable to the events now transpiring, but he quotes that part also which pertains to the calamities coming on the Jewish nation, and to the final judgment. I understand [verse 19](#) to apply directly to the overthrow of Judea and Jerusalem.

20. The sun shall be turned into darkness. See notes on [Matt. 24:29](#).

21. Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, etc. To turn to the Lord for salvation in his appointed way. It means far more than simply prayer. He who would call on the name of the Lord for salvation must do more than say, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." He must hear and obey ([Matt. 7:21](#)).

22. Hear these words. Peter now begins to preach Christ directly to them. He boldly declares that they knew of his miracles, and wonders and signs. He demonstrates the Messiahship in [verses 22-36](#): 1. By the miracles of which they were witnesses. 2. By his Resurrection, proved (1) by the prophecy of David; (2) by the testimony of all the apostles present who were witnesses; (3) by the phenomena then witnessed, which could be only due to his exaltation to the right hand of God.

23. Being delivered by the determinate counsel. It was the will of the Father that he should die, and was known to the Father before his coming. See [Isaiah, chapter 53. By wicked hands have crucified.](#) By the hands of wicked Romans, whom they caused to crucify the Lord.

24. Because it was not possible that he should be holden. It was not possible that Jesus be held by death, because he had life in himself, and, besides, it was the Father's will that he should arise. This verse epitomizes the four Gospels.

25-28. David speaketh. Psa. 16:8-11. 27. Not leave my soul in hell. In *hades*, the unseen abode of the dead. The meaning is that he would not remain under the power of death.

David did not speak this of himself, but of the Son of David. See [verse 29](#). **Thy Holy One.** The Lord Jesus. The promised Messiah.

29. He is both dead and buried. David. His sepulchre was in their midst, within the walls of the city. All his hearers had seen it.

30. Knowing that God had sworn. God had promised to David that Christ should sit on his throne. See [2 Sam. 7:11–16](#); [Psa. 89:3, 4, 35, 37](#); [132:11](#).

32. This Jesus hath God raised up. David foretold it; we are all witnesses of it. There were, including himself, at least twelve witnesses there who had seen the risen Lord again and again. The next point is the exaltation of Christ to a heavenly throne.

33. He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. The supernatural marvels of this wonderful day were the proof of Christ's exaltation. He had *shed* them forth.

34. For. Peter now shows that David had foretold the exaltation of Christ. **David ... saith.** [Psa. 110:1](#). Jesus ([Matt. 22:43, 44](#)) quotes the same passage and applies it to himself. **The Lord.** God, the Father. **My Lord.** Christ. **Sit thou on my right hand.** See [verse 33](#). "To sit at the right hand" implies participation in the Supreme Government.

35. Until I make, etc. When the work of the Mediator is ended and all conquered to Christ, then all power is given up to the Father. See [1 Cor. 15:23–28](#).

36. Therefore let all the house of Israel know, etc. This is the grand climax, the conclusion to which the whole discourse had been directed.

37. When they heard this. The conclusion, supported by such convincing demonstration. Before Peter began to speak they did not understand the signs; but now it was clear to them that they had rejected and crucified the Lord. **Pricked in their heart.** Convicted of their sins, and pierced with sorrow. They believed Peter's affirmation; their faith revealed their sin in rejecting Christ. Overwhelmed with sorrow, they ask, **What shall we do?** Is there any way that such sinners can be pardoned?

38. Repent, and be baptized. For the first time the terms of pardon under the New Covenant and the Great Commission are given; given once for all time, and always the same. The convicted, broken-hearted, sorrowing sinner, believing that Jesus is the Christ, is to repent and be baptized. **Repent.** Not sorrow. They already sorrowed; but a change of purpose; the internal change which resolves to serve the Lord. The Greek term rendered repent, means a change of mind. The act of obedience in baptism is an outward expression of both faith and repentance. **In the name of Jesus Christ.** "Upon the name" (Revised Version). Upon the ground of the name. In submission to the authority of Jesus Christ. **For the remission of sins.** Thus, by complying with the conditions just named, they shall receive remission of sins. No man can receive pardon without faith and repentance, nor can he without submission to the will of Christ. "*Eis* (for) denotes the *object* of baptism, which is the remission of the guilt contracted in the state before *metanoia* (repentance)."—*Meyer*. "*In order to the forgiveness of sins* we connect naturally with both the preceding verbs. This clause states the

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motive or object which should induce them to repent and be baptized.”—*Prof. Hackett*. **The gift of the Holy Spirit.** Promised as a comforter to all who obey Christ, but whom “the world cannot receive.”

39. For the promise. Of pardon, and the gift of the Spirit. **Unto you.** Even unto those who rejected the Lord. **To your children.** Your children after you. **To all that are afar off.** To the Gentiles. That he refers to the Gentiles is shown in the next clause, **even as many as the Lord our God shall call.** Peter spake as the Spirit gave him utterance, and perhaps did not fully comprehend his own words.

40. Save yourselves. This was the object of the “many other words.” They could “save themselves” by complying with the conditions named in [verse 38](#), and thus accepting Christ as their Savior. **From this untoward generation.** The wicked Jewish race.

41. They that gladly received his word. Every believing penitent would gladly receive it. **Were baptized.** Not indefinitely in the future, but that day. **The same day there were added about three thousand souls.** “It is proper to add that pools numerous and large which encircled Jerusalem, as both those still in use, and as the remains of others testify of at the present day, afforded ample means for the celebration of the rite of baptism. The habits of the East, as every traveler knows, would present no obstacle to such a use of the public reservoirs.”—*Hackett, Commentary on Acts*. It has been objected to the immersion of the three thousand that the apostles could not have done it in one day. We are not told that the apostles only were the baptists, or even baptized at all. There were at least 120 disciples there; perhaps even more on this great day. Perhaps the Seventy were all there. But the apostles alone could have discharged the office. There would be 250 to each one. Sixty persons have been immersed easily in an hour by one person. At this rate the whole work could have been accomplished by twelve men in about four hours. The celebrated Chryso-stom, aided by his elders, baptized (immersed) 3,000 in a day in a.d. 404.

42. They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine. In the things taught by the apostles. **And fellowship.** Contribution to the common fund and its distribution. **The breaking of bread.** The Lord's supper. From this time it is observed as an ordinance of the church. **In prayers.** I think the prayers of the regular worship are meant. These four items are all features of the public church life.

43. Fear came upon every soul. Of the unbelievers.

44. Had all things common. Many, perhaps most, were sojourners at, not citizens of, Jerusalem. It was needful that they remain together for the time, and while sojourning here, they threw their common funds together. Alford says: “In order, however, rightly to understand this *community*, we may remark, *It is only found in the Church at Jerusalem*. No trace of its existence is discoverable anywhere else; on the contrary, St. Paul speaks constantly of the rich and poor. See [1 Tim. 6:17](#); [Gal. 2:10](#); [2 Cor. 8:13, 15](#); [9:6,7](#); [1 Cor. 16:2](#); also [James 2:1–5](#); [4:13](#).”

45. Sold their possessions. Real estate. **Goods.** Personal property. **Parted them to all men.** On this special liberality we may note, (1) It partly arose from the non-resident or pilgrim character of a large part of the converts. (2) It was not an obligatory rule; the laws of ownership or property were not disturbed or questioned. Even Ananias might have kept all his land unblamed,

46. Continuing daily ... in the temple. They gathered there for the purpose of teaching the multitudes. **Breaking bread from house to house.** Eating their food from house to house. It may refer to observing the Lord's Supper in private residences.

47. The Lord added to the church. This is the first time the church is named as existing. It had been founded on Pentecost. **Such as should be saved.** "Those being saved" (Revised Version). Those being saved on the conditions that the Gospel imposes the Lord added to his church.



Chapter III

The First Persecution

Summary —*Peter and John at the Temple. The Lame Man Healed. The Wonder of the Multitude. Peter Preaches Christ to Them. The Prophet Like Unto Moses.*

1. Peter and John. These two apostles were very closely associated in the early work of the church. They are often named together. **Into the temple.** The Jewish Christians still continued to observe many of the rites of Jewish worship, and, in addition, they preached Christ to the multitudes in the temple courts. It was years before they were fully emancipated from Judaism. **At the hour of prayer.** The ninth hour, three o'clock P.M., the hour of the evening sacrifice, when devout Jews were accustomed to gather at the temple to pray. The miracle that follows is one of many (see 2:43), but is recorded because it led to the first persecution.

2. Laid daily at the gate ... called Beautiful. Generally thought to be the gate opening towards the Mount of Olives. Josephus, who calls it the gate of Nicanor, describes it as wonderfully rich and beautiful (Jos. Ant. 15:11). It was common for the unfortunate to be placed at gates where their condition would appeal to the multitudes entering for worship. Then, public charities were almost unknown, and the helpless were compelled to beg.

6. Silver and gold have I none. Though the early church had poured out its gifts abundantly (2:45), Peter had not enriched himself, and was a poor man, presenting a great contrast to the popes who claim to be his successors. It is related that Thomas Aquinas came to Rome and visited Innocent IV. He looked somewhat amazedly upon the mass of plate and treasure which he saw there. "So," said the pope, "you see, Thomas, we cannot say as did St. Peter of old, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "No," said Aquinas, "neither can you command, as did he, the lame man to arise and walk." Peter had that which the popes have not. **In the name of Jesus Christ.** Christ worked his miracles in no one's name. The power was his own, but with the apostles all things were done in Christ's name, and the power ascribed to him.

7. He took him by the right hand. To encourage and strengthen his faith. He was bidden to "arise and walk in the name of Jesus Christ," and thus to show his faith in act. He did, and was healed in doing so.

8. Leaping up, stood. His alacrity and eagerness are shown in the language used.

9, 10. The people ... were filled with wonder. They had often seen the lame beggar, but now saw him "walking, and leaping and praising God," and did not know how he had been healed.

11. Ran together ... in the porch that is called Solomon's. The marvel assembled a concourse who gathered in Solomon's porch, a great covered portico of the temple, built on foundations that had been reared by Solomon, and hence called by his name.

12. Ye men of Israel. Peter seized the opportunity to preach Christ.

13. The God of Abraham. The God of the patriarchs whom they all worshiped **hath glorified his Son Jesus**. They delivered him to Pilate, and denied him when Pilate would release him, but demanded a murderer, instead of the Holy One, and slew him. This One God had raised and glorified. A wonderful contrast; a terrible arraignment.

15. We are witnesses. The Twelve, all of whom had seen the risen Lord. Observe how prominent in the early preaching is the resurrection and the apostolic witness to it.

16. His name. Not Peter's power, but Christ's name, had done all. **Through faith in his name.** Not only the faith of Peter and John, but the faith created in the lame man. In an act of faith he was made strong. "The faith alike is in the healer and the healed."—*Plumptree*.

17. I wot. I know. It was in ignorance of the majestic personality of Jesus that they slew him. Their rulers, ignorant also, might have known better had they not blinded themselves by prejudice. God "had foreshown all these things by the prophets," even that Christ should suffer. See [Isaiah, chapter 53](#); [Dan. 9:26](#).

19. Repent ye therefore. The same command given on the great occasion of Pentecost ([2:38](#)). Repentance is not sorrow, but the fruit of sorrow ([2 Cor. 7:10](#)). Those, on Pentecost, *pierced to the heart* were told to *repent*. Judas sorrowed unto death, but did not come to repentance. Repentance is an internal change resulting, not from remorse, but from conviction of sin and godly sorrow for it. The Greek term means a change of mind. It is the change of determination or will, the resolve to turn from sin to God, what, in religious language, is often styled "a change of heart." **And be converted.** In the Revision, *Turn again*. The Greek term is not passive, but active. The command is to do some act, not to have something done to us. The Greek term (*Epistrepho*) occurs thirty-nine times in the New Testament and is uniformly in the active voice. A false idea is given in the Common Version by making it passive. To *repent*, or change the heart, is the internal change wrought by faith, and this is to be followed by a definite act, *to turn*. If one is on the wrong road, is convicted of this, repents of it, the result is an *act*, to "turn," and then to go the right way. This figure applies to the sinner. Convicted of sin, repentant, there must be some outward act of turning. That act, following repentance, is given in [Acts 2:38](#). The penitent is required to be baptized, and then to go on in the new way following Jesus. "Baptism is not here expressly named, as in [2:38](#), but was now understood of itself, seeing that thousands had been baptized, and the thought is suggested in the figurative expression *in order* that your sins may be blotted out, namely, by the water of baptism."—*Meyer*. "In a similar exhortation ([2:38](#)) Peter adds, 'Be baptized,' but this would now be understood."—*Dean Howson*. See [22:16](#). **When the times of refreshing shall come.** The Revision is correct, "That so there may come," etc. In [2:38](#)

the steps are, (1) Repentance, (2) baptism, (3) remission of sins, (4) the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here, the order is (1) Repentance, (2) to turn, (3) the blotting out of sins, (4) the seasons of refreshing. One passage aids in interpreting the other.

20. And he shall send Jesus Christ. Again we have to turn to the Revision for the meaning. The great hope of the Jews was the Messiah. He had come, been rejected, and had returned to heaven. His return will be prepared for by repentance, and turning to the Lord. The blotting out of sins, the seasons of refreshing, and the return of Christ are all, in some measure, dependent on their repentance and turning. *The Christ* appointed is *even Jesus*, the crucified One.

21. Whom the heaven must receive. Until all the work predicted by the prophets had been accomplished. **The times of restitution.** The restoration (Revision). The moral restoration of the world. Christ will come in person, not before, but after the millennium is ushered in ([Rev. 20:11–15](#)).

22. A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up. See [Deut. 18:15–19](#). **Like me.** In that he is the Mediator of the New Covenant as Moses was of the Old.

23. Shall be destroyed. The Jews could be saved only by hearing Christ. Nor can we be saved otherwise.

24. And all the prophets also from Samuel. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Samuel is named because he was the founder of the schools of the prophets.

25. Ye are the children of the prophets. The natural heirs of their promised blessings. **And of the covenant.** The covenant of Christ made with Abraham, in which the Savior was promised ([Gen. 12:3](#)). This covenant was older than that of Sinai.

26. Unto you first. To Israel first in order, before the Gentiles, but Peter here recognizes the fact that the Gospel is also for other races. **Sent him to bless you.** Not in person, but by the preaching of Christ as the Savior from sin. The best of all blessings is “the turning of them from iniquity,” as that brings all others.



Chapter IV

Peter and John Before the Sanhedrim

Summary — *The Arrest. The Trial Before the Sanhedrim. Peter's Reply. The Counsel of the Sanhedrists. Their Charge to Peter and John. The Appeal of Peter and John to the Higher Law. The Meeting of the Church for Prayer. The Divine Blessing.*

1. As they spake. Peter and John were both speaking, to separate groups probably. **The priests.** Those of the course then on duty in the temple. See notes on [Luke 1:5](#). **The captain of the temple.** The head of the temple police, who were composed of Levites, and whose duty it was to guard the sacred precincts. See [Luke 22:4](#). **And the Sadducees.** See notes on [Matt. 3:7](#) and [Matt. 22:23](#). They were rationalists, and denied the resurrection of the dead. Annas and Caiaphas, the ex-high priest and the acting high priest, were of the sect, and hence, though the sect was not numerous, it was now very powerful.

2. Being grieved. There were three classes of assailants: *priests*, military, and Sadducees. They had three grounds for action: that Peter and John taught the *people*, that they taught *in the name of Christ*, and that they bore witness of the *resurrection*. The last doctrine, of the resurrection, uprooted the creed of the Sadducees. While Jesus lived, his assailants were chiefly Pharisees; when his apostles began to preach his resurrection the Sadducees came to the front as his chief opposers. This will be noted throughout Acts.

3. Put them in hold. In prison until the next day, for it was now late in the evening.

4. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed. Became converts. This (believed) is a usual scriptural expression for the whole change wrought by belief. "Faith comes by hearing ... the word of God" ([Rom. 10:17](#)), and faith leads to obedience. **The number of the men was about five thousand.** It is probable that the meaning is that the number of men was now increased to five thousand. The term in the Greek (*andres*) does not properly include women, so that this is the number of male believers. It is probable that most of the converts of Pentecost and of this occasion were men. Oriental women were not likely to attend in large numbers on such public occasions.

5. Their rulers, and elders, and scribes. A meeting of the Sanhedrim, the great council of seventy, is meant. These classes, with the priests named in the [next verse](#), constituted it. The members of the Sanhedrim were usually called *rulers*; the *elders* were old men, selected for the place on account of wisdom; the *scribes* were the lawyers, or theologians.

6. Annas the high priest. Still so called, though deposed ten years before by the Romans. The Jews held him still as high priest by right. **Caiaphas.** Son-in-law of Annas, and the high priest now in office by Roman appointment. **John and Alexander.** No doubt great men at the time, but we know nothing of them. **Kindred of the high priest.** Of the family of Annas,

all of priestly rank, and many of them holding high offices. The Sanhedrim usually met in a hall of the temple.

7. Set them in the midst. The high priest acted as president, and the members were arranged in a semi-circle around him, with the prisoners in front. **By what power?** They could not deny the miracle, but they thought that it had been done by some incantation. They ask an explanation.

8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit. They had been promised the Divine help when put on trial ([Matt. 10:19, 20](#)). It was now given. Here was an opportunity to preach Christ to the very body that had sent him to death.

9. If we this day be examined of the good deed. Observe Peter's point, that they are prisoners on trial for a *good* deed.

10. By the name of Jesus Christ. It was the power of that one whom that very court had condemned which had wrought the miracle. **Whom ye crucified.** Peter becomes the accuser. They, his accusers, have been guilty of crucifying the Messiah. They crucified him, but God raised him from the dead.

11. This is the stone which was set at nought. Quoted from [Psa. 118](#). A figure drawn from a building where a rejected, despised stone is the most important and indispensable stone of the structure. Christ quoted the same passage, applied to himself ([Matt. 21:42](#)).

12. Salvation in none other. No other Savior but Jesus; no salvation if his is rejected; no other name or power to save from destruction, unless he is accepted. Why, then, should men invoke the Virgin, or the saints?

13, 14. Perceived that they were unlearned. Not educated in the schools of the rabbins. They had, however, a better learning. **They had been with Jesus.** In them the crucified Jesus stands before them, fearless as their Master. **Beholding the man.** He was the unimpeachable proof of the miracle.

15. When they had commanded them to go aside. They sent them from their presence in order that they might confer freely together. The substance of their deliberations is condensed and reported. The conclusion they arrived at was, not to punish them for a miracle that all the people knew had taken place, but to stop their preaching by threats.

19. Whether it be right in the sight of God. They appeal to the higher law. Their earthly government commanded them not to do what God had directed them to do. In a conflict of this kind there is only one course, that is, to obey God.

20. We cannot but speak. Are under a moral and spiritual obligation to speak. They had a Divine message, and must tell it.

21, 22. Let them go. With threats, afraid to punish them lest they should exasperate the people. **Above forty years old.** Therefore known to everybody as a life-long cripple.

23. Came to their own company. To the body of Christians assembled together, and there reported what had taken place.

24. Lifted up their voice to God with one accord. All engaged in prayer. It was a time of trial. They were forbidden, under awful threats, to preach Christ. Hence they go to God.

25. Why did the heathen rage? Quoted from the [second psalm](#). The predicted facts were all fulfilled in the trial and death of Christ. [Verse 27](#) shows how they were fulfilled.

28. To do whatsoever ... thy counsel determined before to be done. It is not said that God decreed that Pilate, Herod and the rulers should do what they did, but that they did what God had decreed should be done. It was God's will that Christ should die, but they chose, of their own malignity, to slay him. Their will was free.

29, 30. And now, Lord, ... grant. Note their petition. They do not ask to be saved from pain, persecution, or death. There is nothing asked for themselves personally, but they ask (1) that they may have boldness, in the face of threats, to speak the word, and (2) that God would bear them witness by gifts of miraculous power. Their prayer is all for the work's sake.

31. The place was shaken. As a sensible evidence that their prayer was granted, and then **they were filled with the Holy Spirit**, as on Pentecost, so inspired that all fear was shaken off.

32–35. The multitude of them that believed. All the church. **Of one heart and soul.** Perfectly united as one body and with one life. **Neither said any of them.** Note the language that follows. It does not describe a community of goods, but a miraculous benevolence: (1) the goods were not a common fund, but each one had *goods that he possessed*; (2) he did not say that his goods were *his own*; (3) they used all as if it belonged to all; (4) there were none that lacked, for (5) those that had houses and lands sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles. It was a time when a great liberality was called for. Thousands of Jews from abroad had become Christians and must remain at Jerusalem until instructed in the gospel. It was a great emergency, and the church was equal to it, for they brought money, goods, and the proceeds of houses and lands to sustain those who lacked. This continued until God was ready to send them forth, and when the persecution arose about Stephen they “went everywhere preaching the word.”

36, 37. Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas. His name was Joses; but the apostles from some feature of his character called him Barnabas, “the son of exhortation” (see Revision). **A Levite.** Of the sacred tribe. **Of the country of Cyprus.** The famous island of the Mediterranean. He and Paul afterwards carried the gospel there. **Having land.** Possibly a possession somewhere in Judea. See [Num. 35:1–8](#) and [Deut. 10:8, 9](#). As a Levite, Barnabas would have rights in the Levitical possessions. This is the first mention of this celebrated

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companion of Paul's missionary labors. He next appears on a mission to Antioch ([chap. 11:22](#)).



Chapter V

The Sin and Punishment of Ananias and Sapphira

Summary — *The Deceit and Death of Ananias. Of Sapphira. The Increase of the Church. The Signs and Wonders. The Rage of the High Priest and the Sadducees. The Imprisonment of the Apostles. The Prison Doors Opened. Teaching in the Temple. Again Arrested and Threatened. Their Bold Answer. The Resolve of the Sanhedrim to Slay Them. The Wise Counsel of Gamaliel. The Apostles Beaten and Let Go.*

1. But. Amid the peace, grace and abounding liberality of the church there was one dark spot. The sin and fate of Ananias and his wife must be recorded.

2. Kept back part of the price. Like many others, of their own accord they sold a possession for the benefit of the church. They were not compelled to sell it, or when sold to give the money, or to give all. Their sin was not withholding a part, but lying about it. (1) They gave from the wrong motives, not for the Lord, but for human praise. (2) There was hypocrisy and falsehood. **His wife being privy to it.** Hence equally guilty. There was a guilty conspiracy between them. **Brought a certain part.** Pretending it was all. His was a deliberate, public lie.

3, 4. To lie to the Holy Ghost. The sin is here pointed out. The lie was not to men, but to God. The apostles were moved by the Holy Spirit. These verses show clearly that the sin was hypocrisy and deception in the name of religion. These verses also show that the gifts of goods were purely voluntary.

5. Ananias ... gave up the ghost. Fell down and expired. There was a visible judgment upon him for his great sin. It was inflicted by the Holy Spirit through Peter, and shows how hypocrisy is regarded by the Lord.

6. The young men arose, wound him up. Wrapped his mantle tightly around him. **Carried him out.** Of the place of meeting and out of the city for burial. It was common, in the warm climate of Palestine, to bury on the day of death. Severe examples occurred at the outset of both Dispensations. Note the case of Nadab and Abihu ([Lev 10:1, 2](#)) and the sin of Achan ([Josh. 7:16–25](#)).

7. His wife ... came in. To the place of assembly, not having heard of her husband's fate, but full of his spirit.

8, 9. Whether ye sold the land for so much? Naming the amount offered by Ananias. Instead of the confession that would have saved her, she persisted in the lie agreed upon, died as he had died, and was buried in the same tomb.

10. The young men came in. It had required three hours to carry Ananias out of the city to the tomb and return. The gloomy incident occurred and is recorded for a wise purpose:

to teach the church in the outset that even if we can deceive men, we cannot hope to deceive God. It is an example.

11. Great fear came upon all the church. Not of outward enemies, but of so sinning as to invoke the punishment of God. It was a salutary fear.

12–14. By the hands of the apostles were many signs. Note that no one thus far has miraculous power but the apostles. The gift of miracles was not general. When it was imparted to others, we learn how it was imparted. **All with one accord in Solomon's porch.** The apostles, in order to preach. See [3:11](#). The brethren also with them.

13. Of the rest. Of their enemies. That the phrase does not include all who were not Christians is shown by what follows in [verse 14](#). Multitudes of converts were constantly made.

14. Both men and women. This is one of a number of instances in which women are named in early church history. As remarked elsewhere, at first the converts were mainly men. Now there are also women.

15, 16. They brought forth the sick into the streets. The fame of the miracles, and especially of Peter's, caused this to be done. It is not said that the shadow of Peter falling on them did any good, but the people supposed it might. The object is to show the great favor of the apostles with the people. It was a time, however, when multitudes of miracles were wrought.

17. Then the high priest rose up. Was stirred to action. Annas is, no doubt, meant. See note on [4:6](#). His sect, the Sadducees, co-operated with him. They were determined to stop the preaching of the resurrection. See note on [4:1](#).

18. Put them in the common prison. In the city jail, among malefactors. "The 'common prison,' corresponding to our jail, consists of a single room in the governor's cellar, with a floor of earth, and one small window, where all manner of people, from the murderer to the insolent debtor, are promiscuously crowded together. The only furniture consists of a bench, always occupied by the strongest; the rest lie on the floor, or stand. We have visited prisons of this kind where we could only stand a few moments upon the threshold on account of the foul air. The keepers remain outside of the door ([Acts 5:23](#)), but the prisoners are not bound.—*Van Lenneps*.

19. The angel of the Lord ... opened. The language would apply, if the doors were opened by any providential agency, but the messenger was probably a celestial one.

20. Go, stand and speak in the temple. They were to return at once to their interrupted work. It would give a powerful impulse for the imprisoned preachers to be at their place and work the next morning. **This life.** The eternal life denied by the Sadducees.

21. Called the council. The Sanhedrim, for the trial of the apostles, supposing them still in prison. **All the senate.** Many think that a body of elders and other influential leaders were called to assist in the deliberations.

23. The prison truly found we shut. All was as usual and the guards before the doors, but the prisoners gone.

25. Then came one and told them. The mystery was explained by the word that, as usual, the apostles were preaching in the temple.

26. Brought them without violence. The favor of the people for the apostles was so shown that they feared a tumult.

27, 28. The high priest asked them. As president. He charges (1) that they had disregarded the authority of the Sanhedrim; (2) they had filled Jerusalem with their doctrine; (3) they would work up the people to indignation against the rulers for condemning Christ.

29–32. Peter's defence asserts (1) that God must be obeyed rather than earthly rulers; (2) God raised up Jesus whom they hanged on the cross; (3) exalted him to his right hand; (4) to be a Prince and Savior, to grant Israel the opportunity to repent, and to obtain forgiveness; (5) that they were witnesses of these facts, and so was the Holy Spirit. **Given to them that obey Him.** The Holy Spirit is given only to those who have submitted to the Lord ([Acts 2:28](#) and [John 7:38, 39](#)). It dwells only in the obedient heart.

33. Cut to the heart. Convulsed with rage, not sorrow. **Took counsel to slay them.** Concerning the expediency of putting them to death.

34. A Pharisee, named Gamaliel. Observe that it is a Pharisee that opposes violence. Gamaliel was the most distinguished Jewish rabbi of this time. His fame is preserved in the Talmud. He was a grandson of Hillel, a still more famous teacher. Paul was his pupil ([Acts 22:3](#)).

35–39. Ye men of Israel, take heed. Gamaliel's temperate and wise speech advises (1) deliberation; (2) if they were impostors their movement would come to nought like that of other impostors, if let alone; (3) but if of God, it could not be overthrown. **Theudas.** Some leader, only mentioned here, probably raising a commotion in the disturbances that followed the death of Herod the Great. **Judas of Galilee.** A zealot who had opposed the payment of tribute not many years before, in a.d. 8, and was overthrown and slain. He is named by Josephus.

40. To him they agreed. He carried the Sanhedrim with him. **Called the apostles, and beaten them.** While rejecting the punishment of death, they decided to scourge them for disobedience. Scourging was often inflicted even by the rulers of the synagogues. The scourging was on the bare back, and bloody and cruel.

41. Rejoicing. This was their first experience of physical torture for Christ, but not the last, and it gave them joy to suffer for one who had suffered for them. One of the features of the early church was the welcome given to shame, suffering and martyrdom endured for Christ's sake.



42. Daily in the temple. Undeterred by suffering and threats, they still preached the cross in the most public place in Jerusalem, as well as from house to house.



Chapter VI

Stephen Seized and Called Before the Sanhedrim

Summary — *The Complaint of the Grecians. The Choice of Seven Deacons. Many Priests Converted. Stephen Preaches Christ with Power. His Controversy with the Jews. The Charge of Blasphemy. Brought Before the Sanhedrim.*

1. In those days. About that time. It may have been several years after the planting of the church. The believers had become very numerous in Jerusalem. **Arose a murmuring of the Grecians.** “The Grecians” were not Greeks, or Gentiles, but foreign Jews, who were born and brought up out of Palestine, and spoke the Greek language. This class of Jews was found in almost every city where Paul preached. See [Acts 13:14–16](#). **The Hebrews** were Jews of Palestine. They held themselves superior to the foreign Jews, and something of this spirit showed itself in the church. **Their widows were neglected.** There was “distribution to all men, as every man had need,” not to those who did not need, but to the needy, and the dependent widows would especially need care.

2. The twelve. This language shows beyond doubt that Matthias was recognized as an apostle. **Called the multitude.** The masses of the church. **And said.** That it was not proper that the apostles should give their time to these matters instead of preaching. **And serve tables.** To look after the distribution of food.

3. Look ye out. Be it noted that the church was called upon to choose these men. The apostles did not assume the right. There is no warrant here for pope or bishops assuming the right. The apostles guide the choice by describing the kind of men that must be chosen. **Seven men.** Why seven is only a matter of conjecture. **Of honest report.** Men whose reputation was a guarantee that they would handle the trust faithfully. **Full of the Holy Ghost.** Whose lives indicated the fruit of the Spirit. **Of wisdom.** Prudence and judgment would be essential. **Whom we may appoint.** Ordain. The people selected under apostolic direction; the apostle inaugurated into office.

4. We will give ourselves continually to prayer, etc. Observe that the apostles regard prayer of equal importance with preaching. Every preacher ought to heed this.

5. They chose Stephen. He is specially described on account of the glory of martyrdom that so soon followed. **Philip.** Distinguished as “Philip the evangelist.” He gave the gospel to Samaria, converted the eunuch, and afterwards lived and labored at Cæsarea ([Acts 21:8](#)). The others are not again mentioned. **Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch.** A Gentile (Greek) of the great city of Antioch, who had been converted to Judaism and been circumcised. This is the meaning of “proselyte” in the New Testament.

6. When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. The scriptural method of inducting into office. The prayer and imposition of hands was an appeal to God to give the

necessary gifts rather than their impartation. See [Num. 27:23](#); [Gen. 48:13](#). There has been some discussion whether these seven were deacons, and whether this is the origin of the deacon's office in the church. They are never called deacons, but the Greek word rendered to *serve* ([verse 2](#)), is the verb form of which the word deacon is the noun. The usual view is that they were deacons.

7. A great company of the priests were obedient. There was harmony and progress after the trouble was adjusted. The seven became preachers and greatly aided. Not only vast multitudes of the people, but even many of the priesthood obeyed. The priests were very numerous. [Ezra 2:36](#) says that 4,289 priests returned from Babylon, and they must have been much more numerous at this time. **The faith.** The Gospel, which is faith in and obedience to Christ.

8. And Stephen ... did great wonders. He is the first gospel preacher, not an apostle, whose work is named. He is also the first, not an apostle, under the new dispensation, to work miracles. Philip, also, of the seven, possessed miraculous power ([Acts 8:6](#)). Both received the imposition of apostolic hands. This seems to have been necessary to impart this power ([Acts 8:15, 17, 19](#)). See also [Rom. 1:11](#). As far as we know, it was limited to apostles, and to those whom whom the apostles laid hands.

9. There arose certain of the synagogue. This was the ordinary place of worship where Jews met on the Sabbath. The Rabbins say (Talmud) that there were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem. **Of the Libertines.** "The Freedmen." Thousands of Jews had been carried away captives and sold into slavery by Pompey in 63 b.c. These, or their children, were mostly freed at a later period. Those of them who returned to Jerusalem had a synagogue of their own. **The Cyrenians.** A synagogue of. See Revision. See note on [Acts 2:10](#). The Cyrenian Jews who returned to the city of their fathers, like those of other countries, had their own synagogue. **Alexandrians.** Jews from the great city of Alexandria in Egypt, where they were said to be almost one-third of the population. **Of Cilicia.** Of this synagogue the brilliant disciple of Gamaliel, born at Tarsus of Cilicia, was no doubt a member, and one of the most active opposers of Stephen. See [7:58](#). **Of Asia.** The Roman province in Asia Minor of which Ephesus was capital. **Disputing with Stephen.** These synagogues were all composed of "Grecians," foreign Jews. Stephen's name is also Grecian, and he probably preached especially to his own class.

10. They were not able to resist. They attempted to argue, but were silenced.

11. They suborned men. Induced men to give perverted testimony. They determined to silence Stephen. **Heard him speak blasphemous words.** This was the charge against Christ. It is likely that, like Paul, he plainly preached that the Old Covenant had given place to the New, and that God's people were no longer under Moses, but under Christ. This was perverted into blaspheming Moses.

12. They stirred up the people. By their misrepresentations. Thus far the gospel seemed to enjoy great popular favor. It was needful to arouse their hostility. This could be done by perversion of what was preached. The Pharisees, apparently neutral since Pentecost until now, were aroused by Stephen's attack on legalism. **The elders, and the scribes.** See notes on 4:5. **Brought him to the council.** The Sanhedrim.

13, 14. Set up false witnesses. False, in that they perverted what he said, so as to give it a meaning not meant. **Against this holy place.** The temple. He may have said that it would be destroyed (see [Matt. 24:2](#)). **And the law.** He probably said what Paul so often said. See [Gal. 3:24, 25](#). The [next verse](#) shows the tenor of his preaching. He no doubt did preach the end of the Jewish dispensation and the reign of Christ, but he neither blasphemed Moses nor God.

15. Fastening their eyes on him. To see what effect the charges had on him. One of those who thus looked was Saul of Tarsus. It was probably from him that Luke obtained his account of this trial. **As it had been the face of an angel.** His face was radiant, either with his own divinely inspired peace and joy, or shining with a supernatural splendor. I incline to the first view, for had the latter been the case it would have awed the Sanhedrim, and probably suspended their proceedings.



Chapter VII

The Martyrdom of Stephen

Summary —*Stephen Outlines God's Dealings with Abraham. The Christ Promised. Abraham a Man of Faith Before Circumcision Was Appointed. The Patriarchs Sell Joseph into Bondage, Ignorant of the Counsels of God. The Israelites in Egypt First Reject Moses Their Deliverer. The Rejected Moses Is Their Savior. He Predicted a Prophet Like Unto Himself. The Tabernacle and Temple Built, Though God Dwells Not in. Temples Made with Hands. The Jews of Stephen's Time Were Like Their Fathers in Resisting God. Had Slain the Holy One and Had Not Kept the Law. The Outburst of Rage. Stephen Stoned by the Mob.*

1. Are these things so? As president, the high priest asks what reply Stephen has to make to the charges.

2. Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken. In order to make his defence, to unveil the fact that his accusers were fighting God, and to preach Christ, Stephen rapidly outlines Jewish history. Every fact cited has a point. Note (1) that Abraham was called in uncircumcision, and the Christ promised through his seed before he was circumcised; (2) that Joseph, the type of Christ, was rejected by his brethren, and afterwards saves them; (3) that Moses is also rejected and despised, but that God makes choice of him to save Israel; (4) that the Israelites went whoring after false gods and were carried into captivity; (5) that God had the tabernacle and temple built, but was particular to assure Israel that he dwelt not in temples made with human hands; (6) that their Moses, rejected, whom the people refused to obey, predicted a prophet like unto himself, and (7) that in the rejection of Christ they showed just the same spirit as their fathers who had rejected and slain the prophets who predicted Christ's coming. The speech is pointed, logical, and powerful, not intended to conciliate, but to show the Jews their own sins. **The God of glory appeared unto ... Abraham ... in Mesopotamia.** See [Gen. 12:1](#). Abraham's childhood home was at Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia, the country between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. [Gen. 12:1](#) gives a second call at Haran, or Charran (the same), but Stephen declares that the family had gone from Ur to Charran, because of an earlier call. Charran was on the route to Canaan, and Abraham made a stop there of five years, until his father died ([Gen. 11:31, 32](#)). See [verse 4 of this chapter](#).

5. Gave him none inheritance in it. Abraham possessed Canaan only by faith. He looked to the fulfillment of the promise, that it would be the possession of his children when he had neither land nor seed. See [Heb. 11:8–16](#).

6. His seed should sojourn in a strange land. See [Gen. 15:13, 16](#). In Egypt. **Four hundred years.** In round numbers, counting from the time *the seed*, Isaac, should be born to the Exodus. It is stated in [Exod. 12:40](#) that the sojourning of the children of Israel was 430 years.



This includes the period from the call of Abraham to the Exodus. See [Gal. 3:16, 17](#). But Isaac was born about thirty years after the call of Abraham, which leaves Stephen's period of 400 years.

8. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. After his call and the promise of Christ. See [Gen. 17:1–14](#). The covenant of Christ was for all; circumcision for the Jews.

9. The patriarchs, moved with envy. The sons of Jacob. See [Gen. 37:28](#). As they rejected Joseph, their descendants rejected Jesus. **God was with him.** With the one rejected, and raised him to royal honors in the house of Pharaoh.

11. There came a dearth. For the history of Joseph, begin at [chapter 39](#), and read to the close of Genesis. For the account of the famine and the visit to Egypt of the ten brethren, see [Gen. 42 and 43](#).

14. Then sent Joseph. The rejected Joseph becomes the prince and savior of all Israel. **Threescore and fifteen souls.** [Gen. 46:27](#) says that sixty-six persons besides Jacob, Joseph and his two sons, seventy in all, were in Egypt. But the Septuagint Version, quoted almost invariably by Christ and the apostles, as well as by Stephen here, after giving the sixty-six, adds: "And the sons of Joseph born in Egypt were nine souls." The nine, added to the sixty-six, make the seventy-five that Stephen gives. Why this clause was omitted from the Hebrew text, followed by the Common Version, is unknown. Stephen simply follows the text received by Christ, the apostles, and the Jews generally.

16. And were carried over into Sychem. Jacob was buried at Hebron in the cave of Machpelah ([Gen. 50:13](#)), but the *fathers* were buried in Sychem. We are told ([Josh. 24:32](#)) that Joseph was buried there, and Jewish tradition always affirmed that his brethren were buried there also. Jerome, in the fourth century, said that their tombs were still to be seen. He lived in Palestine. **That Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor.** For an account of this purchase, see [Gen. 33:19 and Josh. 24:32](#). The difficulty arises that it was *Jacob* that made the purchase instead of Abraham. Some have supposed that Stephen, in the hurry of a rapid speech under exciting circumstances, by an oversight used the name of Abraham for Jacob; others have thought that Abraham did make the purchase first and that it was repeated by Jacob. Neither of these views are probable. Had Stephen made a *lapsus*, it would have been corrected by Luke, who wrote under Paul's supervision (see [Introduction](#)), so as to give Stephen's meaning. It is far more probable that some copyist, by oversight, first wrote "Abraham" for "Jacob," and that the MSS. that have come down to us were made from that copy. There can hardly be a doubt that a man so learned in the Scriptures as Stephen, and making an inspired defence, said *Jacob*.

17. The time of the promise. Of deliverance from Egypt. See [Gen. 15:13, 14](#). **Which God had sworn.** Solemnly promised. There is no account of a formal oath. "Every divine assurance is equivalent to an oath."—*Maimonides*.

18–21. For an account of the persecution of Israel and birth of Moses, see [Exod. 1 and 2](#).

22. **Moses was learned.** He was reared as “the son of Pharaoh's daughter” ([Heb. 11:24](#)), and would be educated in all the accomplishments of his time. We know from the researches of the Egyptologists (see Rawlinson's Egypt) that at the period of Moses there were great universities for the education of all who were expected to engage in public employments. Eber's *Uarda* gives a good picture of Egypt when Moses was a child.

23–29. For the accounts here given, see [Exod. 2:11–15](#). Compare [Heb. 11:24](#). Observe the point of Stephen, that Israel rejected Moses as “a ruler and judge over them,” as they had rejected Joseph and Jesus. Yet God chose both Joseph and Moses to be their saviors and rulers.

30–34. For the call of Moses, see [Exod. 3:1–10](#).

35, 36. **This Moses whom they refused.** With great force Stephen makes his application. *This Moses* they refused, but God sent him as their ruler and deliverer. If his hearers failed to see the point, the [next verse](#) makes it clear.

37. **This is that Moses, which said.** This rejected Moses who was chosen by God to be a prince and a savior hath said, **A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up ... like unto me.** Like me, “of your brethren;” like me, rejected and despised by Israel; like me, exalted to be a Prince and a Savior by God. See [Deut. 18:15–19](#).

38. **This is he.** Moses. **That was in the church in the wilderness.** The congregation of Israel, the typical church. Moses was its mediator. **With the angel.** The angel of the Covenant, who communicated the law to Moses in Sinai. See [verse 53 and Exod. 23:20, 23](#). **Lively oracles.** The Word of life.

39–42. These verses summarize the unbelief, disbelief and waywardness of Israel under Moses. The point is to show that the rejection of Christ harmonizes with their past history. See [Exod. 16:3; 17:4; 32:1–14; Deut. 4:19](#). **Did ye offer unto me slain beasts and sacrifices?** This passage is quoted from [Amos 5:25–27](#). The emphasis is on *me*. Did ye not offer them to false gods also? The [next verse](#) gives the reply.

43. **Ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch.** Israel turned to the abominable worship of Moloch and other false gods, and hence shall be carried into Captivity. *Moloch*, a god of the Amorites, worshiped by human sacrifices. **Remphan.** Some planet worshiped as a god. **Beyond Babylon.** A punishment brought on all Israel for its sins, predicted by Amos. Observe still his point of showing their national sinfulness.

44–50. **Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness.** The tabernacle built at Sinai, a witness of the Covenant ([Num. 18:2](#)), and of the good things to come ([Heb. 8:5](#)). This tabernacle, built by God's command, according to his pattern ([Exod. 25:9, 40](#)), they had rejected for “the tabernacle of Moloch” ([verse 43](#)). **Which also our fathers ... brought in with Jesus.** Joshua, the Hebrew form for Jesus. He and the later generations of Jews brought this taber-



nacle into Canaan when they conquered it. **Desired to find a tabernacle.** David, who sought to build a permanent temple (2 Sam. 7:2; 1 Chron. 22:7). He was restrained from building the temple, and it was erected by Solomon (2 Chron. 6:7, 8). **48. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not.** See 2 Chron. 6:18. The argument is that the tabernacle was laid aside for the temple by God's command; that God does not confine himself in any house made with hands, and hence the temple also might be laid aside. God's real temple was greater than the building they revered so superstitiously. See Isa. 66:1-2.

51. Ye stiffnecked. Stubborn, like the ox which refuses to bend its neck for the yoke. Stephen now makes his direct application. **Uncircumcised.** Aliens in heart from God. The uncircumcised were aliens from Israel. Stephen told them that spiritually they were *heathen*. They, like their fathers, **resist the Holy Ghost.** The will of God.

52, 53. Which of the prophets, etc.? Their fathers habitually persecuted the prophets and slew some of them who predicted Christ (see lives of Isaiah and Jeremiah). Now they, his hearers, were murderers of the Just One. **Received the law by the disposition of angels.** Through the ministration of angels. See Deut. 29:29. **Have not kept it.** Pretending to be very scrupulous observers of the law, they were wicked law-breakers.

54. They were cut to the heart. Convulsed with rage. Stephen's speech was now violently interrupted. Their rage is shown by their gnashing their teeth.

55. Looked up stedfastly into heaven. The Lord who had promised his presence was with him. His faith was so strengthened that, by faith, he saw the Savior in Heaven, through the opened heavens. The scene was revealed to his soul, instead of his eyes.

57. Cried out with a loud voice. They cried, closed their ears to what they called blasphemy, then, in a tumult, without a vote on his guilt or innocence, rushed upon him to slay him, though yet uncondemned legally.

58. Cast him out of the city. See Lev. 24:14. Though committing murder, they were scrupulous to comply with their custom of execution outside of the city. **And stoned him.** Jesus was crucified, because the Romans put him to death; Stephen was stoned, because Jesus slew him. Stoning was their usual method of execution. **The witnesses.** The witnesses had to cast the first stones (Deut. 13:10; 17:7). Though doing all in a tumult, without the consent of the Roman governor, the forms of the law were observed. **At a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.** Chrysostom says that this young man, who was to become so celebrated, was now about thirty-five. Hackett thinks we was about thirty. For a fuller account of him, see Acts 9:1, note.

59, 60. Stoned Stephen. Repeated to show that in the storm of stones he committed himself to Jesus. **Kneeled down.** Either voluntarily, or brought to his knees by the cruel blows. The point is that in his sufferings, like his Master, he prayed for his enemies. Saul, no doubt, noted this, and it had its effect. **He fell asleep.** To wake again at his Savior's voice. The death of Stephen was a murder, instead of an execution, because (1) no vote of the

Sanhedrim was taken, and (2) the consent of the Roman governor, requisite to capital punishment, was not obtained. Consult [John 18:32](#), note.



Chapter VIII

The Missionary Labors of Philip

Summary — *The Persecution at Jerusalem. Saul's Zeal in Persecution. Philip's Conversion of the Samaritans. Simon the Sorcerer Believes. Peter and John Sent Down to Bestow the Miraculous Powers of the Holy Spirit. Simon's Wicked Offer and Peter's Rebuke. Philip Sent to Preach to the Ethiopian Eunuch. He Explains the Scriptures on the Way and Preaches Jesus. The Eunuch's Request for Baptism. Baptized and Goes on His Way Rejoicing.*

1. Saul was consenting unto his death. The [first three verses of this chapter](#) ought to be attached to the one preceding. Saul consented, that is, approved and gave his voice to the death of Stephen. He did not actively take part in the stoning, but aided and abetted. The memory of this sad event clung to him painfully even to old age. See [Acts 22:20](#). Luke no doubt here records the facts given him by the apostle himself. **At that time.** “On that day.” See Revision. Not satisfied with the blood of Stephen, their persecutors turned their rage at once on the whole church. **They were all scattered.** The meetings of the saints were for the time broken up, and the disciples generally fled from the storm, into the country portions of Judea and the adjoining district of Samaria. The apostles, in some way not explained, shielded from the destruction, remained, and many of the scattered brethren, residents of Jerusalem, soon afterwards returned, while others that were foreign Jews went to other regions, carrying the gospel.

2. Devout men carried Stephen to his burial. Not disciples, but pious Jews, deeply impressed by the gospel, but not yet brought to its acceptance. They were “devout” like Cornelius the Gentile before his conversion. **Made great lamentation over him.** They made their protest against the deed by a public funeral with all the usual Jewish demonstrations of mourning.

3. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church. This mad violence he often recalled and mentioned while serving Christ. See [Acts 22:4; 26:10; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13](#). **Entering into every house.** Where he supposed disciples could be found. **Haling.** Hauling, dragging with violence. As we learn from Paul's statements elsewhere, the saints were not only committed to prison, but scourged in the synagogues and persecuted unto death.

4. Went every where preaching the word. The rage of the persecutors only extended the reign of Christ. The scattered saints, long prepared at the feet of the apostles, went everywhere as preachers of Christ. The blood of Stephen was the seed of the church.

5. Philip went down to the city of Samaria. This was not Philip, the apostle, for all the apostles remained at Jerusalem, but Philip, one of the seven ([Acts 6:5](#)). **The city of Samaria.** The Greek does not render it certain that this was the capital named Samaria, as there is no

definite article. It is literally “a city of Samaria.” The district (see map) lies between Judea and Galilee. Samaria and Sychar were, at this time, two of its principal cities. It was probably one or the other of these to which Philip went.

6–8. The people with one accord gave heed. It was the miracles that, at first, fixed their attention. Observe that Philip, another of the seven, has the gift of miracles, the second recorded instance in the church of the possession of this power by one not an apostle. The [next verse](#) describes the nature of his miracles, similar to those of Christ. See note on [Matt. 4:24](#). See also [Mark 3:11](#) and [Luke 4:41](#).

9. There was a certain man, called Simon. Called the sorcerer, or magician, who bewitched the people by his enchantments. Whether this was done by the conjurer's art or by the power of Satan, it is perhaps impossible for us to know. **Giving out that himself was some great one.** Claiming to be more than a mere man.

10. This man is the great power of God. Unable to explain the things that he did, the Samaritans ascribed them to divine power manifested through Simon.

12. When they believed Philip. This verse states in the concisest manner the apostolic order of converting men: (1) Philip preached; (2) he preached the kingdom and name of Jesus Christ; (3) faith came by hearing, for the Samaritans believed; (4) when they believed they were baptized. This describes the uniform course in apostolic days. **Both men and women.** Note that (1) only believers are baptized, (2) that men and women are both included, but children are not named.

13. Then Simon himself believed also. There has been much needless discussion whether Simon was sincere. It would never have been doubted had we not been told that later he fell into sin. It is best to take the Scripture in its manifest sense. He became a believer like the rest. He was baptized like the rest; then, like many others, at a later period, under temptation, he fell into sin. It is impossible to believe that a man of his power and influence in Samaria would have yielded outwardly to the gospel and shown the deference he manifested to Philip unless he was at the time sincere. But he was of the class described by the Savior when the seed of the sower fell among among thorns.

14. The apostles ... heard. They had remained at Jerusalem. The word reached them of Philip's faithful work. Christ had directed that the gospel be carried to “Jerusalem, and unto Judea, and unto Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” In this order it had been carried to Samaria and been received. The preacher sent there was not an apostle. He had miraculous powers, but could not confer them. It seemed needful, now that the gospel was accepted by a new people, not Jewish, that spiritual gifts, such as had been given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost and imparted through them to others, should be bestowed upon this alien nation. Observe, (1) when the Jews first had the gospel on the day of Pentecost these gifts were imparted by the descent of the Holy Spirit; (2) when the Samaritans were converted these were imparted by the presence of the apostles; (3) when

the first Gentiles were converted, an apostle being present, they were imparted. There is no record of their impartation, save in or by apostolic presence. See [Rom. 1:11](#). **Sent unto them Peter and John.** This is positive proof that Peter was not a pope. The body which sends is superior to the one sent. He and John go at the bidding of the whole apostolic body. This is the last mention of John in Acts.

15–17. Prayed for them. That the Holy Spirit might fall on them. They had been born of water and the Spirit ([John 3:5](#)), but had not received that baptism of the Spirit which conferred miraculous powers. This was bestowed by apostolic prayer and the laying on of hands. I suppose, not on all, but on those selected for teachers and preachers among the Samaritans. “The prayer clearly pointed to such a power of the Holy Spirit as had been bestowed on Pentecost.”—*Plumptree*. “Luke speaks not of the common grace of the Holy Spirit, but of those singular gifts with which God would have certain endowed at the beginning of the gospel.”—*Calvin*. **Laid ... hands on them.** “This was part of that miraculous supremacy of the apostles that they could not communicate to any successor.”—*Whedon*. This reception of the Holy Spirit was manifest in speaking with tongue and other powers.

18, 19. When Simon saw ... he offered them money. Uninstructed in the lofty spirit of the gospel, ambitious to possess this power peculiar to the apostles, he is sordid enough to offer money for it. His sin was not that he aspired to this power, but that he sought to buy it. He had very crude conceptions of the spirit of Christianity. It is not stated, but it is easy to infer, that he was not one of those upon whom the apostles had bestowed the divine gift.

20–24. Peter said. Peter's outburst of indignation is characteristic. **Thy money perish with thee.** Not an anathema, but the statement of a fact, unless he repents. **Because thou hast thought.** Observe that, in Peter's rebukes, the thought is, not that he has never been converted, but that he has now committed an awful sin. It is *one sin*, not his *sins*, that stands out in every sentence. **Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter.** In these gifts of the Holy Spirit. He can neither receive them, nor impart them. Perhaps salvation is also included. **For thy heart is not right.** This offer to purchase the gift of God shows that it was not. Because it is not, he can have no part nor lot, etc. **Repent, therefore, of this.** Observe that Peter does not bid him to repent of his sins, but of *this* one great sin. **If perhaps the thought of thine heart.** This one sin is so great that Peter seems doubtful whether it will be forgiven, even on repentance and prayer. **For I perceive that thou art.** His great sin had brought him into the state now described. **Gall of bitterness.** The gall of reptiles was considered by ancients the source of their venom. The expression would denote moral corruption. **Bond of iniquity.** Bound by iniquity. **Pray ye to the Lord for me.** Simon's language indicates that he was terror-stricken and perhaps deeply touched. The sacred record is silent concerning his future career. Whether he repented or relapsed into his old life is conjecture. Tradition insists that he pursued the latter course.



25. When they had testified. Peter and John did not return until they preached in many Samaritan villages.

26. The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip. In some way he was supernaturally directed to go far south of Samaria to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza for his next work. **Gaza.** An old Philistine city, on the sea-coast plain in southwest Palestine. It was taken by Alexander the Great, and had endured many sieges, but is still a town of 15,000 or 16,000 inhabitants.

27. A man of Ethiopia. The term is applied to that portion of Africa which lies south of Egypt. **A eunuch of great authority.** This mutilated class of men often rose to great power in Oriental countries. This one was the royal treasurer. **Under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians.** Candace had her seat of power on the island of Meroe, a large island of the Nile, about a thousand miles from the mouth of the river. The name Candace seems to have belonged to several queens of this kingdom. It is still seen inscribed on the ruined palace walls of Meroe. **Come to Jerusalem for to worship.** He was probably a proselyte to the Jewish faith. His long journey, his study of Scripture, and his ready hearing all indicate a believer in Jehovah, a devout man, and one seeking for the Christ.

28. Was returning and ... reading. Reading aloud in the Oriental manner. Perhaps he had heard at Jerusalem of Jesus and the Christians. At any rate, he was reading in Isaiah a prophecy of Christ.

29, 30. The Spirit said. How we are not told. Philip promptly obeyed, ran to the chariot, listened and heard what he read, and then asked his question, the result of which was that he was asked to take his place in the chariot to explain the Scripture.

32, 33. The place of the scripture ... was this. See [Isa. 53:7, 8](#). The whole chapter is a wonderful delineation of the sufferings of Christ. Philip found Christ in the text, and from it *he preached to him Jesus*. **Led as a sheep.** Unresisting. **Opened he not his mouth.** Made no defence. **His judgment was taken away.** Justice was trampled under foot. **Who shall declare his generation?** Meyer, De Wette, Robinson and Hackett all agree that this refers to portraying the wickedness of the generation which slew him. Others insist that it means Christ's spiritual posterity, his followers.

34, 35. Of whom speaketh the prophet? This gave Philip the opportunity of preaching Jesus. He showed the prophecies of the Messiah, that it behooved him to suffer, die, and rise again, and that he commanded his gospel to be preached and believers to be baptized in his name. That the eunuch calls for baptism, shows that in preaching Jesus Philip preached the rite.

36. They came to a certain water. The locality of the baptism is not certain. There are several roads from Jerusalem to Gaza. The one by Hebron is through "desert" more than the others. Eusebius and Jerome state that the baptism occurred at a perennial stream, coming from a fountain at Bethsur, not far from Hebron. Robinson places the baptism not far from Gaza, at the old site of Eglon. **See.** The Greek is, "*Behold! Water!*" As if his soul was

filled with joy that he could obey. **What doth hinder me?** Nothing, if he was a believer and the means were at hand.

37. If thou believest, etc.? This verse is omitted in the Revision. It is not found in the oldest extant manuscripts, but was certainly in manuscripts older than any now extant. It is referred to by Irenæus in the second century, and by Augustine in the fourth. Whether written by Luke or not, it shows that the custom of the early church was to require such a confession of faith. **With all thine heart.** A living faith must seize upon and control the heart.

38. They both went down into the water. “The original undoubtedly implies a going, not *to*, but *into*, the water.”—*Abbott*. “No sufficient reason can be given why the parties went down *into* the water, but for the sake of the immersion of the new convert.”—*Ripley*.

39, 40. When they were come up out of the water. They did not go *to* and come away *from* the water, but they went, “both Philip and the eunuch,” down *into* (Greek, *eis*) and came up *out of* (Greek, *ek*) the water. **The Spirit ... caught away Philip.** Led him to depart abruptly. He was snatched away. **Went on his way rejoicing.** In his new-found Savior. **But Philip was found at Azotus.** The old Philistine city of Ashdod, near the sea-coast, between Gaza and Joppa. It is now a ruin. Here he preached in all the sea-coast cities, probably founding churches (see [Acts 9:32, 36](#)), **till he came to Cæsarea**, the seaport northwest of Jerusalem, the Roman capital of Judea. We are not told how soon he reached Cæsarea. It may have been months or years. At any rate, it is likely that it did not take place until after Peter's missionary work there. Many years later we find Philip living in this city ([Acts 21:8](#)).



Chapter IX

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

Summary — *Saul's Journey to Damascus. The Lord Meets Him on the Way. Called to Be a Witness to the Gentiles. Baptized by Ananias. Preaches Christ to the Jews in Damascus. They Seek His Death. His Escape to Jerusalem and Meeting with the Apostles. Departure to Tarsus. Peter Heals Æneas at Lydda. Raises Dorcas at Joppa.*

1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter. See [Acts 8:3](#), from which the narrative is now resumed. As the great change in the life of Saul is now recorded, it is proper to state what can be known of him before his conversion. Probably about a year before he appears in the history at the death of Stephen. He was of the tribe of Benjamin ([Phil. 3:5](#)); his father, though a Jew, had been admitted to Roman citizenship, and Paul was therefore a “Roman” ([Acts 22:28](#)); he was born at Tarsus, a Grecian city, the capital of Cilicia; there he had become familiar with Grecian literature, as well as educated in the law; at what time we know not, but while still young he went to Jerusalem to study in the great Rabbinical schools, and had the celebrated Gamaliel for his teacher ([Acts 22:3](#)); he had, according to Jewish custom, learned a trade, being a tent-maker ([Acts 18:3](#)); he was a Pharisee after the strictest manner of the sect ([Acts 23:6](#)). How long he had been in Jerusalem when he appears in this history, whether he was there for the second time, or had not returned after his attendance at the school of Gamaliel, is uncertain, but when we first behold him he is a “young man,” prominent and influential, active in his opposition to the church, and a trusted leader of its enemies. **Went unto the high priest.** Probably Theophilus, the son of Annas, who was made high priest by the Romans in a.d. 37. He was a Sadducee.

2. Desired of him letters. A commission and letter addressed to the rulers of synagogues. The sway of the high priest was recognized in the synagogues of all the East. He was a sort of pope with the Sanhedrim for his cardinals. **To Damascus.** Situated about 140 miles northeast of Jerusalem, east of Mt. Hermon, in Syria, a beautiful city in a fertile spot redeemed from the desert by the mountain streams, Abana and Pharpar. It is one of the oldest cities in the world, existed in the time of Abraham, and now has about 150,000 inhabitants. **Of this way.** The way of Christ, a phrase often applied in the New Testament to Christianity. Paul's commission, while given in the name of the high priest, was from the Sanhedrim ([Acts 26:10](#)).

3. And as he journeyed. It would require six or seven days to make the journey. It was probably made on foot. **There shined round about him a light.** Brighter than the sun ([Acts 26:13](#)). It was the splendor of the glorified Savior as seen at the Transfiguration, or by John at Patmos. In order to get the full history of this revelation of Christ and Paul's conversion,

we must compare the accounts given by Paul himself in [chapters 22 and 26](#) with Luke's account here.

4. Heard a voice. After he had fallen. Not a sound merely, but words that he could understand. **Why persecutest thou me?** Observe how Christ sympathizes with his persecuted followers. The blows that fall upon them, fall upon him. If Saul strikes the disciples in Damascus, Christ feels the blows in heaven.

5. Who art thou, Lord? Sure that it was a supernatural communication, though he might possibly suspect its source, he did not yet know that it came from Christ. Perhaps at times he had had misgivings that he might be wrong, but he was sincere. **I am Jesus.** It is not said, "the Christ," but Jesus, the crucified one against whom Saul was raging. Had the answer been "the Christ," or the Son of God, Saul might still have doubted whether this was Jesus. **It is hard for thee to kick, etc.** Omitted here by the Revision, but found in [Acts 26:14](#). The idea is, that he is injuring himself, like the ox that kicks back on the goads used to urge him forward.

6. Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee, etc. The question, to which this seems to be the answer is omitted in the Revision and the oldest MSS. He must enter the church just as others. The Lord had appeared to him in order that he might be qualified for apostleship by having seen Christ, but he must learn the way of the gospel from one of its preachers. Christ never told a mortal how to be saved after he gave the Great Commission to the church.

7. And the men ... hearing a voice, but seeing no man. They were dumb with amazement, but did not see Christ, who was only revealed to Saul. They heard the sound, but the words were for Saul and only understood by him. Compare with [Acts 22:9](#). The two passages taken together mean that they heard a sound, but no words.

8. He saw no man. His eyes were blinded by the brightness of the Lord. He who had come with such power to Damascus had to be led helpless into the city.

10. A certain disciple ... named Ananias. He is named nowhere but in connection with the conversion of Saul. As in the case of Philip sent by the angel to the eunuch, so he is sent by revelation to Saul. A revelation was needful from the fact that Saul was a terror to the church and all would avoid him.

11, 12. Go into the street which is called Straight. This street ran in a direct line from gate to gate, east and west, and was anciently 100 feet wide and celebrated for its magnificence. It is now contracted and mean. **Inquire in the house of Judas.** Nothing more is known of this Judas. **For Saul, of Tarsus.** As the name was not uncommon, he is designated by his native city, "no mean city," a place of 30,000 inhabitants, 20,000 at present, then celebrated for its schools. It was the Cilician capital. **He prayeth.** An assurance that Ananias would be favorably received. Besides, in his prayer, the vision came that Ananias would come.



13, 14. Ananias answered. In view of the terrible record of Saul the fears of Ananias were not unreasonable.

15. He is a chosen vessel unto me. On this account the Lord appeared to him. See ([Acts 26:16](#)). The Lord appeared unto him, “for this purpose to make him a minister and a *witness*.” Unless a man is called like Saul to be an apostle he need not expect such a vision. **To bear my name before the Gentiles.** His mission as the apostle to the Gentiles is pointed out. **And kings.** He not only bore witness before the Roman rulers, but before King Agrippa and the emperor Nero.

17. Ananias ... putting his hands on him. Not to convey a gift, but as a friendly act, significant of God's blessing. His sight returned immediately after. There is no proof whatever that any spiritual gifts were imparted, nor that any but apostles could confer these gifts, and Paul always asserted that he received his signs of apostleship, not of men, but of Christ. See [Gal. 1:1, 11, 12](#). “The being filled with the Holy Spirit” took place after the baptism at the hands of Ananias.

18. He arose, and was baptized. The account is more fully given by Paul himself ([Acts 22:13–16](#)). Ananias said, “Receive thy sight, and in the same hour I looked upon him.” Then, after stating why the Lord had called him, he added: “Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Note (1) that “tarrying” for weeks or months before baptism was then unknown; (2) that there would be no necessity of “arising,” if water was applied in baptism, but there would be if he had to go to a place suitable for immersion; (3) that the term *wash* (Greek, “bathe”) implies more than a sprinkling or pouring; (4) that neither Ananias nor Paul ([22:16](#)) understood that his sins were remitted before baptism. Compare [Acts 2:38](#) and [22:16](#).

19. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples. In worship and intercourse with them. He must learn more experimentally of the church before preaching.

20. Straightway. Following this he began to preach **Christ in the synagogues.** *Jesus* in the Revision. He preached that the Crucified Jesus is the Son of God.

21. All that heard him were amazed. They had heard of his former zeal against the church and of his being sent to Damascus, but as yet had not learned of his conversion.

22. Saul increased the more in strength. Grew continually in power to preach Christ.

23. After that many days were fulfilled. A long period, probably at least three years. Luke's narrative is very condensed. He is not writing a history of Saul, but of the founding of the church. We learn from Paul ([Gal. 1:16–18](#)) that he spent at this time a long period in Arabia, and after this returned to Damascus. It was at his return that this persecution broke out. **The Jews took counsel to kill him.** See [2 Cor. 11:32](#), for additional information. At this time Damascus was in the temporary possession of Aretas, an Arabian potentate. Less scrupulous than the Roman rulers, he was willing to please Saul's Jewish enemies, who were numerous and influential, by putting him to death.

24. They watched the gates. “The governor, under Aretas the king, kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me” (2 Cor. 11:32).

25. Let him down by the wall. As the gates were guarded, there was no escape that way. Houses built against or on the wall, would afford an opportunity of letting him down on the outside. “And through a window, in a basket, was I let down by the wall and escaped his hands” (2 Cor. 11:33).

26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem. Three years had passed since he left the city, a proud, talented young Pharisee, with brilliant worldly prospects, the honored agent of the Sanhedrim, commissioned to stamp out Christianity at Damascus. He now returns a disciple of him whom he sought to destroy, his bright worldly prospects all forfeited, an outcast from his own nation, persecuted and hated. Why this change? No explanation is possible, save that given in this history and by himself. **They were afraid of him.** Little was known in the church of the change. A great part of the three years were spent in Arabia, probably in study and preparation of his great work. They had known so much of his fury in the past that they feared him still. His appearance in the church would be much like that of Robert G. Ingersoll in a Christian convention.

27. Barnabas took him. See Acts 4:36. Barnabas was a Hellenist like Saul. When he vouched for him to the apostles, their distrust ended. Paul (Gal. 1:18) gives an account of this visit to the apostles.

29. He disputed against the Grecians. The Jews in Jerusalem who had been born in foreign countries and spoke the Greek language. See notes on Acts 6:1.

30. They brought him down to Cæsarea. The same class of Jews who had raised the persecution against Stephen now sought the death of Saul. By the aid of the brethren he was taken to the seaport of Cæsarea and sailed for his old home at Tarsus. Some think, however, from Gal. 1:21, that the journey was made by land through Syria. It is more likely that he sailed from Cæsarea to Seleucia in Syria, and from thence made his way to Tarsus. Four or five years pass before the next mention of Saul in Acts (12:25), an interval passed in preaching Christ (Gal. 1:23), and resulting in the planting of churches in Cilicia (Acts 15:23, 41).

31. Then had the churches rest. After the departure of Saul there was a cessation of persecution for several years. The reason is found in the history of the times. The Roman emperor, Caligula, had ordered his statue to be placed in the temple at Jerusalem for worship, a desecration of the temple, and the Jews were too much engaged in their efforts to prevent this to persecute the church. **Edified.** Built up. **Were multiplied.** The result, always, of “walking in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit.”

32–34. As Peter passed throughout all quarters. Visiting the churches of Judea. **At Lydda.** A town in the sea-coast plain, now called Ludd, not far from Joppa. Here he healed a cripple of eight years. Observe that he ascribes the power to Christ.

35. All that dwelt at Lydda and Saron. In the plain of Sharon, a term often applied to the sea-coast plain between Joppa and Cæsarea. See [Song of Solomon 2:1](#). The passage means, not that every soul turned, but that there was a general turning as the result of the miracle.

36. There was at Joppa. The seaport of Jerusalem from the times of David to the present day, situated in a fertile plain now celebrated for its fine oranges, of which vast quantities are shipped from the port. Here named as the home of Tabitha, or Dorcas in the Greek (meaning “gazelle”), a saintly Christian noted for her deeds of love.

37. Washed, ... laid her in an upper chamber. Prepared for burial. The place was the large upper room on the upper floor of Eastern houses, usually used as a guest chamber.

38, 39. They sent unto him two men. The fame of his miracles was so well known that they probably hoped that he might restore her to life. **The widows stood by him weeping.** They had been the objects of her benevolence.

40. Peter put them all forth. Compare [1 Kings 17:19–23](#); [2 Kings 4:32–36](#); [Matt. 9:25](#). Perhaps that his whole soul might be fixed on the Lord in prayer. It was on his knees that he was made to feel that the Lord had given him power. In his prayer he called on the name of Christ, was answered, and only needed to say, “Tabitha, arise,” and “she opened her eyes.” It was the first miracle in which death was overcome at the hands of an apostle.

42. Many believed in the Lord. The knowledge of the miracle worked this result.

43. Tarrying many days. Perhaps a year. Joppa was a large city and a favorable field of work. Here Peter was found, at “the house of Simon the tanner,” when called to Cæsarea by the messengers of Cornelius. It was by the seaside ([10:32](#)), and a house is still pointed out, close to the sea-shore, as that of Simon, which Dean Stanley believes to be on the original site.

In the main I have followed that of Dean Howson. The dates for the period after Paul's labors began are reasonably certain, and most critics are substantially agreed. Those of the period from the Ascension to the time when Paul began his labors at Antioch are somewhat uncertain. The Ascension and the founding of the Church on Pentecost must, I think be placed as early as a.d. 30, and this gives a longer interval for the events recorded in the first eleven chapters of Acts. As modified the following are the outlines:

a.d. 30. The Resurrection, the Ascension, the Gospel first Preached on Pentecost, Holy Spirit Sent, the Church Founded, and the Events Embraced from Acts I. to Acts VI: 8.

a.d. 37. Conversion of Paul of Tarsus. Acts IX :1–19.

a.d. 38–40. Period of Paul's Retirement in Arabia.

a.d. 41–43. The Labors of Peter and the Conversion of the Gentiles Recorded in Chapter IX–XI.

a.d. 44. Martyrdom of James, and Death of Herod. Acts XII.

a.d. 45–47. Paul's First Missionary Journey. Acts XIII, XIV.

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- a.d. 49 or 50. Council at Jerusalem. Acts XV.
- a.d. 51–53. Paul on His Second Missionary Journey. Acts XV-XVIII.
- a.d. 54–56. Paul at Ephesus, nearly three Years. Acts XIX.
- a.d. 57. Paul a Second Time at Corinth.
- a.d. 58. Paul Goes to Jerusalem, is seized, Imprisoned. Acts XX-XXIII.
- a.d. 59–60. Paul Imprisoned at Cæsarea. His Defence before Festus and Agrippa. Acts XXIII-XXVI.
- a.d. 61. Paul sent to Rome. Shipwrecked. Acts XXVII-XXVIII.
- a.d. 62. Imprisoned at Rome. The End of Acts.

To this I may add that there is reason to believe that Paul was acquitted and released in a.d. 63, preached in Spain, Greece and Asia, until a.d. 67 or 68, was again seized in Nicopolis in Epirus, taken to Rome a second time, and put to death in a.d. 68.



Chapter X

The Doors of the Kingdom Opened to the Gentiles

Summary — *The Centurion Cornelius. His Vision. His Messengers Sent to Joppa. Peter's Vision the Next Day. Peter Directed to Go to Cæsarea. Peter Preacheth Christ to Cornelius and His Household. The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles. The Gentiles Baptized.*

1. A certain man in Cæsarea named Cornelius. Cæsarea, at this time the chief seaport of Palestine and the Roman capital, was their military headquarters. Cornelius, a Gentile, a Roman officer, is one of three centurions named favorably in the New Testament: Julius ([Acts 27:1–3](#)), the centurion at the cross, and the centurion who built the synagogue at Capernaum ([Luke 7:2](#)). The office corresponded to the modern captain. **The Italian band.** A cohort, composed of about 600 men. Many of the conquered races served in the Roman armies, but this cohort was made up of Italians. At the residence of the Roman procurator would be placed a body of troops on which he could rely.

2. A devout man. This is stated of Gentiles in several places in Acts, and always means those who had abandoned heathenism and turned to Jehovah. They had not become Jews, but were trying to worship the One God. The greater part of the first Gentile converts were made up of this class. He was benevolent and a man of prayer.

3. He saw in a vision evidently. “Openly,” distinctly. **About the ninth hour.** Three o'clock. One of the Jewish hours of prayer ([Acts 3:1](#)).

4. What is it, Lord? Filled with awe, he inquired the meaning of the appearance. **Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial.** He was heard because he was yearning for light and using all the light he had.

5. Send men to Joppa. He is not told to go, because a soldier could not leave his post without orders, but to send. Joppa is about thirty miles south of Cæsarea.

6. Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side. See notes on 9:43. Tanners were required, by the ancient sanitary laws, to live outside city walls, and had to be near plenty of water (Hackett). **Tell thee what thou oughtest to do.** As the angel says that his prayer was heard, he had surely prayed that he might know what to do.

7. Two of his household servants, and a devout soldier. The first were his personal servants, the second of his military household; all, no doubt, “devout.”

9. On the morrow, as they ... drew nigh to the city. Starting in the evening, after three o'clock, they could be near Joppa, thirty miles distant, the next day, “at the sixth hour,” or about twelve o'clock. **Went up upon the housetop to pray.** To the flat roof of the house, surrounded by the usual balustrade about four feet high, a place of retirement, and often the sleeping place of the family in the warm season. Moses ([Deut. 22:8](#)) required balustrades to the roofs. See also [1 Sam. 9:25](#).

10. Fell into a trance. A rapt condition, when he was transported out of himself into a mental condition that fitted him to see divine things. See [2 Cor. 12:2](#); [Rev. 1:10](#).

11–15. Saw heaven opened. The meaning of the vision is plain. Peter was hungry. He saw, let down from heaven, all kinds of animals, those ceremonially unclean and prohibited by the Mosaic law, as well as others, and was told to kill and eat. When he answered that he had never eaten anything *common* (as opposed to holy) and *unclean*, that is, forbidden by Moses, he was told that what God had cleansed was not common or unclean. This could only mean that the ceremonial distinctions of the law ([Lev. chap. 11](#), and [Deut. chap. 14](#)) were abrogated. It was at this time that the messengers from a Gentile, one of a class, with which even Peter would not eat, yet for which Christ had died, presented themselves. The object of the vision was to show Peter that it was the will of the Lord that he should go.

16. This was done thrice. The voice spoke three times. See [verse 15](#).

17–23. While Peter doubted. Doubted, not what the Lord had said, but what was the special object. It was while he was thinking over the matter that the messenger came. The Spirit told him their purpose and what he must do. He, therefore, called in the men, took care of them till the next day, and then returned with them. Six Jewish brethren from Joppa went with him ([11:12](#)).

24. And the morrow after. Parts of two days were employed on the journey. **Cornelius ... had called together his kinsmen and near friends**, who were like-minded with himself.

25, 26. Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet. Meeting him, as he entered, he cast himself at his feet as God's messenger. Observe Peter's conduct: Instead of receiving worship, as the popes who claim to be his successors, he forbade him, as he was "only a man." Not even an angel ought to be worshiped ([Rev. 22:9](#)), only God.

28. Ye know that it is unlawful. Contrary to Jewish customs. Moses prohibited intermarriages and religious intercourse, but the Jews carried their restrictions beyond both the letter and the spirit of the law. They would not eat with the uncircumcised ([Gal. 2:12](#)).

33. We are all here present before God to hear. It was an assembly of "devout" men who recognized the fact that Peter had a message of the Lord for them; the first Gentile audience that ever listened to a gospel sermon.

34, 35. Then Peter opened his mouth. The same preacher who, on the day of Pentecost, declared the conditions of salvation to the Jews now declares them for the first time to the Gentiles. To him Christ gave the keys ([Matt. 16:19](#)) of the kingdom, and with them he opened its doors to both Jew and Gentile. **I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.** It has just dawned on him that Jew and Gentile are on the same footing in God's sight. Those who fear the Lord in any nation, of any race, will be accepted.

36–38. The word which God sent to the children of Israel. The message of Christ. **That word ... ye know.** Have heard of, but not fully. **After the baptism which John preached.** Christ's ministry began from his baptism by John. **How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth.**

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At his baptism, and made him *the Anointed*. He gives a condensed summary of the ministry of Jesus. Luke has only preserved the substance of what Peter said.

39–41. We are witnesses. Not only of his life and power, but of his resurrection.

42. He commanded us to preach. In the Great Commission.

43. To him give all the prophets witness. By their testimony of the Christ, which is so prominent a feature of prophecy. See [Isa. 53:11](#); [55:1–3](#); [Joel 2:32](#). **That through his name, etc.** Three important facts are stated: (1) that remission of sins is in the name of Christ; (2) that it is only granted on condition of belief upon him; that is, trust in his name; (3) that *whosoever* believes thus, Jew or Gentile, shall receive remission of sins.

44. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard. The kinsmen and intimate friends of Cornelius, as well as on him ([verse 24](#)).

45. They of the circumcision. The Jews who went with Peter. They were astonished that the Holy Spirit should fall on Gentiles. This miraculous outpouring was extraordinary, and the object is plain, viz: to convince Peter and his fellow Jews that God had accepted the Gentiles; the same reason for which Peter's vision had been given. This is the only instance recorded of the Spirit falling on unbaptized persons. This exception is made to convince the Jewish Christians that uncircumcised Gentiles were fit subjects of baptism. Peter had to recall this fact in order to convince the church at Jerusalem that he had done right ([Acts 11:2, 3, 15](#)). As on Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell on Jews, so now when Gentiles receive the gospel they are baptized with the Holy Spirit ([11:15, 16](#)).

47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized? Peter's scruples were overcome. He was now satisfied that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as Jews. God had made no difference in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He asks his Jewish brethren if any man can give a reason why they should not be baptized. Wesley says: "How easily is the question decided if we take the word of God for our rule. Either men have received the Holy Spirit, or not. If they have not, then *Repent, saith God, and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. If they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, then *who can forbid water?*"

48. Commanded them to be baptized. All who heard and upon whom the Holy Spirit fell. **In the name of the Lord.** In acknowledgment of his authority. All the baptisms of Acts are *in* his name, but *into* the names of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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Chapter XI

Peter's Defence Before the Church at Jerusalem

Summary — *Peter's Course at Cæsarea Called in Question. He Defends Himself by Relating His Vision. And the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles. The Church, Convinced, Glorify God. The Missionary Work of Those Scattered Abroad. The Conversion of Gentiles at Antioch. Barnabas Sent to Antioch by the Church. Saul Brought from Tarsus. Famine Predicted. Collections for the Relief of Jerusalem.*

1, 2. They of the circumcision contended with him. The Jewish Christians, of whom the church at Jerusalem was entirely composed. The Gentiles of Cæsarea were the first uncircumcised persons admitted, the Samaritans being a circumcised people. The apostles and church generally seemed to understand that Jesus was the world's Savior, but thought that all who came to him must accept Judaism also and be circumcised before baptism. How deep-rooted their ideas were is shown by Peter's own case. It took (1) a vision, (2) the command of the Lord, (3) the call of Cornelius, and (4) the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, to remove his and his brethren's scruples about baptizing the Gentiles. It is, therefore, no wonder that his course was called in question.

3. Thou ... didst eat with them. This was a positive violation, not of the laws of Moses, but of the rules of the orthodox Jews. Though Peter laid aside his Jewish exclusiveness at Cæsarea, he at least once afterwards relapsed ([Gal. 2:12](#)).

4–17. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning. Thus showing that he acted under the Divine orders. See notes in [preceding chapter](#). **These six brethren accompanied me.** These were brethren of Joppa, but Peter had taken them to Jerusalem to confirm his words. He knew his course would be called into question. **Whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.** Note the import of these words of the angel to Cornelius: (1) Notwithstanding his prayers, alms, devotion, and justice, he was not yet saved. Only the gospel could save him. God's mercy was shown in bringing him the gospel. (2) This is the first instance named in Acts of a household baptism. Were there any infants? Who are meant is seen by reference to [10:24](#), "his kinsmen and near friends." These "heard" ([10:44](#)), were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and baptized in water ([10:47, 48](#)). **As on us at the beginning.** Note that Peter compares the outpouring on the Gentiles with that of the day of Pentecost. He calls both instances "baptisms of the Holy Spirit." Miraculous signs accompanied each instance. Have we a right to speak of a baptism of the Holy Spirit without such signs? The gift of the Holy Spirit with its fruit ([Gal. 5:22, 23](#)) is promised to every obedient believer, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit seems to have been extraordinary and special. Note also that Peter calls the Day of Pentecost *the Beginning*. The Beginning of what? Of the preaching of the New Covenant, of the Great Commission, of the conditions of the gospel under the reign of the



exalted King and Savior, of the church of Christ on earth. **What was I, that I could withstand God?** All these extraordinary signs were then given in order to show Peter and the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles were also accepted.

18. They held their peace. Gave up the controversy. They were convinced by the account, and assured that “God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life;” *i. e.*, had removed the barriers in the way of the Gentiles repenting and finding life through Christ.

19. Now they which were scattered abroad. See 8:5. **Travelled as far as Phenice.** Phoenicia. A long, fertile plain between the Lebanon mountains and the sea containing the famous cities of Tyre and Sidon. These preachers, perhaps, founded churches here, as we find them existing later ([Acts 21:4; 27:3](#)). **Cyprus.** The famous island in the Mediterranean. **Antioch.** The capital of the whole province of Syria, including Palestine, situated on the Orontes a short distance from the sea, at this time next after Rome and Alexandria of the cities of the world in greatness, commerce and wealth. It was cultured, luxurious and corrupt, a Greek civilization corrupted by the wealth and luxury of Asia; a sort of oriental Rome. **Preaching ... unto the Jews only.** They departed before the Gentiles at Cæsarea were called to Christ.

20, 21. Cyrene. A great Grecian city of North Africa, with a large Jewish population. These preachers were Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene who had been converted at Jerusalem. **Spake unto the Grecians.** Greeks in the Revision. The preachers were “Grecians,” *i. e.*, Hellenistic Jews (foreign Jews), but those to whom they spoke were *Greeks*, Gentiles, not of Jewish blood at all, I suppose “devout Greeks” who had turned from idols to seek the purer worship of Jehovah These preachers, without knowledge of the call of the Gentiles, led by the spirit of Christ, preached the gospel to these Gentile seekers for light, with the result that “a great multitude believed and turned to the Lord.”

22–24. Sent forth Barnabas. Barnabas was himself a Grecian Jew ([Acts 4:36](#)), also the friend of Saul, another Grecian Jew ([Acts 9:27](#)). He was chosen as a suitable man to go to Antioch and see whether there had been a real work of the Lord. When he had seen that it was **the grace of the Lord**, he rejoiced and gave it Godspeed, and the work grew more and more in this great metropolis. Note that this is the first church named outside the bounds of Palestine. It was to become the great missionary center for the conversion of the Gentile world.

25, 26. Departed to seek Saul. Seeing the great opening, he knew that Saul was the best man to aid him. His trip to Tarsus is supposed to have been in a.d. 43; Saul to have departed from Jerusalem in a.d. 39; hence to have spent about four years in missionary work in “Syria and Cilicia.” See notes on 9:30.] **A whole year.** a.d. 44; they continued the work with great success. **The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.** The Jews called them

“Nazarenes,” or “Galileans.” They called themselves “disciples,” “brethren,” “saints.” The new term was probably bestowed by the Gentiles in the great city, in default of any other name that seemed appropriate. Here was the first great Gentile church. Outsiders could see that they were not Jews nor pagans, hence they called them after their Lord, just as the first disciples of Plato were called Platonists, and those of Epicurus, Epicureans. The designation *Christians* occurs only twice elsewhere in the New Testament ([Acts 26:28](#); [1 Pet. 4:16](#)), and in both places its use is ascribed to those out of the church; yet it was accepted as honoring the Lord.

27, 28. In these days. While Saul was at Antioch. **Came prophets.** See note on 2:17. **One of them named Agabus.** Also named in [21:10](#). He had the prophetic gift. **Should be a great dearth.** A famine. **Throughout all the world.** This expression in the Scriptures often means the Jewish world. **In the days of Claudius Cesar.** Josephus (*Antiquities*, 20: 2, 6) describes a great famine that prevailed in Palestine in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, beginning about the close of a.d. 44, and lasting three or four years. Food had to be imported by the benevolent persons from Egypt and Cyprus, yet many perished.

29, 30. Then the disciples. Those at Antioch. They were informed that the famine would be very severe in Judea. Hence they contributed, each as he could, for the relief of their Jewish brethren, and sent it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. The love of Christ was in their hearts. We see here the dawn of that new spirit that was to revolutionize the Gentile world. The Gentiles of Antioch extend their hands to relieve the distress of the Jews of Palestine.



Chapter XII

Persecutions in Judea

Summary — *The First Apostolic Martyr. Peter Seized by Herod. The Prayers of the Church. Peter's Prison Opened by an Angel. His Appearance to the Praying Disciples. Herod Pronounced a God. His Pitiful Death.*

1. About that time. While Saul and Barnabas were at Antioch. **Herod the king.** Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great. See notes on [Matt. 2:1](#). In the year 41, the Emperor Claudius had added Judea and Samaria to his former dominions, so that, at this time, Herod ruled over all Palestine. While voluptuous, and exhibiting in life none of the restraints of religion, he was a strict observer of the Jewish ceremonies, and hostile to Christianity, because it was subversive to Judaism. **To vex certain of the church.** Some of its leaders.

2. He killed James the brother of John. One of the three apostles most intimate with the Savior. The first apostle to suffer martyrdom. He is the only apostle whose death is recorded in the New Testament, save Judas the betrayer. **With the sword.** He beheaded James. This James, the apostle, is to be distinguished from James, the brother of the Lord ([Gal. 1:19](#)), whose name appears after this in Acts, and who wrote the Epistle of James.

3, 4. He saw it pleased the Jews. He would rather please men than God. Hence, he seized Peter. **The days of unleavened bread.** The Passover week. See [Exod. 12:15, 16](#). Called **Easter** in [verse 4](#). **To four quaternions of soldiers.** Sixteen soldiers divided into four watches, so that four would be on watch all the time, two in the prison and two at the door.

5. But prayer was made without ceasing. By the whole church, in its assemblies, that God might deliver him.

6. When Herod would have brought him forth. To execution, probably on the day after the passover week ended. The Jews thought that executions during this week were a desecration. **Peter was sleeping . . . bound with two chains.** The Roman method was adopted. He was chained to the soldiers who slept on each side of him, while the other two soldiers of the watch stood before the prison door. These precautions were taken for fear of a rescue.

7, 8. The angel of the Lord. Coming in answer to prayer. **Smote Peter.** To arouse him. **Gird thyself.** In other words, Dress thyself. His girdle was unfastened while sleeping, and his sandals laid off. The garment to be cast about him was a cloak. There was no haste.

9–11. Thought he saw a vision. All seemed so strange that, just aroused from sleep, he was uncertain whether it was real. **The first and second ward.** Watches. The soldiers on watch seem to have been stationed apart, one near Peter's door, the other near the gate. **The iron gate.** The outer gate of the prison. It was after it was passed, and the angel had left him



in the street, that Peter was first sure that it was no vision, but that the Lord had delivered him.

12. Came to the house of Mary. This Mary was the mother of Mark, called in Acts both John and Mark. See [13:5, 13](#) and [15:39](#). She was related to Barnabas ([Col. 4:10](#)). **Many were gathered together praying.** For Peter's deliverance.

13–17. A damsel came to hearken. It was in the night, and they were Christians. The knocker might be an enemy or a friend. The damsel, a maid-servant, had charge of the door. **When she knew Peter's voice.** In answer to her question who might be at the door. Instead of opening, in her gladness, she flew to tell the good news, a touch of nature. **It is his angel.** The Jews held that every one had his guardian angel, and they thought his angel had assumed Peter's voice. A mistake, and Luke does not say whether the idea on which it was based is true or not. **They were astonished.** They could hardly believe their own eyes. **Beckoning ... hold their peace.** Their joy was so tumultuous that he could not be heard. **Go shew these things to James.** Not the apostle, but the brother of the Lord, so conspicuous after this as the pastor of the church at Jerusalem. Peter's message seems to recognize the fact that he was a leading man. Perhaps the apostles had retired from the city for fear of Herod. For notices of James, see [Acts 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19 and 2:9, 12](#).

18, 19. As soon as it was day. The sleeping soldiers did not discover that the prisoner was gone until morning. They were answerable for him. **Examined the keepers.** Tried them for neglect of duty. **Commanded.** That those on guard, the four, should be executed. **Went down from Judaea to Cæsarea.** In this city by the sea, the Roman capital of Palestine, he made his abode a part of the time, though Jerusalem was his usual residence. Josephus says that he went now to Cæsarea to conduct games in honor of the Emperor Claudius.

20. Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon. The reason of this displeasure is not known. These cities were on the sea-coast, but Herod's dominions occupied the country behind them. **Having made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend.** Probably by a bribe. The chamberlain guarded his bed-chamber and would be a trusted friend and adviser.

21. On a set day Herod. Josephus (*Antiq.* 19: 8, 2) confirms Luke's account. He states why Herod was at Cæsarea, speaks of the assembly, the royal robe, the oration, the impious shout of the people, the sudden death of Herod, and pronounces it a judgment.

22. The people gave a shout. The people of Cæsarea were, many of them at least, heathen. As we learn from Josephus, on the second day of the games, Herod, clad in robes of silver cloth, entered the theater, and standing in the sunshine, his robes reflected his splendor. Then he made an oration, and the people raised their shout: **It is the voice of a god.** It is thought that his speech was an announcement of his decision in the matter of difficulty with Tyre and Sidon, and that the ambassadors were present.



23. The angel of the Lord smote him. Josephus says he lingered five days in great agony. This harmonizes with Luke's account. **He was eaten of worms.** Josephus says he was taken with abdominal pains; Luke explains the cause. The disease is by no means unknown. Many cases of death from the same cause are on record. Among others the Emperor Galerius, the predecessor of Constantine the Great, so died.

24. But the word of God grew. Its influence kept extending, and all these exciting events.

25. Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem. This verse is introductory to the next chapter, which introduces the era of Gentile missions. [Acts 11:29, 30](#) explains why they had gone to Jerusalem. See note. **Took with them John, whose surname was Mark.** He was a relative of Barnabas ([Col. 4:10](#)). In the next chapter ([13:5](#)) he appears as an associate in their missionary labors.



Chapter XIII

The Era of Gentile Missions

Summary — *Fasting and Prayer at Antioch. The Holy Spirit Directs Paul and Barnabas to Be Sent Forth. Their Ordination. They Preach the Word in Cyprus. Elymas Rebuked. The Proconsul Converted. The Missionaries Sail to Perga. The Gospel Preached in Antioch of Pisidia. The Persecution Raised by the Jews. The Departure to Iconium.*

1. There were in the church at Antioch. For description of Antioch and account of the founding of the church in that city see [11:19](#), notes. Also [11:26](#). This was the mother church of Gentile Christendom. It was at this period the most important city of Asia, and the third city of the world. For description, see notes on [11:22](#). **Prophets and teachers.** These offices were not identical ([Eph. 4:11](#)), though the first included the last. A prophet was an inspired teacher, not necessarily one who predicted the future, but one who spoke God's message by inspiration. **Barnabas.** One of the prophets. See notes on [11:22](#). **Simeon called Niger.** Nothing more is known of him. As Niger means "black," some have fancied that he was an African, but Niger was as common a Roman surname as Black is now. **Lucius of Cyrene.** The men who planted the church at Antioch were "of Cyprus and Cyrene" (see note on [11:20](#)). Lucius was probably one of these. The name occurs again in [Rom. 16:21](#). **And Manaen.** His mother was probably the nurse of Herod when the latter was a babe. Herod Antipas, the husband of Herodias, the murderer of John the Baptist, is meant. He was now dethroned and an exile in Gaul. **And Saul.** The greatest of these men is named last. His greatness was not yet demonstrated.

2. As they ministered. These men worshiped before the Lord, fasting, and no doubt asking for guidance in the extension of Christianity. **The Holy Ghost said.** By an inspiration given to some one of these prophets. "God has spoken at sundry times and in divers manners unto the fathers by the one of these prophets." Compare [20:23](#). **Separate me Barnabas and Saul.** Both had been tried and shown to be worthy. They are now, by Divine direction, to be formally consecrated to the work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. From this time Antioch is the great missionary center. **Whereunto I have called them.** God called; men separated, or formally set apart.

3. When they had fasted and prayed. This verse shows how they were set apart. It was by fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands. They were not thus set apart to an order or rank in the kingdom, but to a work unto which they were called. They were not made priests, or bishops, but *missionaries*. This act did not make Paul an apostle. Christ chose him, as he had Peter, John and the others. **They sent them away.** As the missionaries of the church at Antioch to the heathen. We find that they return to report to the church ([Acts 14:27](#)) after a long missionary tour.



4. So they ... departed unto Seleucia. This was the seaport of Antioch, at the mouth of the Orontes, about sixteen miles distant in a direct course. At that period it was crowded with shipping. The massive walls of its harbors are still seen, though the city is a ruin. **They sailed to Cyprus.** The large island which could be seen in clear air from the coast of Asia. It was chosen as the first field, probably because it was the old home of Barnabas (4:36). It had a large Jewish population.

5. At Salamis. The eastern seaport. A day's run would carry them from Seleucia to Salamis. The distance is only about fifty miles. **Preached ... in the synagogues.** That there was more than one shows that the Jews were very numerous. In the reign of Trajan, a half century later, they were numerous enough in Cyprus to almost exterminate the Gentile population, and were only put down after the arrival of the Roman general, Hadrian, afterwards emperor, with a great army. **They had also John.** Mark. He probably acted as baptist. He was related to Barnabas (Col. 4:10).

6. When they had gone through the isle. The island was about 130 miles long by fifty wide. Salamis being at the east and Paphos at the west extremity. **Paphos.** This was at this time the capital. It was noted for the worship of Venus. **Found a certain sorcerer.** A magician. Though the law (Deut. 18:9–22; Lev. 19:31) forbade witchcraft and magic, yet contemporaneous history shows that at this period the Jewish magicians had great influence. Marius, Pompey, Crassus, Cæsar, and Tiberius were all more or less under their sway. **A false prophet.** Falsely professing inspiration.

7. Was with the deputy. In the Revision, "Proconsul." The Roman provinces at this time were divided into senatorial and imperial. The senatorial were ruled by a proconsul. We learn from other sources that Cyprus at this time was a senatorial province ruled by a proconsul. **Sergius Paulus.** Nothing more is known of him than is here related. **A prudent man.** An inquiring man. Hence he was anxious to hear Barnabas and Saul.

8. But Elymas. Another name of Bar-Jesus, meaning, the wise man. He had probably assumed it. **Withstood them.** As a Jew he was opposed, and his interests, too, were opposed. He did not wish to lose his hold on the proconsul. Hence he sought to prevent his acceptance of the faith.

9. But Saul, who is also called Paul. From this date he is the chief figure of the Acts. Barnabas, who had hitherto been the leader, falls behind. The origin of the name Paul is unknown. It is a Roman name, that of a great Roman family, and it is likely that the great apostle had two names, one Jewish, the other Gentile, a common thing anciently. Peter, Daniel, Esther, and many others afford examples. **Filled with the Holy Ghost.** Acting under the impulse of the Holy Spirit.

10–12. Child of the devil. Under his influence. **The right ways of the Lord.** God's plan of salvation in Christ. **The hand of the Lord is upon thee.** In judgment. **Thou shalt be blind.** He was fighting against the light. Hence physical blindness for a season. **A mist and**



a darkness. As though a cloud had gathered about him. **Then the deputy ... believed.** The language implies that he became a Christian. The “believers” were those who accepted Christ.

13. Now when Paul and his company. Henceforth Paul is the leader. From Paphos they sailed northward to Perga on the Asiatic mainland, an important city of Pamphylia. **John departing.** Why he left we do not know, but we know Paul did not approve of it. See [15:39](#). Perhaps he feared the dangers before them.

14. They came to Antioch. They seemed to have passed at once from Perga to the Antioch that lay in the interior. It must be distinguished from the Antioch of Syria ([11:22](#)) before named. There were several Antiochs, this one being the capital of the province of Pisidia. Vast ruins still mark its site. **They went into the synagogue.** In every Gentile city where there was a Jewish synagogue the gospel was preached first to the Jews by the apostolic preachers. The course of Paul and Barnabas here is an example of their custom.

15. After the reading. In the synagogue worship the reading of the Scriptures made a very important part. As copies of the Scriptures were very rare, this reading was necessary to convey scriptural instruction to the people. They were read in course, two lessons each Sabbath, one from the five books of Moses, the other from the other books of the Old Testament. Plumptre insists that we are enabled by two curious coincidences to fix, with very little uncertainty, the precise Sabbath on which the mission work at Antioch opened. The opening words of Paul refer to [Deut. 1:31](#), and this was the lesson for the forty-fourth Sabbath in the year, which fell in July or August; the corresponding second lesson from the prophets being [Isa. 1:1–27](#), from which he also quotes. He starts, as was natural, from what the people had just been listening to, as the text of his discourse. **The rulers of the synagogue.** The synagogue was governed by a board of elders.

16. Then Paul stood up. Invited to speak by the usual courtesy extended to visiting brethren, he arose, according to the Greek custom. In Judea speakers sat. Among the Greeks they stood. The address that follows, the first reported address of Paul, is worthy of special study especially as an example of the character of his preaching in the synagogue. It begins with a short recapitulation of the glorious history of Israel, a theme always apt to secure the favor of a Jewish audience, and when he has ascended to David, the hero king and the pride of every Jew, he passes from him to the promised Son of David, and thus preaches Christ. Had he begun at once with the latter, the great object of his discourse, he would have aroused prejudice and perhaps closed their ears. It will be observed here before a Jewish audience, as well as at Athens before a heathen audience, he first secured a common ground with his hearers, and upon it founded his argument for the gospel. **Men of Israel, and ye that fear God.** There were two classes present, Jews and “the devout Greeks.” The latter had given up heathenism, had learned to “fear God,” and were anxious to learn more about him; hence were wont to attend the synagogue.

17–19. Destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan. For their names, see [Deut. 7:1](#).

20. After that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years. This statement seems to conflict with [1 Kings 6:1](#), which assigns 480 years to the period between the coming out of Egypt and the fourth year of the reign of Solomon. This would allow only about 300 years to the period of the Judges. David's reign was forty years, Saul's the same, the period in the wilderness the same, Joshua ruled about twenty-five years, add four years for Solomon, and we have 149 years, which, taken from 480 years, leaves 331 for the time of Judges and Samuel. The apparent discrepancy between Paul and the writer of 1 Kings is removed, however, by the Revision, based on the oldest and best Greek text. It changes the place where "and after that" occurs, so that the passage reads, "When he had destroyed the seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years: and after these things (*i. e.*, after the allotment of the land and all before mentioned) he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet." The 450 years, in my judgment, includes the period from the departure out of Egypt to the reign of David, the two greatest eras in Jewish history before Christ.

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21. By the space of forty years. The Old Testament does not give the length of Saul's reign, but Josephus says Saul reigned for forty years.

22. He raised up unto them David. The Lord called the young shepherd to the throne. **A man after mine own heart.** The language does not occur in this form in the Old Testament, but is implied in [1 Sam. 13:14](#). This does not imply that David was perfect, but that he sought to do the Lord's will, instead of showing stubborn disobedience, like Saul. He exhibited nobility of purpose, sought the welfare of the people, and aimed at a purer life.

23. Of this man's seed, ... according to his promise. For the promise of a Savior of David's seed, see [2 Sam. 7:12](#); [Isa. 11:1](#); [Zech. 3:8](#); [6:12](#).

24, 25. When John had first preached. John, who preached before the Savior's coming, is named because he was well known to the Jews, and most of them regarded him a prophet. See [Matt. 3:1–12](#) and [John 5:32–35](#).

26. Men and brethren. Having declared the coming of the Savior of the seed of David, he now shows to whom his salvation was offered, not only to "children of the stock of Abraham," but to "whosoever among you feareth God," Gentiles as well as Jews.

27–37. Paul now recapitulates the facts of the Gospel, viz: (1) Christ rejected by the rulers; (2) the Scriptures that they read every Sabbath fulfilled by condemning him; (3) the demand upon Pilate to slay him, when he had declared there was no cause of death; (4) the Scriptures fulfilled in his death; (5) the abundantly attested resurrection; (6) he declares that the promise made the fathers was now fulfilled to their children (see [Gen. 12:3](#); [22:18](#), etc.) **Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.** See [Psa. 2:7](#). Paul gives the thought in [Rom. 1:4](#): "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead." **No more to return to corruption.** Never more to endure death. **I will give you the sure mercies of David.** The mercies promised to David, one of which was a descendant

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whose throne should be everlasting. See [Isa. 55:3](#), and compare [2 Sam. 7:10](#). **Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.** Quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost. See [Acts 2:27–31](#), notes.

38–41. Through this man. The risen Savior. Only through Christ does God offer pardon. See [4:12](#); [Rom. 3:25](#) and [8:1–4](#). **By him all that believe are justified.** If you believe on Jesus as the Messiah and accept him in faith, he will do for you what the law could never do, justify you before God. The law could not bring peace. **Beware therefore.** The address closes with a warning of the danger of rejecting Christ. [Verse 41](#) is freely quoted from [Habakkuk 1:5](#). His words referred primarily to the invasion of the Chaldeans, but reached beyond to a greater punishment for the greater sin of rejecting Christ. Only a few years after Paul quoted this at Antioch “the despisers wondered and perished” in the awful calamity of the Jewish nation, brought on by refusing the Savior.

42, 43. When the Jews were gone out. The Revised text gives a different sense: “As they (Paul and Barnabas) went out,” they were asked to speak again the next Sabbath. **When the congregation broke up.** When the services were over, many, both Jews and proselytes, followed them to learn more, and possibly yielded to Christ. **Persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.** By trusting in and obeying him. This could not be done if they refused Christ when he was preached to them.

44. The next sabbath came almost the whole city. The sermon of the Sabbath before, the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the week, and the talk aroused, filled the city with intense interest.

45. When the Jews saw the multitudes. The vast concourse, in large part Gentiles, anxious to hear of the “ensign to whom the Gentiles shall seek,” aroused Jewish bigotry. Nothing ever stirred the Jews of either Palestine or of Gentile countries to such hatred as the declaration that Christ is a Savior of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. See [22:21](#). **Contradicting and blaspheming.** Contradicting the application of the prophecies to Jesus, which Paul made in his address; blaspheming by denying and speaking contemptuously of the Son of God.

46. It was necessary. The preachers met this attitude of the Jews by boldly stating their purpose to turn from them to the Gentiles. It was God’s will that the Gospel should first be offered to the chosen people. See [Acts 1:8](#); [3:26](#); [Rom. 1:16](#). While the chosen people were to have the first opportunity, yet “God had put no difference” between Jew and Greek. As soon as the Jewish audiences manifested a self-willed, contradictory spirit, instead of engaging in idle disputation, the apostles were wont to turn to the Gentiles.

47. For so hath the Lord commanded. It was not only the Lord’s will that they should preach first to the Jews, but that they should then turn to the Gentiles. So the Lord had

shown in their own prophets. [Isaiah 49:6](#) is quoted, where Christ is declared to be “a light of the Gentiles,” and appointed “for salvation to the ends of the earth;” a world Savior.

48. When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad. Glad, not only that the gospel was offered to them, but that in sacred writings of the Jews, it was declared that the Gentiles should have the gospel. They, too, had always been embraced in God's plan of redemption. **As many as were ordained to eternal life.** This passage has been used as a proof text for the extreme Calvinism that makes God arbitrarily select some for salvation and reject others. Wesley, on the other hand, says: “The original word rendered *ordained* is not once used in the Scriptures to express eternal predestination of any kind. The sense is that those, and those only, now ordained, now believed. Not that God rejected the rest; it was his will that they also should be saved, but they thrust salvation from them. Nor were those who then believed *forced* to believe. Grace was offered to them and they did not thrust it away.” It is God's ordination that those of humble, teachable, honest hearts, seeking the truth and life, shall come to life when it is offered, and such accepted the gospel on this occasion. **Believed.** “Made a public profession of their faith.”—*Dean Howson*.

50. The Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women. Gentile women who had learned to revere the One God, women of high rank (see Revision). A Roman writer (Strabo) declares that the women in this part of Asia exerted a powerful influence. **And the chief men.** Probably the husbands of these women. **Raised persecution.** There was probably no appeal to the magistrates, who were Romans (Antioch of Pisidia was a Roman colony), but they excited tumultuous opposition. The missionaries retired for the time, because their work was interrupted. They were not exiled, for they returned afterward ([14:21](#)).

51. They shook off the dust of their feet. See [Luke 9:5](#). The Master's command was obeyed. **Iconium.** In Lycaonia, about fifty miles east of the Pisidian Antioch. At a later period, Iconium became celebrated as the capital of the Turks, before Constantinople fell into their hands. The Turkish sultan was long called the Sultan of Iconium. It was only after the Turkish conquests in Europe that the capital was moved to Constantinople. It is still a place of 30,000 inhabitants, and is called Konieh.

52. The disciples were filled with joy. Those of Antioch. Even if Paul and Barnabas were driven away, they had left them a glorious inheritance.



Chapter XIV

Missionary Labors in the Cities of Asia Minor

Summary —*Paul and Barnabas at Iconium. Flight to Lystra and Derbe. The Cripple at Lystra Healed. The Heathen Seek to Worship Paul and Barnabas as Gods. A Persecution Raised by the Jews. Paul Stoned Until Supposed to Be Dead. They Return to Visit the New Churches. Elders Ordained. The Return to the Syrian Antioch. The Report of Their Labors.*

1. They went ... into the synagogue of the Jews. Just as in the island of Cyprus and at Antioch. In almost every principal place a colony of Jews and a synagogue were found. Here, among their own nation, and in accordance with the customs of the synagogue, they spoke, and first declared the gospel. The result seemed uniformly to reach some Jews, and a number of the “devout Greeks” who attended the synagogue to learn more of God. Thus was formed the nucleus of the church. At Iconium, “a great multitude both of the Jews and the Greeks believed.”

2, 3. The unbelieving Jews. Here, as elsewhere, there was division. Those who stubbornly rejected the gospel were filled with hatred and opposed in every possible way. As they could do nothing without the aid of the Gentiles in that Gentile city, they sought to prejudice them. Notwithstanding, for a long time, Paul and Barnabas, continued to preach there with great success. How long they continued at Iconium is unknown, but as the first missionary journey occupied three or four years, they probably were here several months.

5, 6. There was an assault made. Hardly an assault, so much as a movement to make one. The Greek term implies a sudden movement. The attempt was avoided by the preachers receiving information and escaping from the city. In this effort there was concert of action between the Gentiles and Jews, the rulers of the synagogue joining, and the purpose was murderous. Paul (2 Cor. 11:25) says, “Once was I stoned.” That stoning was at Lystra. There was an attempt to stone at Iconium, but not a stone was thrown. **Fled to Lystra and Derbe.** These were Lycaonian cities, not far from Iconium. Neither now exists, but the ruins of Lystra, and those of Derbe it is thought, are identical. The first is called by a name meaning “The Thousand and One Churches,” on account of the ruins of so many sacred edifices. Lystra is named frequently in early church history as a center of Christian influence.

8–10. There sat a certain man at Lystra. The account of the healing of this cripple is related, not as an unusual occurrence, but because it led to the attempt to deify Paul and Barnabas. As to the frequency of the miracles, see [verse 3](#) above. **The same heard Paul speak.** He might have been carried by his friends to the place of speaking, some open square or thoroughfare, to gratify his curiosity, or even to ask alms. **He had faith to be healed.**



Wrought by hearing the word. As faith is a gospel requisite that we should be healed of our sins, so it was required as a condition of miraculous healing of bodily diseases. Note that this miracle, like those of Christ, is a parable of redemption. There is (1) Hearing of the Word; (2) faith which comes by hearing ([Rom. 10:17](#)); (3) the command that calls for an exercise of faith; (4) the effort to obey in faith; (5) salvation from the infirmity by obedience. As Christ so often said, so might Paul, “Thy faith hath saved thee.”

11–13. When the people saw what Paul had done. It must be kept in mind that the people of Lystra were heathen, that they believed in many gods, that their legends taught them that the gods had often come down in the form of men and interfered in human affairs. Hence, it is not strange that when they witnessed this miracle, unlike anything ever seen before in their city, they exclaimed, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.” **In the speech of Lycaonia.** Paul had preached in Greek, which was understood over all the East, but the native dialect of the Lycaonians was different, and in that they confer together. **Called Barnabas, Jupiter.** The chief of the gods in the Greek and Roman Pantheon. Barnabas was no doubt a more stately man than Paul, who says that his own “bodily presence was weak and speech contemptible,” and there was also a reason why they thought Paul, **Mercurius.** Mercury was the “interpreter of the gods.” His Greek name, *Hermes*, is the origin of our word Hermeneutics. Paul, eloquent, persuasive, active, was thought to represent the part of Mercury. **Then the priest of Jupiter.** There was a temple of Jupiter before the gates of the city, with the usual priest, and carried away by their idea, they prepared to offer sacrifices to the gods whom they supposed to have visited them. **Brought oxen and garlands.** The oxen for sacrifices; the sacrifices before being offered were crowned with garlands. Floral crowns were also worn by the priest offering sacrifice.

14–18. Which when the apostles. The term “apostles” is used in [verse 4](#). It is applied in the New Testament a number of times to persons not of the twelve, but apostolic men (see [2 Cor. 8:23](#)). Paul was an apostle, chosen by the Lord, and Barnabas was an apostolic missionary, sent out (apostle means “one sent”) by the Holy Spirit. **They rent their clothes.** A sign of great grief, and even of indignation and horror. See [Gen. 37:29](#) and [Matt. 26:65](#). **We are men.** Not gods, but human, human as you are. See in this protest the unfaltering devotion to truth of these men. No advantage to themselves would induce them to permit a deception. **Should turn from these vanities.** From this idolatry. Instead, they called them to the worship of the Living God, the Creator of all things. **Who in times past.** He had left the nations to their own conceits until it should be demonstrated that man by searching cannot find out God. The efforts of human wisdom were a failure. **Nevertheless he left not himself without witness.** Nature with many voices testified of him. See [Rom. 1:18–21](#).

19, 20. Came thither Jews. These inveterate opposers followed from the late scenes of gospel triumphs, and found the Lystrians disappointed that they had not been allowed to adore Paul and Barnabas. From one extreme they were easily led to the other. If they were

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not gods, they were bad men. The fickle populace was easily stirred to riot, and, led by the Jews, they seized and stoned the great apostle until they supposed he was dead. This, the first bodily injury he suffered for Christ, of which we have record, is alluded to in [2 Cor. 11:25](#), where he gives some account of what he had endured. After the stoning, his enemies dragged him out of the city as they would a carcass. When Paul's enemies had gone, the disciples gathered around, and to their joy and surprise **he rose up, and came into the city**. Whether he had received a blow that rendered him unconscious and apparently dead, until he recovered from the swoon, or whether his restoration was miraculous, cannot be surely determined. As commanded by Christ, when persecuted in one city, they departed and came the next day to Derbe, to labor for a time.

21–23. They returned again to Lystra. After a season of work at Derbe. The Jews had gone, the excitement had subsided, and it was needful to revisit their fields of labor to organize the churches. It is well to remember that one of the converts was Timothy ([16:1](#)). **Confirming the souls of the disciples.** Not an outward rite, but words of cheer that strengthened their souls. **Through much tribulation.** They taught them that they must expect trials and persecutions. All have to bear the cross. See [Rom. 5:3](#); [2 Cor. 4:17](#); [Heb. 12:5–11](#). **And when they had ordained them elders.** Observe (1) that elders were not appointed as soon as the churches were planted; time must be taken so as to know what men were fitted for the office; (2) that elders were not appointed to preside over a district, but **in every church**; (3) that there was a plurality; (4) that they were set apart with fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands. It is not here stated who selected the men, but from [Acts 6:6](#) we would infer that they were chosen by the church under the advice of the apostles.

24–28. Preached the word in Perga. Here they had landed early in this missionary journey, but did not then, from some cause, pause to preach the gospel. See [13:13, 14](#). **Went down into Attalia.** A seaport not far from Perga. **Thence they sailed to Antioch.** The Syrian Antioch, the first Gentile church, the mother church of Gentile missions, the church that sent them forth several years before ([13:1, 3](#)). Exactly how long a time had been occupied in this missionary tour cannot be ascertained, but it is almost certain that the visit to Jerusalem, recorded in [Acts 11:29, 30](#) and [12:25](#), took place in a.d. 44, while that mentioned in [15:2](#) took place in a.d. 51, there being six or seven years between. This time was occupied with the missionary journey and the stay at Antioch. The first probably extended over three or four years. **They rehearsed all that God had done with them.** They very properly made a report to the church that had sent them forth. It was a very cheering report. The gospel had been planted in the great island of Cyprus, received by the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, and extended through Pamphylia, Pisidia and Lycaonia, strong churches having been planted



in their principal cities. **Abode there a long time.** As near as we can learn about two years, no doubt busy all the time preaching in the great city.



Chapter XV

The Question of Circumcision

Summary — *The Judaizing Teachers at Antioch. Opposed by Paul and Barnabas. The Question Referred to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas Report to the Apostles and Elders Their Work Among the Gentiles. Pharisees Insist That These Gentiles Must Be Circumcised. Peter's Address. Paul and Barnabas Show How God Was with Them. The Judgment of James the Lord's Brother. His Views Accepted by All. The Apostolic Letter to the Gentile Christians. The Joy at Antioch When the Letter Is Read. Judas and Silas.*

1. Certain men which came from Judea. This chapter records the first intimation of the great controversy that agitated the apostolic church, and of which we find traces in many of Paul's letters, the question whether Christianity was merely a development and a sort of culmination of Judaism, or was a New Dispensation that had supplanted the Old and taken its place. At first the Christians of Jerusalem and Judea remained strict Jews, still keeping the ordinances of Moses. The Samaritans converted by Philip were a circumcised people. The idea of the apostles, at first, seems to have been that Gentiles might become Christians, but must first be circumcised. It was a matter of astonishment to Peter and the brethren that he was required to baptize the Gentile Cornelius and his friends without circumcision. Then came the formation of the Gentile church at Antioch and the successful labors of Paul and Barnabas in western Asia. The influx of the Gentiles to the church, and their acceptance on the same terms as the old covenanted people of Jehovah, stirred those Jewish brethren of the more bigoted type to bitter opposition, and they began to send their teachers abroad with the declaration, **Except ye be circumcised.... ye cannot be saved.** Thus they came to Antioch; thus, at a later period, they disturbed the churches of Galatia and called out the Galatian letter. In order to destroy their influence, it was needful at once to settle whether they spoke the sentiment of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and hence Paul and Barnabas were sent to lay this question before the great mother church. This caused the conference described in this chapter, spoken of in church history as The Council of Jerusalem. The reader should form some idea of the importance of this question. It was none other than whether Christendom should be Jewish Christian, or delivered from the bondage of the Jewish law into the liberty of the children of God. Paul ([Gal. 2:4](#)) calls these "certain men" "false brethren."

2. No small dissension. These men were opposed by Paul and Barnabas, but the fact that they were from Jerusalem, and probably contended that they had the authority of the apostles, gave them an influence.

3, 4. Being brought on their way by the church. A special escort of church members attended them on their journey. It was mark of honor. See [20:38](#) and [21:5](#). **Passed through**

Phenice. Phoenicia. They went by the land route, visiting the churches of Phoenicia and Samaria, causing great joy by their account of so great success among the Gentiles. **Were received of the church.** Had a cordial reception, a warm greeting.

5. There rose up certain of the Pharisees. Men of that sect who, like Paul, had become Christians, but unlike him had retained their Jewish bigotry. Perhaps some of them were Paul's old friends. They seem to have sprung the controversy when the missionaries gave account of their work ([verse 4](#)).

6. The apostles and elders came together. A meeting of the apostles and the elders of Jerusalem was called. It was in the year a.d. 51, about twenty years after the ascension of Christ. One apostle had suffered martyrdom; eleven, including Matthias, remained, though some might have been in distant parts. James, the "brother of the Lord," though not one of the Twelve, was a chief man now in the Jerusalem church, and is often spoken of by historians as its pastor, or bishop. Though his sentiment decided the question this day, he has been regarded as a leader of the Judaizing Christians. See [Gal. 2:12](#).

7–11. When there had been much disputing. One side insisted that the Gentiles must keep the law of Moses, the other that they were not under the Mosaic covenant at all. **Peter rose up.** Probably silent until this time. He arose to rehearse his own experiences which had given him new light. **A good while ago.** Nine or ten years before. For the account of Peter's conversion of the Gentiles, see [chapters 10 and 11](#). **Put no difference between us and them.** Accepted them just as he accepted us, and gave the Holy Spirit as a proof to us that he had accepted them. **Purifying their hearts by faith.** The Jews held that Gentiles were unclean, but Peter declared that faith, the true circumcision, that of the heart, not of the body, purified them into fitness for the ordinances of Christ. Observe Peter's doctrine: not circumcision of the flesh, but the faith that leads to obedience cleanses from uncleanness. **To put a yoke.** To impose Jewish obligations on Gentile Christians. The law of Moses was a yoke that **neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.** So strict in its requirements that none could keep it perfectly. **Through the grace of the Lord.** This is the hope of both Jew and Gentile, not obedience to the ceremonials of Moses.

12. All the multitude kept silence. After Peter's reminder of his work among the Gentiles, Paul and Barnabas were probably called on to show whether their work, like Peter's, showed that God was with them. They therefore gave some account of the miracles that God had wrought by their hands, thereby attesting the Divine favor.

13–21. James answered, saying. For other references to James see [1 Cor. 15:7](#); [Gal. 1:19 and 2:9](#), and the Epistle of James. He is also mentioned several times in the Gospels, and seems, before the death of Jesus, to have been an unbeliever. It is probable that the speech of Peter, followed by the account given by Paul and Barnabas, convinced him, and led to

the views he now expresses. **Simeon.** Simon Peter. **To this agree the ... prophets.** The quotation he gives is from [Amos 9:11, 12](#). **Build again the tabernacle of David.** Restore the splendors of his family in the reign of the Messiah, "the Son of David." **That the residue of men.** The Gentile world. This grand prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles makes no mention of circumcision. **Known unto God are all his works.** The meaning is, that this calling of the Gentiles is a part of the Divine plan known to God from the beginning. **Wherefore.** Since it is evidently God's will, "My sentence is, that we do not trouble them." **Sentence.** Decision. **That they abstain from the pollutions of idols.** Four items are mentioned, which are all embraced in the apostolic letter as things forbidden. They were four common customs of the Gentile world, and matters on which there should be a clear understanding. The first does not mean only to refrain from worshiping idols, or eating meat offered in idol sacrifice, but from all the pollutions of the system of idolatry. Licentiousness and drunkenness received a sanction from religion. See Lecky's *European Morals*, chap. V., and Conybeare and Howson's Paul, chap. IV. **Fornication.** Chastity was the exception instead of the rule among Gentiles at this period. **From things strangled.** Because in strangling the blood was retained in the flesh. The use of blood was prohibited by the Mosaic law, and for wise reasons this prohibition was extended to Gentiles. The Roman epicures were wont to drown fowls in wine and then use the flesh. It was a common thing to drink wine mingled with blood. The only way to strike at these savage practices was to prohibit its use. **For Moses ... hath.** There are synagogues in every city. The use of blood would shock the Jews who have membership in these.

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22–29. Then pleased ... with the whole church. All acquiesced in the judgment of James. The church is not before mentioned as taking part. The decisions seem to have been submitted to its voice. **To send chosen men.** As the messengers of the church at Jerusalem. **Judas.** Little is known of him to save that he was a prophet ([verse 32](#)). **Silas.** Well known after this as the companion of Paul. See [Acts 16](#); [1 Thess. 1:1](#); [2 Cor. 1:19](#). **They wrote letters.** A letter. Luke gives it, I suppose, verbatim. **Send greeting.** Observe that the greeting is not only from the apostles and elders, but from the church. **It seemed good unto us.** It seemed good to them to send men, but the decision made "seemed good to the Holy Spirit" ([verse 28](#)). **Men that have hazarded their lives.** This high praise is given to Paul and Barnabas. It is the tribute of the church at Jerusalem to the two men sent from the church at Antioch. **Seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us.** The decision was inspired. **That ye abstain from meats.** See note on [verse 20](#).

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30–35. They rejoiced for the consolation. When they returned and the letter was read to the church at Antioch, it caused great joy. **Judas and Silas, being prophets.** Inspired speakers. Such speakers were necessary to the church until it had the New Testament for a guide. **They were let go in peace.** They were dismissed for Jerusalem with benedictions of peace. **It pleased Silas to abide there still.** This verse is not found in the Revision, nor in

the oldest MSS. **Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch.** Probably for the greater part of a year, preaching, and assisted by many other laborers.

36–41. Paul said unto Barnabas. This is a proposal to start on a second missionary journey, in order to visit and strengthen the churches already planted, as well as to extend the work. **Barnabas determined to take with them John.** He had abandoned them on the first tour (13:13), and his reasons did not satisfy Paul; hence he declined to take him. **The contention was so sharp.** Neither would yield, so they determined to work separately. Barnabas, with Mark, went to visit the churches of Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas as his fellow laborer. He seems to have returned from Jerusalem. **Being recommended ... to the grace of God.** Evidently a meeting of the church was held to commend them to God. **Went through Syria and Cilicia.** We have no account of the founding of these churches, but we know that Paul had before this labored in these parts. See [Gal. 1:21](#).



Chapter XVI

The Gospel Carried into Europe

Summary —*Paul at Troas. The Call to Macedonia in a Vision. The Journey to Philippi. The Conversion of Lydia and Her Household. The Damsel with the Spirit of Divination Healed. The Rage of Her Masters. Paul and Silas Seized, Scourged, Placed in Prison in the Stocks. The Events at Midnight. The Jailer and Household Baptized. An Appeal to Rights of Romans.*

1–3. He came to Derbe and Lystra. Compare [14:6–21](#). **Behold, a certain disciple was there.** A member of the church at Lystra, converted on the previous missionary tour. **Timotheus.** Born of a Jewish mother, but of a Greek father. The name is Greek and means one who fears God. Following his father, he was uncircumcised and, hence, regarded as a Greek instead of a Jew. Yet he had been taught the Scriptures from childhood ([2 Tim. 3:15](#)) by his pious mother and grandmother ([2 Tim. 1:5](#)). These, Eunice and Lois by name, were Christians also. [1 Cor. 4:17](#) shows that Paul converted him. Compare [Gal. 4:19](#). **Well reported.** As an active, efficient Christian. He had evidently labored for Christ in both places, and given such proofs as to show his fitness for the missionary work. **Go forth with him.** As a traveling companion. **And circumcised him.** Not because he thought it necessary to salvation, but **because of the Jews.** Wherever Paul traveled, he first labored in the Jewish synagogues. If one of his traveling companions was a Gentile, it would arouse Jewish prejudices so as to close their ears. Hence, since “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision was anything” ([1 Cor. 7:19](#)), he complied with the principle that he states in [1 Cor. 9:19, 20](#). In [Gal. 2:3](#) it is stated that when Titus, a Greek, went up to Jerusalem, he was not compelled to be circumcised. Had he been, it would have been a concession to the Judaizing Christians who insisted that circumcision was necessary to salvation. Here the case was different. No Judaizing party made such a demand, and the act was one of pure expediency, in order to reach more readily unconverted Jews. These examples teach us to accommodate ourselves to the prejudices of others as far as we can without the sacrifice of principle. From other passages ([1 Tim. 4:14](#); [2 Tim. 1:6](#)), we learn that, at this time probably, Timothy was ordained by the elders, and received special gifts by the imposition of the hands of the apostle.

4, 5. They went through the cities. Where churches were already planted. As they went, they “delivered the decrees on circumcision and the law of Moses” decided upon at Jerusalem ([15:23–29](#)).

6–10. When they had gone throughout Phrygia. This was a Roman province west of Lycaonia in Asia Minor, running down to the seacoast of the Ægean Sea. **Galatia** lay on the north of Lycaonia, and was entirely in the interior. It received its name from a settlement of Gauls, an offshoot of a Gallic invasion of Greece in the third century before Christ. It became a Roman province in a.d. 26. No record is made here of the results of this tour, but

as we elsewhere learn of numerous churches in Galatia shortly after this, we are justified in the inference that they were planted at this time. **Forbidden ... to preach the word in Asia.** By Asia is meant, not the great quarter of the world so named, but the province so called by the Romans, of which Ephesus was the capital. The Spirit now had other work for them. In the same way they were kept from going into Bithynia, the province on the Black or Euxine sea, north of Galatia, and hence turned westward through Mysia to the sea-coast at Troas. This city was about four miles from the site of ancient Troy, and was a transit harbor for those who crossed from Asia to Macedonia, or Greece. **A vision appeared.** Like Peter's vision at Joppa, it was a revelation. Like Peter's, it called him to labor in fields before unentered. **A man of Macedonia.** Macedonia proper lies to the north of the Ægean Sea, within a few hours sail of Troas. This ancient kingdom, under Philip and Alexander, had first absorbed all Greece, then conquered Persia and spread the Grecian language and customs over all western Asia. In turn it had fallen before the Romans, and was now a Roman province. It had a number of large cities, but Thessalonica was the Roman capital.

10. We endeavored to go into Macedonia. Sought to find a ship to carry them across. There is no intimation that they preached at this time of Troas, but a few years later we find here a church (20:6–12). Here, first, the writer of Acts speaks of himself as one of the company and adopts the style of an eye witness. It is supposed that Luke joined the missionary band at Troas.

11, 12. We came with a straight course. Before the wind. **To Samothracia.** An island about halfway between Troas and Neapolis, the European port where they landed. **And from thence to Philippi.** Only a few miles distant. They sought it at once, because it was **the chief city of that part of Macedonia.** The apostles tried to leaven the centers of influence with the Gospel. The city had been rebuilt about 400 years before this by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, who named it after himself. It was famous as the place of the decisive battle between Brutus and Cassius on the one hand, and Mark Antony and Octavius, afterwards Augustus Cæsar, upon the other. **A colony.** A Roman colony was a settlement of Romans in a foreign country, with all the privileges of Romans. The colony had its own senate, its own magistrates, observed all the Roman forms, and was a miniature Rome. This colony had been established by Augustus Cæsar, who settled at this place a multitude of the partisans of his rival, Mark Antony, after the death of the latter. Philippi is now a small village named Filiba.

13–15. Went out ... by a river side. The Gangas, a small river which flows by the city. **Where prayer was wont to be made.** Where there was a praying place. There seems to have been no synagogue, but a few pious Jews, women at least in great part, met on the river banks, out of the city, for prayer. **We ... spake unto the women.** Either Jewish women, or proselytes to the Jewish faith. **Lydia.** The name is Greek. She was probably a convert to Judaism. **A seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira.** Thyatira, afterwards one of the seven

churches of Asia, was beyond the Ægean Sea, hundreds of miles away. It was on the borders of Lydia, which was famous for its purple cloths. She was at this distant place for purposes of trade. Thyatira was a Macedonian colony, and Lydia probably had acquaintances or kinsmen in Macedonia itself. **Whose heart the Lord opened.** How, it is not stated. Possibly some of his providences especially fitted her for the reception of the gospel. **And when she was baptized.** In the apostolic period baptism always at once followed acceptance of the gospel. **And her household.** Some have held that this implies the baptism of infants. It rather implies that her servants and friends also accepted the gospel. There is no ground for the inference that she was even married, or had children. Meyer (*Acts*, p. 311), himself a German Lutheran, says: "If, in the Jewish and Gentile families which were converted to Christ there were children, their baptism is to be assumed in *those* cases, when they were so far advanced *that they could and did confess their faith on Jesus as the Messiah; for this was the universal, absolutely necessary qualification for the reception of baptism.... Therefore the baptism of the children of Christians*, of which no trace is found in the New Testament is not to be held as an apostolic ordinance." Olshausen and Neander, also Pedobaptists, take the same view. Lydia's household was probably composed of women who assisted her in her business. **She constrained us.** Paul did not usually accept aid from his converts ([Acts 20:33](#); [2 Cor. 12:17](#)), but it seems that her urgent entreaty prevailed.

16–18. As we went to prayer. To the place of prayer. **A certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination.** Literally, "The spirit of a Pythoness." This meant, among the Greeks, a prophetic spirit, Pythias being one of the names of Apollo, the god of prophecy. The account shows that the damsel was "possessed," that her strange power gave her value in that it was superhuman, that she was a slave, owned by several masters, and brought them **much gain by soothsaying.** Luke does not say that she foretold the future, but the people thought she did. She was a demoniac. See note on [Matt. 8:29](#). **These men are the servants of the most high God.** For similar testimony of the evil spirits to the work and power of Christ, see [Mark 3:12](#); [Luke 4:34](#). The Lord silenced them, and Paul followed the example. He delayed for many days, for reasons we cannot explain, possibly on account of something connected with the afflicted damsel herself. **In the name of Jesus Christ to come out.** "In my name," said the risen Lord, "shall they cast out devils" ([Mark 16:17](#)).

19–24. When her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone. Nothing inflames the rage of men more than to see their hope of ill-gotten gains taken away. In our country more than one man has fallen a victim to the rage of rum-sellers who have seen their hope of gain taken away. **Caught Paul and Silas.** As the leaders of the missionary band. **Drew them into the market-place.** The forum, or open square where meetings were held and the magistrates held their courts. **To the magistrates.** Roman officers, two in number, called *duumviri*, or prætors. **These men, being Jews.** A great prejudice against Jews at this time existed in Europe. Near this time, Claudius Cæsar expelled all Jews from Rome ([18:2](#)). **Do**

trouble our city. Raise disturbances. **Teach customs ... not lawful.** Roman law sternly forbade one not a Jew to be circumcised.—Howson. Paul and Silas did not teach this, but it was a safe charge to make, they *being Jews*. **The multitude rose ... against them.** Inflamed with prejudice. **The magistrates.** Without inquiry, influenced by the outcries of the throng. **Rent off their clothes.** They ordered them at once to be scourged. The lictors, the executioners, were at hand. The Roman custom was to lay bare the body and to beat it with the rods borne by the lictors. Paul says (2 Cor. 11:25), “Thrice was I beaten with rods.” **Laid many stripes upon them.** Moses (Deut. 25:3) mercifully restricted the number of stripes; hence, Paul says: “Five times I received of the Jews forty stripes, save one” (2 Cor. 11:24). With the Romans there was no such restriction. **Thrust them into the inner prison.** A damp interior cell from which all light was excluded. **The stocks.** An instrument of torture as well as confinement. The feet, stretched wide apart, were thrust through holes in a wall of wood, and the prisoner was fastened there.

25–34. Prayed, and sang praises. Never before had such sounds at midnight been heard from that inner dungeon. Bound, fettered, tortured, the spirit still had liberty, could pray, and praise God. God heard them, too, for there was a **great earthquake**. See Acts 4:31. It was God's angel to loose their bonds, open the prison doors, and magnify their work. **The keeper ... drew out his sword.** He was responsible with his life for the safety of his prisoners. Fancying them gone, he determined, like a Roman, to anticipate disgrace by death. Right there at Philippi, Brutus and Cassius had each inflicted self-death. Self-murder was very common among the Romans. **We are all here.** Paul and Silas had no inclination of escape; the other prisoners were probably too much astounded. **Called for a light.** “Lights” in the Revision. All was darkness. **Fell down before Paul and Silas.** Awed, believing that they were under Divine protection. **Brought them out.** Of the inner prison, probably into the prison court. **What must I do to be saved?** Saved from suicide, no danger of death because the prisoners are there, awed by the wonderful events, aware that these men preached a new religion and salvation, he asks this question. **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.** He was a heathen. Faith was the first essential step. To Jews, on the day of Pentecost, already believing Peter's proposition, he said, in answer to the same question, “Repent and be baptized;” but the heathen jailer was not ready for this. Faith must first be wrought, and then that faith, leading to the acceptance of Christ, would save. His faith would save, because it would be the power that would lead him to follow Christ. **And thy house.** We learn from the [next verse](#) that “his house” could listen the **word of the Lord**, hence were not infants. It was needful to *preach the word*, for this heathen knew almost nothing of the gospel. In preaching it, Paul preached baptism, for that follows in [verse 33](#). **Washed their stripes.** They were all covered with bruises, blood and dust. His heart is now changed and filled with the spirit of mercy. Howson suggests that they were washed in the tank or reservoir within the prison court, supplied by the water from the roof. Here also all were **baptized straightway**. On the

baptism of his household, see notes on verse 15 above. **Brought them into his house.** The Revision says “up;” that is, from the court below where he washed their stripes, and was baptized. They were “brought out” (verse 30), the word was preached “in his house” (verse 32), they were then “taken” to the place of baptism (verse 33), after he “brought them into his house” (verse 34). **Believing in God with all his house.** All his household were, therefore, believers.

35–40. The magistrates sent the serjeants. The lictors are meant. It is possible that the magistrates had, in some way, heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. They wished, therefore, to quietly get rid of them. The Porcian and Valerian laws exempted all Roman citizens from stripes or torture. They had broken the law. **Let them come themselves and fetch us out.** They had been publicly scourged and tortured as evil doers, in violation of law. Paul insisted that they should be as publicly vindicated, not for their own honor, but for the sake of the church at Philippi. **Being Romans.** We learn from Acts 22:25 that Paul was born a Roman citizen. His father, or some remoter ancestor, had been admitted to Roman citizenship, a great privilege and honor. **They feared.** Had Paul insisted, the magistrates could have been severely punished. They might abuse aliens, but “to be a Roman was greater than to be a king.” Hence, they humbled themselves, and “came, and besought them, and desired them to depart out of that city.” **When they had seen the brethren.** Who now met at the house of Lydia. The church thus planted grew and was afterwards honored with an apostolic letter. **Departed.** To another field of labor. The reader should pause to reflect that Philippi was the first place, so far as we know, where the gospel was preached in Europe, that a woman was the first convert, that the messengers of the cross were met with blows, torture, and the dungeon, but through grace and the power of God triumphed gloriously. While Paul was in his next field of labor, Thessalonica, this young church of Philippi twice sent contributions to sustain him (Phil. 4:15, 16).



Chapter XVII

Paul at Athens

Summary — *The Journey to Thessalonica. Labors in the Synagogue. A Church Planted. The Jews Stir Up Persecution. Departure to Berea. Journey to Athens. The City Full of Idols. Paul's Evangelistic Labors. Taken to the Areopagus. His Address to the Athenians. The Diverse Results: Some Mock; Some Propose to Hear Again; Some Are Converted.*

1–4. Passed through Amphipolis ... came to Thessalonica. They traveled along the great Roman military road, which passed through Macedonia and Greece to Dyrrachium on the Adriatic sea, and then beginning on the other side at Brundisium, extended to Rome. Amphipolis was about thirty miles, a day's journey, southwest of Philippi; Apollonia about the same distance farther on, and Thessalonica about twenty-eight miles west of Apollonia. Thessalonica was a rich commercial city, the seat of the Roman governor of Macedonia, and is still a city of about 70,000 population, of whom one-third are Jews. Its excellent harbor makes it a coveted object of Austrian diplomacy in the Balkan provinces. **Paul, as his manner was.** It was his custom always to begin his work in the synagogue if he found one. Here he showed from the Old Testament that the promised Messiah should die, and rise again, that Jesus complied with these conditions, and hence must be the Christ. This line of argument was continued in the synagogue for three sabbaths. This indicates how long he continued to argue in the synagogue, not how long he remained here. **Some of them believed.** Of the Jews who heard in the synagogue. Also, **of the devout Greeks a great multitude.** These were religious Gentiles who had departed from heathenism, attended the synagogue, but had not been circumcised. **Of the chief women.** Some of them, no doubt, the wives of the “devout Greeks.” Some of the converts made during Paul's stay were idolators (1 *Thess.* 1:9). The result of these labors was the establishment of a flourishing church, the existence of which called out the two letters to the Thessalonians.

5–9. But the Jews. As usual, a part believed and the others were filled with hatred. **Certain lewd fellows.** “Vile fellows of the rabble.” The Jews called in the worst classes to aid them. **Assaulted the house of Jason.** Paul and Silas had abode there (*verse 7*), but were not found, probably from having a warning. **Drew Jason ... unto the rulers of the city.** Called “politarchs” in the Greek text, and so called in an inscription of the first century still seen on an ancient arch in the city. **These that have turned the world upside down.** A strong tribute to the revolutionizing power of the new Faith. It did change the world. **These all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar.** A false charge, but the one most likely to secure the attention of the magistrates. **Saying that there is another king.** The Romans never called their ruler *a king*, but he was so called by subject nations. The Jews said to Pilate, “We will have no king but Cæsar.” The only ground for the charge against Paul was that he preached



the kingdom of Christ. **They troubled ... the rulers.** Troubled, because it was a charge of disloyalty to the Roman Cæsar, and of an attempt to have another king. They were utterly ignorant of the nature of Christ's kingdom. **9. When they had taken security.** Of those asserted. They received some kind of a guarantee that there would be nothing done contrary to the laws of the empire.

10–12. Sent away Paul and Silas by night. By night so as to leave without a fresh disturbance. **Unto Berea.** Howson places Berea sixty, Hackett forty-five, miles west of Thessalonica. The first states that it now has 18,000 population, and is called Verria. **Many of them believed.** This would be the natural result. As elsewhere, the converts were Jews and devout Greeks, both men and women. **Honourable.** Of high rank.

13–15. They came thither. The inveterate hatred of the Jews of Thessalonica pursued him. When they began to stir up a disturbance at Berea, as Paul was the chief object of hatred, it was thought best for him to leave, but Silas and Timothy were left to continue the work. **To go as it were to the sea.** He started as though to embark on the sea, Berea not being a seaport. Whether he did, or went to Athens by land, is not stated. The journey by land was about 250 miles. The sea voyage would be much the quicker route. **They that conducted Paul.** Some of the Berean brethren. When they returned they took a message to Silas and Timothy to join him at once. From [1 Thess. 3:1, 2](#), we learn that Timothy was at once sent to Thessalonica.

16–18. While Paul waited. At first he seems to have intended to await the arrival of Timothy and Silas before he opened his work, but his spirit was too much stirred. **Wholly given to idolatry.** “Full of idols” in the Revision. This is confirmed by the Greek writers. The Greek historian Pausanias says that there were more idols in Athens than in all the rest of Greece combined. Many other writers bear the same testimony. Paul would see them wherever he turned his eyes. **Disputed ... in the market.** There was in Athens one great “market place,” or public square. The porches around it were favorite places for discussion. **Epicureans and Stoics.** Two of the philosophical schools then prevalent in Athens. The first held that the gods were careless about human affairs, and that a man's best course was to get as much pleasure out of life as possible. With them pleasure was the chief good. The Stoics were fatalists, believers in a sort of pantheism, and insisted on self-righteousness. Epicurus was the founder of the first sect; Zeno, of the second. **What will this babler say?** A contemptuous expression. **A setter forth of strange gods.** He spoke of God and the risen Jesus. Some have thought that they mistook *Anastasis*, the Greek for *resurrection*, for the name of a goddess.

19–21. Brought him unto the Areopagus. The Greek term for Mars' hill ([verse 22](#)). The hill was a place of assembly. There the supreme court of Athens met. There the courts that sat concerning religious matters convened. The associations had something to do, probably, with Paul being taken here to speak, though the meeting was informal and not



official. The hill is about fifty feet high, and was then surrounded by the most glorious works of art in Athens. **To tell or hear some new thing.** Demosthenes himself speaks of this propensity of the Athenians ([Philipp. 1:43](#)). It was in harmony with the spirit of the city that he should be called on to speak to gratify the curiosity of the populace.

22–31. Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill. In the Areopagus. Let the reader keep in mind that this address was spoken in the literary capital of the ancient world, the most cultured city of the earth to which every Roman who sought a finished education resorted to complete his studies, the home of the philosophers, orators, sculptors, painters and poets, and the great university where many thousands of strangers were gathered for study. This ancient city of so glorious history is the modern capital of Greece, and has about 100,000 inhabitants. **Ye men of Athens.** The introduction of Paul has always been regarded as a masterpiece of skill. He does not say, “In all things ye are too superstitious” (see Revision in the margin), or ye are “more religious than others.” His remark is a compliment, and he confirms it by a statement that he had found an altar to the **unknown God**. Besides thousands of altars and statues of deities whom they named, this altar was dedicated to the “Unknown,” as if to some deity whose presence they felt, but whom they did not comprehend. This Unknown, he announces, **I declare unto you**. Ancient writers speak of altars at Athens to the unknown God, or gods. Such an introduction was well calculated to fix the attention of his critical audience. **God that made the world.** He now declares the attributes of that unknown God: (1) The God that made the world; (2) Lord of heaven and earth; (3) dwelleth not in temples; (4) not worshiped by human hands; (5) giveth life to all that lives; (6) made of one blood all nations; (7) appointed that men should seek the Lord; (8) we are his offspring; (9) hence, the Godhead is not like any idol made by human hands. It dishonors so glorious a being to liken him to man's device. Then comes the application. **The times of this ignorance.** The times when there was no revelation in to those in darkness. **God winked at.** Overlooked. **Now commandeth.** The gospel is world-embracing. (1) All men, (2) everywhere, are command to repent. This call to repentance is urged because God **hath appointed a day**; the day of coming judgment, when the world will be judged through Christ. Of this the resurrection of Christ is an assurance. **Appointed times** ([verse 26](#)). Athens had had her day. She was once the mistress of the seas. The same fact is true of every nation. **Certain of your poets.** Aratus, who wrote about 200 years before. Also Cleanthes, in his Hymn to Jupiter. **Raised him from the dead** ([verse 31](#)). If Jesus was raised, all men will be raised; hence, the assurance of a general judgment after death.

32–34. When they heard of the resurrection. The Epicureans were materialists like the Sadducees. They no doubt mocked at the idea of a resurrection. The Stoics probably wished to **hear again of this matter**. There was a division of sentiment. **So Paul departed.** He regarded the field less fruitful than others. **Certain men ... believed.** His labors were not without results. One of the judges of the court of the Areopagus, the judges which were



chosen from the noblest men of the city, **Dionysius**, was converted, along with others. A church does not seem to have been founded at this time; at least it is not elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament. Even as late as the time of Constantine the Great, Athens was a rallying point of the dying Paganism.



Chapter XVIII

Paul at Corinth

Summary —*Paul Leaves Athens for Corinth. Works with Aquila and Priscilla. Preaches in the Synagogue. Departs to the Gentiles. Many Hear, Believe, and Are Baptized. The Lord Encourages Paul in a Vision. The Seizure of Paul by the Jews. Before the Judgment Seat of Gallio. The Accusers Driven Away. Paul Sails to Ephesus, Antioch and Jerusalem. Starts on His Third Missionary Tour. Apollos Taught by Aquila and Priscilla, and Preaches in Corinth.*

1. Came to Corinth. The distance between Athens and Corinth is forty-five miles by sea. The Acropolis of one city can be plainly discerned from the other. From the most remote times Corinth had been an important commercial center. Situated on the narrow isthmus between Greece proper and the Peloponesus, it had harbors on both the Ægean and Adriatic seas. The old city was destroyed by the Roman Consul Mummius, but it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar, made a Roman *colony*, (see notes on 16:12), and was, at the time of Paul's visit, a city of great splendor. Of its morals one fact will speak; one temple, that of Venus Pandemos, had a thousand courtesans attached.

2. Found a certain Jew named Aquila. We have no account of the conversion of these two Christians, so famous in connection with Paul's labors. The fact that he describes Aquila as a Jew seems to imply that he was not yet a Christian. I am of the opinion that they were converted at Corinth. For other notices of them, see [verses 18 and 26 below](#); [Rom. 16:3, 4](#); [2 Tim. 4:19](#), and other passages in the Epistles. **Born in Pontus.** A great province southeast of the Euxine Sea. **Lately come from Italy.** They had been driven out of Italy by a decree of the Emperor Claudius banishing all Jews from Rome. The Roman historian Suetonius, who lived about fifty years later, alludes to this decree, but states that the Jews made disturbances at the instigation of one *Chrestus*, a form the ancients often used for spelling *Christus*; a mistake of the historian, showing that they did not comprehend the spiritual nature of Christ's reign.

3. He abode with them. He did this **because they were of the same craft.** This is the first mention of the handicraft by which so often during his toilsome life Paul earned his daily bread. Every Jewish boy was taught a trade, and Paul no doubt learned his in Tarsus. Compare [20:34](#); [1 Thess. 2:9](#); [2 Thess. 3:8](#); [1 Cor. 4:12](#).

4. He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath. While toiling six days in the week in this strange city, on the Sabbath, according to his custom, he preached.

5. When Silas and Timotheus were come. When Paul left Berea for Athens they remained ([17:14](#)), but he sent for them to come to him. [1 Thess. 3:1](#) seems to imply that Timothy was sent back from Athens to Thessalonica. Some think, however, that they did not join him at all until he was in Corinth. **Was pressed in the spirit.** The Revision reads,

“Was constrained by the word,” that is, by the gospel message. When they came, probably freed from the need of daily labor, and encouraged by their presence, he began the work in earnest.

6. When they ... blasphemed. Against Jesus Christ. The opposition became malignant. **He shook his raiment.** See note on 13:51. **Your blood be upon your own heads.** “I have done my duty. The responsibility is now yours.”

7–11. He departed thence. Left the synagogue and taught no more there, but secured a place of teaching in the house of Justus, near by. The Revision reads, “Titus Justus.” Some have supposed this man to be the Titus to whom the epistle was afterwards written. **Crispus, the chief ruler.** Though the synagogue opposed, its president became a Christian with all his family. Paul baptized him with his own hands ([1 Cor. 1:14](#)). **Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.** This describes the gospel process of conversion. The word is preached, faith comes by hearing ([Rom. 10:17](#)), confession ([Rom. 10:10](#)) and baptism follow belief. This is the invariable order in the New Testament. **Spake the Lord to Paul.** In some way he manifested his presence and cheered him in his work, by the assurance of great success. We know that the result was not only a flourishing church in Corinth, to which two epistles were written, but churches through Achaia, the province of which Corinth was the capital ([2 Cor. 1:1](#).) **He continued there a year and six months.** While here, besides his other labors, he wrote the two epistles to the Thessalonians, the first of that grand series of letters which form so precious a feature of the New Testament.

12–17. When Gallio was the deputy of Achaia. Proconsul, in the Revision, as it should be. The province of Achaia had been transferred by Claudius to the government of the senate, and the governors of senatorial provinces were proconsuls, which is the meaning of the term rendered deputy. Gallio was the brother of Seneca, the philosopher and tutor of Nero. He is often mentioned in the literature of that day as a cultivated, polished man of the world. Seneca speaks of his brother's residence in Achaia. **The Jews made insurrection.** Rose up against Paul, no doubt enraged at the success of his work. His sleepless enemies always found some occasion to stir up strife. **Brought him to the judgment seat.** The court of Gallio. **This man persuadeth ... contrary to the law.** Their charge was that Paul sought to persuade men to worship contrary to the Roman law; that is, he preached a new and unlawful religion. Besides the state religion, Rome recognized various others, among them Judaism. These Jews attempted to show that Paul's gospel was not Judaism. **Gallio said unto the Jews.** Without suffering Paul to reply, he at once rebuked the Jews, who were evidently not in his favor. His rebuke shows that he ignorantly regarded Christianity as a kind of Judaism, and thought that the enmity of the Jews was due to the rivalry of sects. To him it was a question of “words and names, and of the Jewish law.” **He drave them.** Ordered his lictors to clear the court of the Jews. **The Greeks took Sosthenes.** He had evidently succeeded Crispus as chief ruler of the synagogue, and was probably foremost among the

accusers. The populace laid violent hands on him. **Gallio cared for none of those things.** The great Romans were usually utterly indifferent to religion at this period. Nor did Gallio care to see some violence inflicted on the leading Jews.

18–23. After this. After the affair before Gallio. How long Paul remained, whether weeks or months, is not stated. The object is to show that this occurrence did not cause his departure. **Sailed thence into Syria.** Antioch, the mother Gentile church from whence he started, was his destination. **Having shorn his head in Cenchrea.** Cenchrea was the eastern harbor of Corinth, and received the commerce of Asia. A church was planted here ([Rom. 16:1](#)). **For he had a vow.** We know that the Jews were wont to make personal vows ([Gen. 28:20](#); [Lev. 27:2](#); [1 Sam. 1:11](#); [2 Sam. 15:7](#), etc.) Paul complied with this custom of his race for some reason not explained. Why he took the vow, for how long, and what the shaving of the head had to do with it, are matters of conjecture. Nazarite vows required the shaving of the head in Jerusalem, and the hair cut off was offered in the temple. This could not have been a Nazarite vow. It is probable that he complied with some Jewish custom to aid him in reaching his own people with the gospel. **Came to Ephesus.** The great commercial metropolis of Asia Minor. **Left them there.** Priscilla and Aquila. **Entered the synagogue.** The Jews seem to have given him a favorable hearing, but he could not now tarry. **Keep this feast.** There are reasons for believing the feast to be Pentecost. **I will return to you.** He kept the promise. See [19:1](#). **Landed at Cæsarea.** He sailed from Ephesus to Cæsarea, and went up from thence, about seventy miles, to Jerusalem. **Saluted the church.** We have no other account of the incidents of the visit. **Went down to Antioch.** The headquarters of Gentile missions, the terminus of his second missionary tour. It had occupied at least three years. **Spent some time there.** He did not remain a great while, but departed to visit the churches he had planted on his last tour in Galatia and Phrygia, This is the beginning of his third missionary journey.

24–28. A certain Jew named Apollos. A native of Alexandria, a city where there were tens of thousands of Jews. He was an eloquent rabbi, learned in the Scriptures, a disciple of John the Baptist, but had not yet learned fully the gospel of Christ. **He spake diligently the things of the Lord.** That is, all that John understood. He believed that Jesus was the one coming after John, but he had learned only the gospel of the Lord's first commission ([Matt. chap. 10](#)). He was ignorant of the gospel of the second commission ([Matt. 28:19](#)), and of Pentecost. In my opinion his position was about that of the disciples of the Lord before the Great Commission was given. He had the gospel in part, but needed to be shown **the way of God more perfectly.** Aquila and Priscilla supplied this need, and equipped him for gospel work. **When he was disposed to pass into Achaia.** Greece, the province of which Corinth was the Roman capital. **The brethren wrote.** This is the first instance of church letters. This was written to show the brethren at Corinth that the bearer was worthy of their confidence. They no doubt testified to his soundness in the faith and Christian character. Paul alludes

to such letters in [2 Cor. 3:1](#). **He helped them much.** The believers at Corinth. Apollos was God's instrument to help them. **Through grace.** Through the Divine favor. **For he mightily convinced the Jews.** That he was a man of God of great power is shown by Paul's allusions to him. See [1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6](#).



Chapter XIX

Paul at Ephesus

Summary — *Twelve of John's Disciples Rebaptized. Paul Teaches in the School of Tyrannus. God's Presence with Paul in Power. Sceva and His Sons. The Books of Magic Burned. Timothy and Erastus Sent into Macedonia. The Tumult Raised by Demetrius and the Craftsmen. The Wise Advice of the City Recorder.*

1. Paul having passed through the upper coasts. The mountain highlands of the interior of Asia Minor (see 18:23). Ephesus, on the coast, was near sea level. **Finding certain disciples.** These disciples had only been baptized with John's baptism (verse 3), and had but an imperfect knowledge of Christ. Their case presents some difficulties hard to explain, unless we had more of the facts. They had evidently been baptized by some of John's disciples, possibly in Asia, after the Great Commission was given, and were no doubt Jews. Some think that they were baptized by Apollos before he was "instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly" (18:25, 26).

2. Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? This question is asked in order to lead their way to a knowledge of their imperfect obedience. For their reply, see the Revision. They had heard of the Holy Spirit; John always spoke of Christ as one who should bestow it, but they had heard nothing of the scenes of Pentecost and the descent of the Spirit. It must not be forgotten that they lived nearly a thousand miles from Jerusalem, in an age when each part of the world knew little of what transpired elsewhere.

3. Unto what then were ye baptized? This question implies that the possession of the Holy Spirit is closely connected with a right baptism (compare 2:38). The only case in which the Spirit was received before baptism was that of Cornelius. For the reasons of this exception to the rule, see notes on 10:44–47. The fact that these disciples "know nothing of the Holy Spirit being given," showed that there was something wrong about their baptism. **Unto John's baptism.** While John's baptism differed from that commanded in Christ's commission, the apostles, the one hundred and twenty, and the "five hundred brethren" (1 Cor. 15:6), as far as we know, received no other. We are to infer, therefore, that it was valid until Christ's baptism took its place. Why, then, were these disciples re-baptized? The only explanation is that their baptism took place after John's baptism had been superseded by that of Christ, or after the Savior had been crucified.

4. John verily baptized. His baptism was (1) of Repentance; (2) of Faith in a coming Savior. Christian baptism is (1) of Repentance; (2) of Faith in a Savior that has come, died, risen, and been exalted to the heavens; (3) is into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; (4) enjoys not only the promise of remission of sins, but of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

5. When they heard this. Paul's explanation of the difference between Christ's and John's baptism, to which we have only an allusion. The example of these men shows that if a baptism is imperfect, from an ignorance of Christ's will, it is not wrong to correct the defect by a more perfect obedience.

6. When Paul had laid his hands on them. It seemed proper that these men should enjoy, not only the ordinary influence of the Spirit, but that some spiritual gifts should be imparted, such as were given by the laying on of apostolic hands. Compare [8:17](#); [Rom. 1:11](#). **Spake with tongues.** Of this ancient gift we learn (1) it edified only the speaker ([1 Cor. 14:4](#)); (2) to benefit others an interpreter was needed ([1 Cor. 14:5-27](#)); (3) God could understand ([1 Cor. 14:2](#)). This gift disappeared at an early date from the church.

7. The men were about twelve. Thus these men appear in this episode and then disappear from our knowledge. They were now endowed for usefulness, and perhaps did great service in the religious revolution that soon transformed all that part of Asia.

8. He went into the synagogue. Once before he had spoken in it, on his former missionary journey ([18:19, 20](#)). Now for three months of the three years spent in Ephesus he occupies the same pulpit. These three years were comparatively quiet, but among the most successful of Paul's missionary career. About seventeen years of busy toil had now passed since his conversion.

9. When divers were hardened. As soon as they began to raise scenes of strife in the synagogue, he ceased to teach there. He removed the disciples from the synagogue, forming a separate body, and taught **daily in the school of one Tyrannus**. Either a place where lectures were given on Greek philosophy, or, as some have supposed, a rabbinical school. One Greek New Testament manuscript says he taught "from the sixth to the tenth hour," specifying the hours that he had the use of the building.

10. Continued for two years. That is, for two years he used this building. His whole stay in Ephesus was three years ([20:31](#)). **So that all they which dwelt in Asia.** The Roman province of Asia of which Ephesus was the capital. It embraced only a part of Asia Minor. We know that Paul's preaching had a powerful effect (1) from the results upon those who practiced magic; (2) from the alarm of Demetrius ([verse 24](#)); (3) from the statement of Pliny, about forty years later, in his celebrated letter to Trajan, that Christianity had caused the temples of the gods to be deserted.

11, 12. God wrought special miracles. If miracles are wrought, it is always God's work, and he can work them as he wills. In this case, in order to magnify the name of his preacher, he let his power go with articles that were carried from Paul to the sick. The Lord, in his wisdom, can make use of any instrument he chooses.

13-16. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists. Our Lord refers to these Jewish exorcists in [Matt. 12:27](#). Josephus (*Antiq.* 8:2, 5) declares that certain Jews claimed to expel demons. He says that their knowledge of the art was derived from Solomon. These, witnessing



the wonderful power of the name of Christ, thinking it a sort of incantation, took it upon themselves to use it instead of their usual formula. **Seven sons of one Sceva.** He is said to be “chief of the priests.” Some think he was a chief ruler of the synagogue, but it is far more probable that he was a head of one of the twenty-four courses of priests (these heads were called “chief priests”) who had been deposed for some cause and had wandered away from Palestine. **15, 16. And the evil spirit answered.** The evil spirit spoke and acted by means of the man possessed. It is possible that in this instance the spirit was overruled so as to magnify the gospel preached by Paul. On this question of demoniacal possession, See notes on [Matt. 8:29](#).

17–20. This was known to all the Jews and Greeks. Ephesus was a great seat of magical arts. This event would have a powerful effect on those who dealt in charms, incantations, and magic, and of course would exalt the name of Christ. **Many that believed came.** They had not been freed before from their old superstitions. If we are disposed to wonder at this, let us remember that there are Christians still who wear charms, watch signs, or go to fortune tellers. **Which used curious arts.** Magical arts. **Brought their books together, and burned them.** There was real repentance, and they brought forth its fruits. These *books*, alluded to by ancient writers, were manuscript volumes of charms, incantations, recipes for love philtres, and other things of similar character. **They counted the price of them.** If the “piece of silver” is the Attic drachma or Roman denarius, as is probable (about sixteen cents), the whole value would be about \$8,000. These “books” had considerable money value on account of their rarity. **So mightily grew the word of God.** About this time the apostle wrote from Ephesus in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: “For a great and effectual door is opened unto me” ([1 Cor. 16:9](#)).

21, 22. After these things were ended. What has just been recorded. **Paul purposed in the spirit.** Had determined, after a journey into Macedonia and Greece, to visit the churches planted in his former tour, to return to Jerusalem, and then to **see Rome.** This was all carried out, but in a way that at this time he did not foresee. **Sent into Macedonia.** A band of missionaries always attended him and were sent where there seemed to be need. See [1 Cor. 4:17](#); [16:10](#). **Erastus.** Not before named, but mentioned also in [Rom. 16:23](#), as “the chamberlain of Corinth.”

23–34. No small stir about that way. Thus far his labors at Ephesus had been without violent opposition. We now have given the account of the events that led to his departure. **A certain man named Demetrius, ... made silver shrines.** The temple of Diana at Ephesus was counted one of the wonders of the world. It was at this time (this was the third temple which had been built in succession) of white marble, 425 feet long by 220 wide, with 127 columns, and of surpassing wealth and splendor. It contained an image said to have fallen from heaven ([verse 35](#)). It was visited by thousands of pilgrims, and a great industry grew up in making miniature representations of the temple, of wood, gold, or silver. This was the

work of Demetrius and his fellow-workers. After paganism fell, much of the material of this temple was transported to Constantinople, and was used in the construction of the church of St. Sophia. **Sirs.** Observe the argument of Demetrius: (1) By this craft we have our wealth; (2) Paul teaches that these are not gods that are made with hands; (3) therefore our craft is in danger; (4) the great goddess Diana is despised; (5) great is Diana of the Ephesians! The prime incentive of his religious zeal is that his craft is in danger. Many are like him still. **The whole city was filled with confusion.** Nothing would more quickly arouse a mob than the belief that both their business and religion were assailed. **Having caught Gaius.** A Macedonian. **Aristarchus.** Of Thessalonica. **They rushed with one accord into the theatre.** The remains of the theatre are still to be seen. It was of vast extent, and would seat, as its remains show, from 20,000 to 30,000 persons. It was the custom to use the theatre, not only for amusements, but for public assemblies. **The disciples suffered him not.** Paul's intrepidity and zeal would have led him to appear in person to reply to the charges, but the Ephesian disciples thought that he would be sacrificed to the rage of the mob. **The chief of Asia.** The chief officials of the province. These men, called Asiarchs, were ten in number, and were chosen annually from the chief towns of the province called Asia to preside over games and festivals. The president of their body always lived in Ephesus. These men were his **friends.** Possibly in sympathy with the gospel. We have many instances in the life of Paul in which the great Roman officials treat him with not only respect, but sympathy. **They drew Alexander out of the multitude.** A Jew, evidently of great prominence, and put forward by the Jews, in order to disavow Paul, and to turn the tumult to their advantage. They wished to shift all blame on the Christians. The Gentile aversion to Jews was, however, too great to allow him a hearing.

35–40. And when the townclerk had appeased the people. Stopped their foolish outcry so that he could be heard. This town clerk, or recorder, was an officer of great influence in the Grecian cities of Asia. He stood next in rank to the officer that we now call the mayor, and in the absence of the latter acted for him. His address was a very judicious one. **The image which fell down from Jupiter.** It was a common superstition that some hideous image worshiped in a heathen temple had fallen from heaven. Some of them were meteoric stones, of others the origin was unknown, and the delusion was in part due to the deception of the priests. The Palladium of Troy, the Diana of Tauris, and the Pallas of Athena were all said to have fallen. **37. These men.** Gaius and Aristarchus (see [verse 29](#)), men against whom there was no charge. They were neither **robbers of temples** (see the Revision) nor blasphemers of Diana. **If Demetrius.** If they have anything to charge there are courts of justice. **Deputies.** Proconsuls. **We are in danger.** The Roman law made it a capital offence to incite a riot, nor did the Roman officials wink at any disturbance in the provinces. Ephesus was

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what was called “a free city;” that is, it governed itself in local matters. It might have its liberties taken away for just such occurrences as those of this day.



Chapter XX

The Second Visit to Europe and Return

Summary —*Paul Departs to Macedonia. And to Greece. Paul at Troas. The Meeting on the First Day of the Week to Break Bread. The Meeting with the Elders of the Church at Ephesus. Paul's Affectionate Warnings. The Sorrowful Farewell.*

1–6. After the uproar was ceased. It had been his purpose to go into Macedonia (19:21), but to remain at Ephesus until after Pentecost (1 Cor. 16:8), and that time (about the middle of May, a.d. 57 or 58) had probably come. Hence, having *exhorted* the disciples (Revision), he departed. It was on his way to Greece that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written. He speaks in 2 Cor. 12:14 and 13:1, of coming “the third time” to Corinth. Hence, Hackett supposes that during the three years at Ephesus he made a flying visit to Corinth by sea to correct disorders in the church there. **When he had gone over those parts.** Visited Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea at least, and possibly other Macedonian churches. **He came into Greece.** To Corinth. During the three months that he remained in Corinth, he wrote the greatest of all his letters, the Epistle to the Romans. **The Jews laid in wait.** We have no further details, but it was, no doubt, a murderous plot. To prevent it, his plans were changed, and instead of sailing to Syria, he again took the route to Macedonia. **There accompanied him to Asia, Sopater.** The Revision, based on the oldest MSS, calls him “the son of Pyrrhus.” He is otherwise unknown. **Aristarchus.** See 19:29. **Secundus** is not named elsewhere. **Gaius of Derbe.** So named to distinguish him from another Gaius (19:29). Derbe was in Lycaonia. See 14:6. **Timotheus.** This celebrated disciple was of Lystra near Derbe. See notes on 16:1–4. **Tychicus.** Supposed to be an Ephesian. See Col. 4:7, 8; Eph. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:12. **Trophimus.** He attended Paul all the way to Jerusalem. See Acts 21:29 and 2 Tim. 4:20. **These going before.** Paul evidently tarried with the church at Philippi, while they went on to Troas. **Us.** Luke was now a companion. When Paul first passed into Europe, six or seven years before, he was with him (16:12), but there are reasons for thinking that he had remained and labored in Philippi until this time. Henceforth he attends the great apostle. **Came to Troas in five days.** The winds must have been contrary. Formerly (16:11) the voyage was made in two days. For Troas, see note on 16:8.

7–12. On the first day of the week when, etc. The language shows that it was the custom to meet on the first day of the week, and shows the leading object of that meeting. This was not a farewell meeting for Paul, for then the day of the week would not have been mentioned, but the regular weekly assemblage of the saints. They came together, primarily, **to break bread, i. e.,** to observe the Lord's Supper. Dean Howson says: “We have here an unmistakable allusion to the practice, which began evidently immediately after the resurrection of our Lord, of assembling on the first day of the week for religious purposes.” He also shows that

the Lord arose on the first day of the week, showed himself to the apostles a second time one week later on the first day of the week, that the church was founded and the Holy Spirit shed forth on Pentecost, which was on the first day of the week. On the same day the disciples at Troas meet to break bread, the Corinthians meet, take collections (1 Cor. 16:2) and eat the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20), and the Lord on Patmos reveals himself to John (Rev. 1:10). In addition to this, the early church writers from Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, to Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian, all with one consent, declare that the church observed the first day of the week. They are equally agreed that the Lord's Supper was observed weekly, on the first day of the week. **Paul preached.** Though it was the special object of this weekly meeting *to break bread*, preaching was a part of the worship. **Continued his speech until midnight.** About to depart, probably never to see them more, all were anxious to hear the great apostle, and he had much to say. **There were many lights.** This is mentioned to show how they could meet at night. In those time public meetings and even the games of the theatre were by daylight. Means of lighting were very imperfect. **Eutychnus.** Sitting in the window, and at last overcome by drowsiness, he fell to the earth, three stories below. The language implies that he was killed by the fall, and restored by the Divine power, exercised through Paul. The history is plain, simple, and easy to understand. Compare 2 Kings 4:34. **When he ... had broken bread and eaten.** Opinions are divided whether the Lord's Supper had been celebrated before his long discourse and this was a common meal just before his departure in the early morning, or whether these words allude to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. I incline to the last opinion. The fact that the same phraseology is used in both places shows that they refer to the same thing. Some, however, insist that if this be true, the Lord's Supper was celebrated on Monday morning before day. This does not necessarily follow. The Jews began their day at sunset. Sunday began at sunset of what he call Saturday. The early churches, composed in large part of Jews at first, often followed the Jewish custom. It is probable that this meeting at Troas began at the close of the Sabbath, in the evening, was continued through the night, the Lord's Supper being celebrated in the latter part of the night, before dawn of Sunday, and that at daybreak Paul departed. He had remained over a week to have the privilege of observing the Lord's Supper with them. So, too, he remained a week with the disciples at Tyre (21:4) and with the brethren at Puteoli (28:14).

13–16. Sailed unto Assos. The distance from Troas to Assos by sea, round Cape Lectum, was about forty miles, while across by land it was only half as far. Paul, probably attended by a number of brethren, chose to walk across. Vast ruins now mark the site of the seaport of Assos. **Mitylene.** The next stopping place, about thirty miles from Assos, still the capital of the island of Lesbos. It is now called Castro. **Sailed to Chios.** A populous island near the Asiatic coast, famed for its wine. In 1822, the Turks almost exterminated the inhabitants in a frightful massacre. **Samos.** All these islands are celebrated in Greek history. Samos is separated from the coast only by a narrow channel. **Trogyllium.** A promontory not far from

Ephesus. **Came to Miletus.** A city famous from the time of Homer, but at this period sinking in importance on account of the prosperity of Ephesus, only thirty miles away. A swamp and a few ruins now mark its site. **Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus.** If he stopped at this scene of three years' labor, he felt that he could not tear himself away without a considerable stay. But it was his plan to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost, now not far off. Hence, instead of stopping at Ephesus, he sent for the elders to visit him at Miletus.

17–27. Called the elders of the church. No mention has been made before of their appointment, but it was Paul's custom to “ordain elders in every church” (14:23). These elders were also called “bishops” (see [verse 28](#), Revision). In apostolic days there was a plurality of elders in every church; these elders were “bishops,” or *overseers*. There was no distinct episcopal order. This is admitted even by the advocates of an episcopate. Dean Howson, of the Church of England, declares (Acts, p. 475) that no special order of bishops was created in the lifetime of Paul, or the apostles, but he dates their origin about the close of the first or beginning of the second century. Prof. Rothe, of Heidelberg (quoted by Lightfoot on Philippians), supposes that after the martyrdom of Paul, Peter and James the necessity was felt for a general supervision, and that this gave rise to the appointment of diocesan bishops. By the admission of all scholars, the episcopal order is *post*-apostolic. **Ye know.** This is a pastoral address, worthy of the closest study by all pastors and elders. First, the apostle calls attention to his own example. Every elder ought to be an example. **Taught you publicly.** Three months in the synagogue at Ephesus; two years in the school of Tyrannus, besides his teaching in the church assemblies. **Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord.** These items embrace the sum of Christian doctrine. Repentance of our sins against our Creator, the resolve to turn from them; then faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior, by trust in his grace and obedience to his will. **Now I go bound in the spirit.** Urged by a sense of duty, yet knowing from the premonitions of the Holy Spirit that bonds and afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem. **Ye shall see my face no more.** Paul does not state this as a revelation, but as his conviction. He then thought it not improbable that he would soon die for Christ. Many think that he was released from his first imprisonment in Rome. Dean Howson says: “It is *almost* certain that Paul, after his liberation from the imprisonment spoken of in [Acts XXVIII.](#), did revisit the Asian churches (see notices and greetings and directions in [2 Tim. IV.](#) and in [Tit. 1:5](#), especially the words, ‘Trophimus I have left at Miletum sick’).” **Pure from the blood of all men.** Not responsible, if they are lost, for he had declared “the whole counsel of God.”

28–31. Take heed. Here begin the special admonitions to the elders. **To yourselves.** Their own lives must be the first subject of watchfulness. No man can be so exalted that he does not need to watch and pray. **The flock.** The church, the fold of the Good Shepherd, of whom they were under-shepherds, or *pastors*. **To feed the church.** “On the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby.” **Grievous wolves.** The figure of the flock is still kept

up. The “grievous wolves” were false teachers, and the special reference is to the Judaizing teachers, who taught that the Gentile Christians must keep the Jewish law. Paul's ministry was a long battle with the schismatics. See [1 Tim. 1:3, 4, 20](#); [2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17](#); also 1. By turning to these references the names of some six of these “grievous wolves” will be found. Also in [Rev. 2:6](#) we learn that there were false teachers at Ephesus.

32–35. I commend you to God. In their weighty responsibility he commends them to God. **And to the word of his grace.** The word will be a guide in all their difficulties and is **able to build them up and give them an inheritance among the sanctified.** If it is followed, they cannot stray. **Sanctified.** All Christians are spoken of as sanctified. See [1 Cor. 1:2; 6:9–11](#). **I have coveted no man's silver.** No motives of self-interest could induce him to labor in the work to which he was called. It offered no earthly emoluments. We have found that at Corinth he worked with his own hands for support. We here learn that he did the same thing at Ephesus. See [18:3](#); [2 Thess. 3:10–12](#); [1 Cor. 4:11, 12](#). He also warns Timothy to flee from the love of money as hurtful, an admonition that should never be forgotten. **It is more blessed to give than to receive.** These words, quoted by Paul, as well known are not found in any one of the four Gospels, but are none the less genuine. They only preserve a fragment of the sayings and doings of our Lord ([John 21:25](#)). Giving, even here, secures more real happiness than receiving, and besides, is Godlike and blesses forever.

36–38. He kneeled down, and prayed. This was the most appropriate parting for these ancient men of God. **Fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him.** An Eastern custom of exhibiting great affection. **That they should see his face no more.** This thought caused their greatest sorrow, but we have seen that it is probable that they did see him again. It was not, however, until after Acts was written. See note on verse 25.

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Chapter XXI

Paul Seized in the Temple

Summary —*The Voyage to Tyre. The Prayer-Meeting on the Seashore. Abiding with Philip the Evangelist in Cæsarea. The Prophecy of Agabus. The Importunity of the Disciples That Paul Should Not Go to Jerusalem. The Meeting of Paul with James and the Elders at Jerusalem. Their Request That He Should Disarm Prejudice by a Nazarite Vow. The Attempt to Kill Him in the Temple. The Rescue by the Chief Captain.*

1–6. After we were gotten from them. Chrysostom, himself, a Greek, says the Greek word means “had torn away.” **Came to ... Coos.** A small island, famous for its wines, forty miles south of Miletus. Hippocrates, the great physician, and Apelles, the painter, were born here. **The day following to Rhodes.** Fifty miles further south, one of the most famous islands of the world, noted for its beauty, its Colossus, its defence by the Knights of St. John against the Turks, and for giving its name to one of the American states. **Thence to Patara.** On the coast of Lydia. Here he took another ship, this probably being the destination of the first. **Finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia.** Tyre, where he landed, was a Phoenician city. **When we had discovered Cyprus.** Sailed in sight of Cyprus. This would arouse the memories of Paul's first missionary labors here about fourteen years before (see [13:4–13](#)). **Sailed into Syria.** Syria embraced Phoenicia, Palestine and Antioch, in the Roman use of the term. **Landed at Tyre.** Still a considerable city, though its ancient glories had faded on account of the growth of Alexandria and Antioch, which had become the commercial centers of the East. “Its most important ruins now lie beneath the sea and can be seen through its waters.” **Finding disciples.** In [chapter 11:19](#), we find that preachers of the word came to Phoenicia, of which Tyre was the capital, and probably planted the church **Tarried seven days.** As this statement is made three times where Paul found brethren ([20:6](#); [28:14](#)), it evidently implies that he tarried at each place to have one solemn meeting on the first day of the week, as at Troas, and to celebrate the Lord's Supper with the church. **Said to Paul through the Spirit.** Predicted the sufferings that would befall him, and endeavored to dissuade him. **We kneeled down on the shore and prayed.** This was an affecting sight. The whole church, men, women and children, gathered around the great apostle and his companions, and the voice of prayer arose above the ceaseless roar of the waves.

7–14. Came to Ptolemais. Here the journey by sea ended. This city, now called Acre, and having 15,000 population, is one of the oldest cities in the world, and called Accho in [Judges 1:31](#), from which term its modern name is derived. It had the name Ptolemais for a few centuries from Ptolemy Soter, an Egyptian king who rebuilt it. **Came to Cæsarea.** By land, a distance of thirty to forty miles. Paul had been here twice before ([9:30](#); [18:22](#)). The place is memorable for the conversion of the first Gentiles. **Entered into the house of Philip.**

The evangelist of whose work we have an account in [chapter 8](#), nearly a quarter of a century before. The last account of him ([8:40](#)) shows him preaching in the cities of the sea-coast. In one of these we now find him settled. **Had four daughters ... which did prophesy.** Compare [Acts 2:17](#). The prophetic spirit in either the Old or New Testament is not confined to a single sex. Deborah and Huldah are Old Testament examples, and in the New Testament, Elisabeth, Mary, Anna, and the daughters of Philip are instances. **A certain prophet named Agabus.** He is named in [11:28](#) as a prophet. He had probably come down to meet Paul. **Took Paul's girdle.** The belt or sash that bound the loose, flowing robe worn. In the style of the Old Testament prophets he impressed his lesson in a dramatic manner. Compare [1 Kings 22:11](#); [Isa. 20:2, 3](#); [Jer. 13:4–9](#); [Ezek. 4:1, 2, 3](#). **When we heard these things.** The striking manner of Agabus, and perhaps his statements of the dark plots among the Jews against Paul, had such an effect that all sought, more earnestly than ever before, to dissuade him from going on. Why should the apostle, with these certain dangers revealed, press on right into the stronghold of enemies thirsting for his blood, infuriated by the accounts that came up from Asia and Europe of his success in converting Jews to Christ? Had not a deep sense of duty impelled him, we may be certain that he would have done this. *There can be no doubt that he braved the danger in order to prevent a schism that threatened the church.* False reports were circulated at Jerusalem concerning his teaching to Jewish Christians; the church there was filled with prejudice against him; from thence Judaizing teachers went forth to interfere with his work. Hence, in a loving spirit, filled with that charity that suffers all things, and carrying large offerings gathered in the Gentile churches for the poor at Jerusalem, he came to disarm prejudice and show the falsehood of the stories alleged about his teachings. There are times when duty calls the man of God to face the danger; so went the Lord to Jerusalem in spite of the protests of his disciples; so went Luther to Worms, though warned of his danger; so went Paul to Jerusalem.

15–17. Took up our carriages. Our baggage. See Revision. “Carriages” once meant the things carried. **Went with us certain disciples of Cæsarea.** Paul was often thus attended. They seem to have gone in order to find a place for him with an old disciple, a native of Cyprus, now dwelling in Jerusalem, named Mnason. **Come to Jerusalem.** This is the fifth time Paul entered the Holy City since his departure on that memorable journey to Damascus about twenty-two years before. The present probable date is near Pentecost (the latter part of May), a.d. 58.

18–27. Paul went in with us unto James. For the identification and position of James see note on [15:13](#). This James was not one of the twelve, but was “the brother of the Lord,” a witness of the risen Savior ([1 Cor. 15:7](#)). “James the brother of John” had been slain ([12:2](#)); of James the son of Alphæus, little is known, but James “the brother of the Lord” ([Gal. 1:19](#)) was now the leader of the church at Jerusalem. No mention is made of any one of the twelve, and it is probable that those still living in a.d. 58, were in other fields of labor. The “elders”

are mentioned, but not the apostles, a proof that none of the latter were present. **When they heard it.** Paul's report of the wonderful success of the gospel. They evidently approved of and sympathized with his work. **Thou seest, brother, now many thousands ... believe.** The Greek reads: "How many tens thousands." There were not only many thousands of Christians in the Jerusalem church, but many thousands of Jewish Christians who had come up to the feast of Pentecost. Twenty-seven years before there were five thousand men who believed in Jerusalem (4:4). **They are all zealous for the law.** "Zealots" for the law in the Greek. They believed upon Christ as the Messiah, but did not understand that the Old Covenant had passed away to give place to the New (Heb. 8:13). Hence, while they observed the Christian rites, they still kept up the forms of Judaism. It took a direct interposition of the Spirit to teach that Gentiles were entitled to baptism without circumcision. It required a council in Jerusalem to settle the question that Gentile Christians were not to keep the Jewish law. God taught the church, lesson by lesson, but up to this time that at Jerusalem had not yet learned that they were freed from the obligation to keep the law of Moses. Paul, in advance of the rest, had learned that the Jewish forms were not to be imposed upon Gentiles, were not an obligation upon Jewish Christians, but he still observed them, at least in part, himself, and so far from bidding Jewish brethren to forsake Moses, he circumcised Timothy, and said, "Let every man abide in the same calling (whether Jew or Gentile) in which he is called." (Read the whole connection of 1 Cor. 7:18-20). He had not, therefore, taught **Jews to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. Do therefore this.** This counsel is given that the multitude of Jewish Christians may see that Paul still kept the Jewish customs. As he did keep them, not as a matter of obligation, but as a Jew, in order that he might reach his own race, it involved no sacrifice of principle. **We have four men which have a vow.** These were Jewish Christians. The vow was a Nazaritish vow (see Num. 6:14-18 for a description). This vow involved living an ascetic life for a certain period, sometimes thirty days, and was terminated by shaving the head, burning the hair as an offering, and offering a sacrifice. The advice to Paul is to associate himself in this vow, **and be at charges with them** for the necessary expenses, and thus show that he kept the time-honored customs of the Jewish race. **As touching the Gentiles.** The duties of the Gentiles had been settled in the council described in @chap. 15. The advice of James was no doubt given from the best of motives. His position was a difficult one. The fanaticism of the Jewish nation, which broke out in war a few years later, was growing intense. The national feeling in the church had to be handled with great care. It would not do for the church to believe that Paul had become a renegade from their race. Paul, aware of all these difficulties, generously complied for the sake of peace and unity. We cannot be certain that the advice was just right, or that Paul did just right to comply, but these grand men acted according to their knowledge, and the record of Acts portrays both the shortcomings and the perfection of its great worthies. **Entered into the temple.**



Purifying himself, he entered the temple, gave notice that the sacrifices would be offered at a definite time, and the period of the vows be closed. **When the seven days were almost ended.** Seven days was an ordinary period of purification (*Exod. 29:37; Lev. 12:2; 13:6; Num. 12:14*, etc.).

Concerning this advice of James and compliance of Paul, Pres. Milligan says: "Three different views have been taken: (1) That Paul in this case acted ignorantly, not being aware of the fact that the law of Moses was no longer binding; (2) that, like Peter (*Gal. 2:11*), he acted from fear of the Jewish brethren; (3) that he acted in conformity with the law of Christian benevolence which requires us to respect even the weaknesses and prejudices of our brethren, so far as this can be done without in any way neglecting the requirements of the Gospel." The third hypothesis is the best, but some explanations are needful. The Jewish Christians were slowly emancipated from Judaism, and they did not reach the clear conviction, until after the temple was destroyed, that its sacrifices were obsolete. Gentiles were forbidden to sacrifice to idols, but there was no such prohibition with regard to the altar of Jehovah. Even Paul evidently at this time thought of the sacrifices as, like circumcision, a matter of indifference. It was left for the next generation to learn that the inspired writings of Paul himself lead to the conclusion that all the sacrifices of the temple altar pointed to the Lamb of God, and that, from the time he was offered, they became obsolete.

27-40. The Jews ... of Asia. From the Roman province called Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital. As Paul had spent three years in that city, they knew him well. These Jews were watching Paul, had seen him in company with Trophimus, an Ephesian Greek, and when they saw Paul in the temple keeping the Nazarite vow, seized him and raised an outcry. **Hath polluted this holy place.** They not only charge him with teaching against Judaism, but with bringing Greeks into the part of the temple where all Gentiles were forbidden to come. The Palestine Exploration Society found in their excavations an inscription that must have been over the passage between the court of the Gentiles and the interior court, where the chambers for Nazarites were, forbidding aliens to pass the balustrade on the penalty of death. Nothing could arouse a greater outburst of fanaticism than the belief that Paul had taken Gentiles within the sacred precincts. **They took Paul, and drew him out of the temple.** He was, no doubt, within the inner courts, and was hurried without, and the gates shut, to prevent the pollution of the sacred courts by the shedding of blood. They proposed to slay him when they had dragged him where it could be done without profanation. They were willing to murder, but not to profane the temple. **They went about to kill him.** Had Trophimus been within, their customs might have permitted them to kill him, but to slay Paul could only be a murder. **Tidings came unto the chief captain.** The commander of the garrison in the castle of Antonia, overlooking the temple. The watch could see the uproar from their elevated outlook, and the soldiers in a moment would rush down the staircase that led into the temple area, and appear upon the scene. The fortress joined the temple wall



and had two flights of stairs leading into the temple courts. **Took him, and commanded him to be bound.** The first thought of the commander was that the man seized was some great criminal. From [verse 38](#) we learn that he supposed Paul was an Egyptian rebel. Hence he ordered him bound. **Canst thou speak Greek?** When Paul reached the head of the stairs, as he was carried by the soldiers into the fortress, he addressed the officer in Greek. Surprised that he should use that language, the chief captain asked if he was not **that Egyptian.** Josephus twice mentions this notorious Egyptian, a pretended prophet, and leader of the *Sicarii*, or “Assassins.” This “Egyptian” brigand was probably illiterate and did not speak Greek. **I am a Jew of Tarsus.** As Tarsus was “no mean city,” a free city, he was entitled to some consideration. **When he had given him license.** To address the people. He stood at the head of the stairs, with the vast throng in the court below. Beckoning with the hand to call attention, he addressed them in their beloved Hebrew tongue. There is no excitement, no resentment, but an earnest purpose to benefit them by preaching Christ.



Chapter XXII

Paul's Address to the Jews in the Temple

Summary — *Paul Speaks in Hebrew to the People. His Jewish Birth at Tarsus. His Education at the Feet of Gamaliel. His Persecution of the Church. The Appearance of Christ to Him on the Way to Damascus. His Baptism. The Vision of the Lord in the Temple. Sent to the Gentiles. The Interruption of the Mob. Appeals to His Rights as a Roman.*

1–3. Spake in the Hebrew tongue. The tongue called the Hebrew, a dialect of the ancient Hebrew, and distinguished from it by the name *Aramaic*. It was the common language of Judea in the time of Christ. It would be understood by all Paul's Jewish hearers, while many could not understand Greek. **I am a Jew.** In order to refute their charge that he taught against Moses, he calls attention to his Jewish birth, and his education under their venerated doctor of the law, Gamaliel. For the character of this teacher, See notes on 5:34. **Was zealous toward God.** His zeal was like theirs, honest, and ardent. Observe how he associates himself with his hearers. It was the first opportunity he had ever had to explain to the people of Jerusalem the reason why he had become a Christian.

4, 5. I persecuted this way. He did this from his zeal towards God, whom he thought he thus served. **Unto the death.** This seems to imply that Stephen was not the only martyr in whose death he was an accomplice. **The high priest doth bear me witness.** The high priest in a.d. 37, the time Saul of Tarsus was sent to Damascus, was not now high priest, having been deposed by the Romans, but was probably a member of the Sanhedrim at this time. It is also probable that the present high priest personally knew about all facts. There were many present who knew that he had been a commissioned persecutor.

6–11. Nigh unto Damascus about noon. See notes on 9:3–10, where the account of Paul's conversion is given. There the time of day is not mentioned. The light appeared when the sun was at its brightest, and was brighter than the sun (26:13). **Saul, Saul.** The Voice spoke in the Hebrew tongue (26:14). **Why persecutest thou me?** By persecuting those for whom Christ died. **Heard not the voice.** Some have insisted that there is a contradiction between this statement and that of 9:7, but the word *hear* is often used in the sense of “understand.” Once the writer heard Abraham Lincoln address a great audience. Some, at a distance, cried out, “We cannot hear.” They meant *understand*, for they could hear the sound of his voice. **I could not see for the glory of that light.** In chapter 9 we are told that he was blinded, but not the cause.

12–16. One Ananias, a devout man. In the account of 9:10 we are told he was a disciple. Though a disciple, he kept the law strictly. **The God of our fathers.** Of the Jews. **See that Just One.** The Lord Jesus Christ. It was necessary that Paul should see the Lord in order to become a witness. He refers more than once to the fact that he had seen the risen Christ (1

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Cor. 9:1; 15:8). Arise, and be baptized. Dean Howson (*Acts*, p. 501) says that the verb “baptize” in the Greek is in the middle voice, and that a more accurate rendering would be, “Have thyself baptized.” **Wash away thy sins.** This language shows that Ananias thought that the penitent sinner was to be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38), and that Paul held the same view. Compare **Titus 3:5**. Hackett says: “This clause states the result of baptism in language derived from the nature of the ordinance. It answers to *eis apheisin hamartion* (2:38), *i. e.*, submit to the rite in order to be forgiven.... There can be no question of the mode of baptism in this case, for if it be held that *be baptized* is uncertain in its meaning, *wash away* is a definition that removes the doubt.” As the final act of conversion, baptism symbolically, is said to wash away sins.

17–21. When I was come again to Jerusalem. This was three years after his conversion (**Gal. 1:17, 18**). He shows in what follows that it was by Divine direction that he had devoted his life to the conversion of the Gentiles, that he would have labored with his own race, but that, while in the temple praying, he had a second vision of the Lord who, a second time, assured him that his work was with the Gentiles. **In a trance.** Greek, “An ecstasy,” a state of mind when the spirit was, as it were, lifted out of the bodily conditions and enabled to discern things unseen. Compare **10:10**. Some have held that this trance in the temple is described in **2 Cor. 12:2, 3**, but this is uncertain. **They will not receive thy testimony.** His own countrymen are meant. They regarded him as an apostate. **Lord, they know.** He recalls the very words of his prayer to show his anxiety to labor with his own race. **When the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed.** See **7:58 and 8:1**. **Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.** Thus by the command of his Lord his life-work was placed beyond the pale of Israel.

22, 23. They gave him audience unto this word. To the statement that the Lord sent him to the Gentiles. This at once filled them with fury. Amid their long sufferings from foreign oppressors, the Jew took comfort in the thought that when his Messiah came the Gentile would be abased and the Jew would put his feet upon his neck. Hence, nothing so stirred their passions as an intimation that Christ would be a Savior to the Gentiles. In his own synagogue of Nazareth, when the Lord declared the salvation of the Gentiles, his own townsmen sought to put him to death. We have seen the struggle in the infant church before it would receive Gentiles without circumcision. At this time, the smothered fires of the great Jewish war, that broke out a few years later, were burning in Jewish hearts. Hence, the statement that Paul's Christ was a Savior of the Gentiles, and had commanded him to pass by the Jews and offer salvation to the Gentiles, at once produced an explosion of frantic rage. **Cast off their clothes, and threw dust.** Manifestations of an uncontrolled fury that hardly knew what it did.

24–30. Bade that he be examined by scourging. Probably ignorant of the Hebrew tongue, unable to understand what had caused the fury of the people, thinking that it might

be due to the commission of some horrible crime by the speaker, the chief captain, drawing him into the castle, ordered that he be put to the torture to compel him to make a confession. Until recent times, it was common to torture prisoners under the belief that thus they could be compelled to speak the truth. Scourging was the usual method of torture among the Romans. The prisoner's back was bared, he was bound, and the rods borne by the lictors were usually employed. **Paul said to the centurion.** Who was seeing that the chief captain's orders were carried out. **Is it lawful to scourge a Roman?** Once before at Philippi (16:37) he had appealed to his rights as a Roman, but this was after the scourging. The name *Roman* acted like magic in each case. The centurion at once pauses, tell his commander to beware; no officer dared to lay a hand in violence on a Roman citizen without trial. The claim was at once allowed, for it was a capital offense to make a false claim of citizenship, and none dared attempt it. "He who falsely pretended to Roman citizenship was beheaded on the Esquiline hill."—*Suetonius*. A constant traveler like Paul would be likely to carry papers that would prove his claims. **Art thou a Roman?** The commander comes at once to inquire for himself. The officer states that he had bought citizenship himself. He was not of Roman birth, an alien, but by a heavy bribe had obtained Roman rights. This was not uncommon in the corrupt period of Roman government that had come. **But I was free born.** His father before had been a Roman citizen. Whether he inherited it also, or had in some way secured the right, is unknown. If any wonder how a Jew could be a Roman, let them look around and see Jews, Germans, Irish, etc., who are American citizens. **The chief captain was afraid.** Because he had bound Paul for the torture, and had thus violated the privileges of Roman citizenship. **On the morrow.** Perplexed concerning the animosity of his countrymen to Paul, anxious to know whether he was a malefactor, he ordered a meeting of the Sanhedrim that it might investigate the charges against him.

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Chapter XXIII

Paul's Defence Before the Sanhedrim

Summary — *The Insult of the High Priest. Paul's Rebuke. His Appeal to the Pharisees. Their Favor. The Dissension. Paul Removed. The Vision of the Lord in the Night. The Plot of the Sicarii. Revealed to the Chief Captain by Paul's Nephew. Paul Sent Under an Escort of Soldiers to Cæsarea. The Letter of Claudius Lysias to Felix.*

1. Paul, earnestly beholding. Attentively studying his audience, and no doubt seeking whether there were old acquaintances among the members of the Sanhedrim. He probably knew at least a part of the body. Many years before he had been its trusted agent, to execute its orders against Christians; now he is on trial before it for being one of that body which it formerly employed him to destroy. They regarded him a renegade, much as our countrymen regard Benedict Arnold, and their hate was so vindictive that they were utterly unable to listen calmly to his defence. Hence, as soon as he began by declaring that he had acted **in all good conscience until this day**, the high priest ordered that he be smitten in the mouth.

2–5. To smite him on the mouth. The high priest flamed up in an instant at the statement of Paul that he had acted in good conscience. “How could such a renegade from Judaism be conscientious?” It is common in the despotic East to order the mouths that are supposed to have spoken falsely to be smitten. Ananias was high priest at this time, but was removed on a charge brought by King Agrippa (25:13) in a.d. 59. He was at last assassinated. **God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.** These words, spoken by the prisoner, indignant at the mockery of justice, were rather a prediction than an imprecation. I have just stated that this violent man came to an untimely death. The insult to Paul reminds us of a similar one to his Master before the same body (John 18:22). By *whited wall* Paul means a hypocrite. See note on Matt. 23:27. **I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest.** It was contrary to the law of Moses (Exod. 22:28) to revile one in high authority. Paul's reply to the charge that he had violated the law has been variously explained. Howson gives what appears to me the most probable view: “I did not take thought, at the moment, in my indignation over the command to smite a defenceless prisoner on trial, that he was the high priest. I am well aware that it is said, ‘Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.’” His words were an apology for his hasty speech. *I wist not* is used in the sense of “I did not bear in mind.”

6–10. Perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees. When the Savior was condemned, the Sanhedrim was composed of both parties, and now, nearly thirty years later, we find it the same. The chief priests, as a rule, were Sadducees, while the scribes were mainly of the Pharisees. It was the doctrine of the resurrection that especially inflamed the Sadducees against the gospel (see Acts 4:2). This was the ground of battle between the two sects, and Paul, himself once a Pharisee, now preaching a gospel of which

the great fact is the resurrection, not only avails himself of the opportunity to proclaim the fundamental truth of Christianity, but in so doing divides his enemies. Alford, says, concerning his declaration, **I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question**, that, "All prospect for a fair trial was hopeless. Paul well knew from experience that personal odium would bias his judges, and violence prevail over justice. He therefore uses in the cause of truth the maxim so often perverted to the use of falsehood, *Divide and conquer*." **There arose a dissension**. The Pharisees were at once reminded that Paul was with them in their great ground of contention with the Sadducees. His appeal to them makes them at once his champions against the rival sect. **8. The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection**. See notes on [Matt. 22:23](#) for the doctrinal view of the Sadducees. The statement here is fully confirmed by Josephus. See *Wars of the Jews*, 2:8, 14. **The scribes ... arose**. These were mostly Pharisees, and were a learned class. **We find no evil in this man**. There was more to them in common with him than with the materialistic Sadducees. **If a spirit or an angel**. See the Revision. They throw this out as a defiance to the Sadducees who denied both angel and spirit. The clause "Let us not fight, etc.," is not found in the best MSS. **There arose a great dissension**. One party took Paul's side, the other opposed; one sought to lay hands on him, the other to defend him. The chief captain interposed and removed Paul to the castle.

11. The night following. Paul's conditions seemed most forlorn. He was even suspected by the church in Jerusalem. He was a prisoner to the Romans. His own nation was thirsting for his life. He had twice, within two days, narrowly escaped death. He needed comfort, and hence **the Lord stood by him**, cheered him, and gave him encouragement concerning his future work. It not doubt was like a ray of light, as he passed a sleepless night in his prison cell, to learn that the dear Lord still had work for him.

12-24. Certain of the Jews banded together. Perhaps these Jews were of the bitter enemies from Asia who had laid hands on him in the temple. They may have belonged to a wild fanatical association of Jewish assassins, who, a few years later, played a prominent part, called *Sicarii*. The Talmud says that those who took such a vow were released from it, if it was impossible to carry it out. Their purpose was to induce **the chief priests**, who were Sadducees, to have Paul appear before the Sanhedrim the next day, and then they would murder him. **Paul's sister's son heard**. This is the only mention in Acts of any of Paul's relations. It is possible that this nephew was studying in Jerusalem, as Paul had done many years before, and heard of the plot from those who did not know that he was in any way related to Paul. Whether he was a Christian or not, he took pains to inform his uncle. There was no difficulty of access, for Paul was a Roman, and would be treated with courtesy. Paul, at once, sent him to the chief captain with his information. **19. Took him by the hand**. To show how carefully he was listening to the story. **Called unto him two centurions**. These were told to prepare four hundred and seventy soldiers for an escort, a large force,

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but the country was in a disturbed condition, and all the occurrences connected with Paul confused and alarmed the commander. **Bring him safe unto Felix.** Of this man, then governor, we will hear more. He was originally a slave, but had risen by base arts to a high position. His brother Pallas was the emperor's favorite, and secured the important post of governor for Felix in a.d. 52. In a.d. 60 he was removed.

25–30. He wrote a letter. Roman law required that when a prisoner was sent by a lower official to a higher for trial, a letter should be sent stating the charges. That of Lysias states his understanding of the case. **I rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.** Like many modern officials, he prevaricates. He found out he was a Roman after he rescued him. **I sent him straightway to thee.** “Though I held him to be innocent, hearing of the plot against his life, I thought it best to send him to thee.” Had he released Paul in Jerusalem, the conspirators would have murdered him.

31–35. Brought him by night to Antipatris. They departed by night so that the Jews would know nothing of Paul's departure until the next day. Antipatris was about thirty-eight miles from Jerusalem. The march was not probably made by night, but begun at night and was completed the next day. **On the morrow.** The morrow after they reached Antipatris, all returned but the horsemen. Cæsarea was now only twenty-six miles distant, and the danger was over. **He asked of what province he was.** Felix was governor of Judea under the proconsul of Syria. Had he found the prisoner to be of some other province under the proconsul, he would probably have turned him over to its governor (compare [Luke 23:6, 7](#)), but when he found he was of Cilicia, a distant part of the empire, he retained him. **Kept in Herod's judgment hall.** The palace built by Herod the Great in Cæsarea for his own residence, but now occupied by Felix.

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Chapter XXIV

Paul's Defence Before Felix

Summary — *The High Priest and Elders Come Down to Accuse Paul. The Speech of Tertullus, Their Lawyer. Paul's Reply. Declares His Manner of Life, That He is a Christian, Why He Came to Jerusalem, How He Acted. Felix Defers a Decision for Further Inquiry. Paul Preaches Before Felix and Drusilla.*

1–9. After five days. Five days after Paul departed from Jerusalem. The Roman usage was to investigate a case promptly. The deep animosity of the Jews is shown by the fact that the high priest himself came down to prosecute, attended by a delegation from the Sanhedrim (elders). **A certain orator named Tertullus.** A lawyer acquainted with the forms of Roman courts. Some have supposed that he was not a Jew, from his name, but it is probable that he was a Jew who had been educated in Roman law, perhaps at Rome. The name signifies nothing. That of Paul (Paulus) was itself Roman. The first three verses of the address of Tertullus are compliments to Felix, intended to secure a favorable hearing. In [fifth verse](#) the charges begin, the first one of which is false. **A ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.** This was *the* offence of Paul. All their hatred was due to the fact that he was the great Christian leader. The reason why this urged was to show that Paul preached a religion not authorized by Roman law. See notes on 18:13. *Nazarenes* was for hundreds of years the term was applied to Christians by the Jews. This is the only instance, however, in the New Testament where it so applied. The Mohammedans still use it. **Hath gone about to profane the temple.** This false charge is repeated, because this was the cry when Paul was seized ([21:28](#)). Note that there are three charges: (1) That Paul was the author of sedition; (2) preached an unlawful religion; (3) profaned the temple. The penalty of the last by Jewish law was death, and the Romans usually permitted it to be enforced. **Whom we took, and would have judged.** This part of the sixth verse, all of the seventh, and the first clause of the eighth, are not found in the Revision, or the best MSS. *Whom* ([verse 8](#)) in the Common Version becomes *him* in the Revision and refers to Paul. **And the Jews joined in the charge.** Those who had come down from Jerusalem affirmed that Tertullus had spoken in the facts.

10–21. Paul answered. He had the right to reply to his accusers. The Roman law condemned no one unheard. **Thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation.** For six or seven years Felix had been governor and was therefore familiar with the state of affairs in Judea. Upon this fact Paul courteously congratulates himself. **It is not more than twelve days.** It would be easy for Felix to ascertain the facts, for only twelve days had passed since he returned to Judea, after many years absence. Of these twelve, the first is the day Paul meets James and the elders, the second he enters upon his vow, the seventh he is seized in the temple, the eighth tried before the Sanhedrim, the eleventh day he is delivered to Felix,

and the thirteenth appears before his court. **Verse 12** is in answer to the first charge, that of sedition. He had been perfectly quiet in Jerusalem. **But this I confess. Verses 14, 15 and 16** are in answer to the second charge, that he is of the *sect* of Nazarenes." He confesses that he worships God **after that way they call a sect** (see Revision). Yet he is a true Jew, **believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets**. In becoming a Christian, he had not, therefore, as they asserted, apostatized from the faith of his fathers. **And have hope toward God**. This hope of the resurrection, the great doctrine of Christianity, was one that the law and the prophets foreshadow, and **which they themselves also allow**. The Jews held this same hope. Apart from the Sadducees, a small minority, the Jews believed in a future life and judgment. Hence, even in this matter, he was not preaching a new, unknown and illegal doctrine, for Judaism was acknowledged by Roman law. Josephus says, "The Sadducees were able to persuade none but the rich. The Pharisees had the multitude on their side." **Herein do I exercise myself**. In this belief of a resurrection. His belief was not a theory, but a life, and hence he sought to keep his conscience pure in the sight of God and man. **Now after many years I came**. Here he begins his reply to the third charge, that of profaning the temple. He came to Jerusalem with the most benevolent motives, **to bring alms to my own nation**. These were the sums of money gathered in the Gentile churches for the poor in Jerusalem. See [Rom. 15:25–31](#); [1 Cor. 16:1–4](#); [2 Cor. 8:9](#). **Offerings**. Such as were customary at the temple. It was while engaged in the preparations for a Nazarite offering that he was seized. He thus accounts for his presence in the temple. **Certain Jews from Asia found me**. He states how these Jews who raised the outcry found him engaged. He was engaged in a Jewish rite. **Who ought to have been here**. These foreign Jews were the legal accusers. The Sanhedrim was a court of trial, and its members present were not the accusers. The Roman custom required the accusers to face the accused. **Let these same here say**. Let those present testify if they know one thing against me, save that I declared before the Sanhedrim that **Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question**. This was the real offence in the eyes of the high priest and his fellow Sadducees.

22, 23. Felix heard these things. The speeches on each side. **Having more perfect knowledge**. Understanding the real animus of the charges. He was well acquainted with the Jewish hatred of Christians, and understood something of *that way*, the Christian doctrine. **He commanded a centurion to keep Paul**. Two reasons caused him to keep a prisoner that had done no wrong: (1) He did not like to offend the Jews; (2) he hoped to be bribed by the Christians to let Paul go. Paul was not put in confinement, but under the charge of an officer who was responsible for him. Usually in this kind of imprisonment the prisoner was bound to a soldier.

24–27. Felix came with his wife Drusilla. This woman, a Jewess, was the daughter of the Herod who died miserably at Cæsarea ([12:23](#)), and the sister of King Agrippa and Bernice ([25:23](#)). She was very beautiful and very profligate, had been the wife of Azizus, the king of

Emesa, but had left him and married Felix. Perhaps the interest she felt in Paul was due to the fact that her father had been a persecutor of the Christians, had died a singular death, and this had been pronounced a judgment. **As he reasoned.** They, no doubt, expected that he would speak of doctrine, but instead he spoke of the life that ought to be lived, with special reference to those who sat before him in such state and glory. When he spoke of **righteousness**, he spoke of justice to a judge who held this office only for the sake of gain and who took bribes. When he spoke of **temperance**, he rebuked the unbridled sway of the passions and of lust. When he spoke of **judgment**, he pictured the judgment scene when the unjust and impure of earth shall be called to account. With such power he spoke that the stern Roman trembled before the poor prisoner in his power. **Go thy way.** Felix does not resent; he is too powerfully moved, but he puts off. Thus thousands destroy their souls. **He hoped that money.** Almost every Roman governor took a province in order to enrich himself, and hence would welcome bribery and every species of corruption. Felix was no worse than the average official of his time. **But after two years.** It was in the autumn of a.d. 60 that Felix was removed. **Porcius Festus came in Felix' room.** This officer was more upright, according to Josephus, than most Roman governors, but died in the second year of his office. **Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure.** He was recalled, because grave accusations were made against him. Had he released Paul, it would have intensified the enmity of the Jews, and hence he was turned over as a prisoner to his successor.

The question has been asked how Paul spent these two years of confinement. Dean Howson urges that at this time of the Gospel of Luke was written under the supervision of Paul. He and Luke were in Judea, where the facts could be gathered. Philip lived at Cæsarea. Paul more than once in his writings speaks of "My Gospel." *Irenæus*, who had heard those preach who had heard the apostles, tells us that Paul was accustomed to speak of the Gospel of Luke as written by him, and Origen and Jerome assert the same fact. We know Paul could not have been idle. Hence, for these reasons, Howson suggests that at this period his chief work was the Third Gospel, the "Gospel for the Gentiles."

Chapter XXV

The Appeal to Cæsar

Summary — *The Jewish Leaders Accuse Paul to Festus. Trial Before Festus at Cæsarea. Rather Than Be Sent to Jerusalem, Paul Appeals to Cæsar. King Agrippa and Bernice Visit Festus. They Ask to See and Hear Paul. On the Morrow a Meeting in Great State. King Agrippa Requested to Examine Paul That Festus May Know What to Report to Rome.*

1–6. When Festus was come into the province. Had become governor of Judea. The whole province of which Judea was a part was called Syria, and was ruled by a *proconsul*. The divisions of one of the great proconsulships were ruled by *procurators*, translated “governors.” Pontius Pilate, Felix and Festus are examples of the latter. **Then the high priest ... informed him against Paul.** Immediately after entering upon his government, Festus went from the Roman capital of Judea to its Jewish capital. The rulers did not lose this opportunity to prosecute Paul. Their aim was to have him transferred from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, and thus exposed to their murderous designs. **To kill him.** This was the real object of their request. Those who will read the account of these times given by Josephus, a Jew of this period, will see that such a murderous purpose is not improbable. Their purpose was for the time baffled by the decision of Festus that the case must be tried before his court in Cæsarea instead of before the Sanhedrim. **Those who are able.** Those possessing official power.

7–12. When he was come. When Festus had returned to Cæsarea. **The Jews ... laid many and grievous complaints against Paul.** From the substance of Paul's reply ([verse 8](#)), it is easy to determine that these charges were about the same as before Felix, viz: (1) Teaching a new and illegal religion; (2) profaning the temple; (3) sedition, or offending against Cæsar, charges that they could not sustain. It is evident from [verse 19](#) that particular stress was laid upon the fact that he was a “ring-leader of the Nazarenes.” **9. Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure.** He desired to avoid a difficulty with them at the very beginning of his government. He therefore proposed to Paul to go to Jerusalem for trial. This was the request of the Jews. The charges were in great part concerning a violation of the Jewish law, and the Sanhedrim claimed jurisdiction in that case. But Paul was a Roman, hence Festus could not, without his consent, send him up to the stronghold of his enemies. He perhaps thought that Paul would appeal to his rights as a citizen, and that would prevent the necessity of a refusal to comply with the wishes of the Jews. **I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat.** Before a Roman tribunal. The governor was the representative of Cæsar. To be delivered over to the Sanhedrim was to be sent to certain death. Hence, he falls back on the right of every Roman citizen to appeal to Cæsar himself, or to the imperial tribunal in Rome, a right granted by law to all Romans in the provinces, an essential for protection against unjust

governors. **When he had conferred with the council.** His own counsellors, men called “assessors,” whose duty it was to advise the governor. He then announces the decision, I suppose, in the legal language used in such cases, **Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar thou shalt go.**

13–27. Agrippa and Bernice came. King Agrippa II., the son of Herod Agrippa, whose death is told in 12:23. Drusilla and Bernice were his sisters. He was the last of the Herodian kings, and was at this time king of Calchis. Bernice, his beautiful sister, was one of the fairest and most dissolute women of her time. She was married several times, had been twice married before Paul saw her, and is discredibly associated with both Vespasian and Titus. The latter took her to Rome, and would have married her had it not been for the storm of public disapproval. **To salute Festus.** To pay their respects to the new Roman official. **Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king.** He did this for advice. He was really perplexed. He had just come into the province of Judea, and was not acquainted with Jewish customs. He could see nothing wrong in Paul, but the Jewish rulers accused him so vehemently that he was not sure that he understood the case. King Agrippa was a Jew by birth, would understand the real difference between Paul and the Sanhedrim, and could aid Festus to formulate the charges that must be sent to Rome when Paul was sent to appear before Cæsar's tribunal. **Their own superstition.** The Jewish religion. **Unto the hearing of Augustus.** One of the titles of the Roman emperor. He was styled *Cæsar*, *Augustus*, and *Imperator*, from whence the word emperor. **On the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp.** The account reads like that of an eye-witness, as it doubtless is. The gathering of a king, a princess, a great Roman representative of Cæsar, with their splendid retinues, heralds, lictors, and men at arms, as well as the great officers of the Roman army and chief men of Cæsarea, was a sight well calculated to leave a profound impression. Then **Paul was brought forth** before this splendid array of royalty and power. **Festus said.** He introduces the cause by a short explanation: (1) Ye see this man; (2) the Jews declare that he ought not to live; (3) I have found in him nothing worthy of death; (4) he had appealed to Augustus; (5) I have nothing certain to write in the way of charges; (6) perhaps thou, O King Agrippa, canst help me out of this difficulty. **My lord.** The emperor. This great occasion gave Paul a great opportunity. Instead of using it to defend himself, he preached the gospel to that great audience. His address, as given in the next chapter, is a masterpiece.

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Chapter XXVI

Paul's Address Before King Agrippa

Summary — *Agrippa's Knowledge of the Law and the Jews. Paul's Early Career and Hatred of Christ. The Great Doctrine of the Resurrection. The Manifestation of the Risen Lord to Paul Near Damascus. Paul's Preaching of the Suffering Christ. The Interruption of Festus and the Reply. Paul's Personal Appeal to Agrippa. The Decision That Paul Had Done Nothing Worthy of Bonds.*

1. Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Not Agrippa, but Festus had the authority in the province, but this meeting was arranged in order that Agrippa might investigate the case and assist Festus in formulating the charges (see [25:26, 27](#)); hence the king calls upon Paul to speak.

2, 3. I think myself happy, king Agrippa. Agrippa had been brought up in the Jewish religion, professed to be a steadfast Jew, was the legal guardian of the temple, and hence was well versed in all the Jewish customs. He was therefore competent to be a judge of an accusation of treason to the religion and law of their forefathers. Paul felt it a privilege to defend himself before one who was prepared to decide whether his preaching was contrary to Moses and the prophets, or, on the other hand, a fulfillment of them.

4–8. My manner of life from my youth. He appeals to his life to show that it had been consistent with the law. The Jews all knew that he had been educated and had lived a Pharisee, the strictest of Jewish sects. It was not because of a departure from the faith of his fathers that he was accused, but he was **judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers.** That glorious promise, running through all the Jewish Scriptures, was that the Messiah should come. For examples of the promise, see [Gen. 22:18; 49:10; Deut. 18:15–19; Isa. 9:6, 7](#). Paul not only believed in Moses and the prophets, but believed that the promise God made to them was fulfilled. **Unto which promise.** This promise was the hope of Israel. The twelve tribes, in their constant, never-ceasing service of God, were simulated by the hope that they would enjoy the fulfillment of the promise. **Our twelve tribes.** Paul, like James ([Jas. 1:1](#)), speaks of the twelve tribes as having the same glorious hope. Since the Captivity, the tribal existence of the ten northern tribes had not been preserved, but descendants of all the tribes were mingled in the Jewish nation. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, John the Baptist of Levi, Joseph and Mary of Judah, Anna ([Luke 2:36](#)) of the tribe of Asher. **Why should it be thought incredible with you?** This hope of Israel involved the resurrection of Christ. This Moses and the prophets taught. His countrymen accepted Moses and the prophets, but denied the resurrection as a thing incredible. It was for this hope's sake, of a risen Redeemer, that he was called in question. There was no doubt much said which our record does not preserve, as we have only the outlines of addresses.

9–11. I verily thought with myself. Next, in order to show his zeal for Judaism, he describes his course as a persecutor. He was thoroughly conscientious then in opposing Christ. For his course as a persecutor, see 7:58; 9:1, 2; 22:4. **I gave my voice against them.** “Vote,” in the Revision. This has been held to indicate that he was a member of the Sanhedrim. This would hardly be doubted were it not that tradition declares that the members of the Sanhedrim had to be married and fathers of a family. Hence, some have held that Paul was a member of some lesser court appointed by the Sanhedrim to try the Christians. **I punished them oft in every synagogue.** “All the synagogues” (Revision). Scourging was a not uncommon punishment in the synagogue (Matt. 10:17; 23:34). **Compelled them to blaspheme.** Terrified them into denying Jesus. **Even unto strange cities.** Of these Damascus was one. That he was a terrible persecutor, “exceedingly mad,” raging, even fanatical cannot be doubted from his own account.

12–18. As I went to Damascus. Compare 9:1–9. This is the third account of Paul's conversion, the first being in chapter 9, and the second in 22:4–16. There are a few new details given here: (1) The over-powering glory of the Lord is specially dwelt upon here; (2) we are here told that the voice heard was in the **Hebrew tongue** (he was now speaking Greek to King Agrippa). This fact that he here states is remarkable. Bengel says: “The Hebrew tongue, Christ's language when on earth; his language, too, when he spoke from heaven.” It was in the Aramaic, a Hebrew dialect, that the Savior taught when on earth, and it is a significant circumstance that Paul heard his voice in the same tongue to which Peter, James and John had listened. Not only is this true, but critics hold that the Hebraisms are so prominent in the Book of Revelation as to indicate that the revelations there recorded were made in Hebrew, and afterward translated by John into Greek. See Howson on *Acts*, p. 546. The proverb, **It is hard for thee to kick against the goad**, is here added. The mission of Paul to the Gentiles is described as being a part of the Lord's communication. **I have appeared for this purpose.** In order that he might be a minister and a witness. It was needful that the apostle of the Gentiles should see Christ. He must be a witness that the Lord had risen. He was chosen for this work before conversion, because he was honest, deeply conscientious, and possessed the great qualities that were needful to fit him for the most important work ever assigned to man.

19–20. I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. He could still have disobeyed. His will was free, but he could only act in good conscience by obeying Christ. He not only was baptized by Ananias in Damascus, but, after some preparation, he began to preach, **first in Damascus** (9:27), and then **at Jerusalem**, where he disputed against the Grecians (9:28, 29). Just when he preached **throughout the coasts of Judea** we are not informed. Hackett thinks it was when he came up with help at the time of the famine (11:30). **That they should repent.** He preached more than a theory; he preached a new life.

21–23. For these causes the Jews caught me. Because he obeyed and preached Christ. **I continue to this day.** By the divine help. That had protected him, because he was doing God's work, and he was enabled to witness to all ranks. **Both to small and great.** What he witnessed was only what Moses and the prophets had said should come, viz.: **That Christ should suffer, rise, shew light to the people, and to the Gentiles.** In these things he had the support of Moses and the prophets, and for these things he was accused. He was not at variance with Moses and the law, but preached their meaning.



24–26. Paul, thou art beside thyself. The earnestness and fervor of Paul were so strange to Festus, his doctrine of the resurrection so novel, his manner so sincere, and his testimony so startling, that the Roman could only explain it by a mental delusion. The display of such vast knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures to Agrippa convinced him that intense study resulted in derangement. It must not be forgotten that Festus had just come into his position, and knew little of Paul. **I am not mad, most noble Festus.** The courteous answer shows the mistake of Festus, a mistake due to his ignorance of the subject. **The king knoweth.** The facts that he had cited in his discourse were well known to the king, viz., the predictions of the prophets, the hope of a Messiah, the death of Jesus, and the spread of the congregations of those who believed that he was a risen Lord.

27–30. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? The king professed to believe them. Yet those very prophets, as Paul had shown, testified to all the facts of the career of Jesus of Nazareth and his claims to Messiahship. This personal appeal deeply moved the king, as his reply shows. **Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.** The Revision changes the translation somewhat, but I have little doubt but that the Common Version gives the idea. The king, like Felix (24:25), was deeply moved; the fact that he and Festus decided (verse 32) that Paul was not a transgressors show that they were favorably impressed; it was no occasion for an ironical answer, and Paul took the remark as in earnest, and added still another appeal. Chrysostom, Luther, Beza, Bengel and Howson take this view. **Paul said, I would to God, etc.** His reply is courteous, but of intense earnestness, a last effort to save souls that were deeply stirred. He would that king and governor, all, Jew and Gentile, shared his hope of a glorious inheritance, and were, like himself, at peace with God;—such as he, **save these bonds.** It is probable that his chains were then hanging upon his arms, and that he indicated them by a gesture.

31, 32. When they had gone aside. Retired for private conference. Their decision was that Paul had done nothing justifying his imprisonment. The accusations of the Jews were groundless. **This man might have been set at liberty.** His innocence was clear, but after the appeal to Cæsar, the case belonged to the higher courts, and Festus had no more power



to clear than to condemn. It was God's will that Paul should be carried to Rome. There was work for him to do in the capital of the world (see [23:11](#)).



Chapter XXVII

The Sea Voyage to Rome

Summary — *The Centurion in Charge of Paul Embarks with Him for Rome. At Myra Take an Alexandrian Corn Ship. The Weather Tempestuous Paul Advises the Centurion to Go into Harbor for the Winter. Caught by the Euroclydon and Driven. After Fourteen Days of Drifting Paul Assures Them That All Will Escape. The Ship Runs Ashore on the Island of Malta and Is Destroyed. The Men All Saved.*

1. When it was determined. When all was settled that Paul should go to Italy, and the time appointed had come. **Delivered Paul and certain other prisoners.** No information is given concerning these companions in bonds. **To a centurion named Julius.** All we learn of this Roman officer is favorable. It is remarkable how uniformly Paul commanded the respect of the Roman officials with whom he came in contact. Sergius Paulus, Gallio, Felix, Festus and Julius are examples of this. **Of the Augustan band.** Rather, “cohort.” Josephus says that this period one of the cohorts stationed at Cæsarea took the name of Augustus (Wars, 2:12, 7 and 2:12, 5).

2. A ship of Adramyttium. This city was on the Asiatic coast of the Ægean Sea. In those days there were no regular lines of passenger ships, and in making a voyage from Judea to Rome several ships might be necessary to complete the voyage. Paul took three before he reached Rome. **Aristarchus, a Macedonian.** He is named in 19:29 and in 20:4. Luke and Aristarchus are the only fellow-Christians who attended Paul on the journey, as far as we know. In Col. 4:10, written while a prisoner at Rome, Paul calls Aristarchus his fellow-prisoner.

3. The next day we touched at Sidon. The next after sailing. Sidon was about sixty-seven miles north of Cæsarea. Here the centurion suffered Paul to go ashore to see his **friends**, the disciples in Sidon.

4, 5. Sailed under Cyprus. Near the eastern coast, where, by keeping near the shore, the contrary winds would be less felt, being broken by the highlands of the great island. The wind must have been from the northwest. The geographical details of this voyage are so accurate that they must have been written by an eye-witness. **Myra, a city of Lycia.** Reached by sailing over the seas of Cilicia and Pamphylia. Myra was a well-known port of that period.

6–8. Found a ship of Alexandria. The object was to meet a vessel on a voyage to Italy. Here was found such a ship, one of the great grain ships that sailed from Egypt. These were often large, of from 500 to 1,000 tons burden. **Sailed slowly.** On account of contrary winds. From Myra to Cnidus was only 137 miles, yet it required “many days.” The language seems to imply that the ship was not able to come into the port of Cnidus, a good harbor, fit for wintering, on the Carian coast. **We sailed under Crete.** From Cnidus, they ought to have

sailed west, but the headwinds compelled them to direct their course to the south, where they took shelter under the lee of Crete. The winds were still evidently from the northwest. **With difficulty** they reached a place called **Fair Havens**. On the south coast of Crete. It retains the same name to this day. It is a roadstead, near **the city of Lasea**. It was supposed that all trace of this city was lost until recently, but it is now known that the natives apply this name to the ruins of an ancient town about five miles from Fair Havens.

9–13. When much time was spent. How long a time had passed since the embarkation cannot be told, but so long that **sailing was now dangerous**. On account of the season of year. In the winter, not only the storms, but the clouds and darkness, interfered with navigation. Mariners, in the absence of the compass, needed the sun and stars to direct their course. **Because the fast was ... past.** That of the Atonement, which came in October. **Sirs, I perceive.** Paul's experience taught him the danger of proceeding. It was the stormy and tempestuous season. He therefore volunteered his advice. **Centurion gave more heed.** The master, or captain, and the owner, were both aboard, and it was but natural that their wishes would prevail with the centurion. The chief argument for proceeding was that Fair Havens was not a good harbor, and they hoped to reach a better one. **Phenice.** This place, Phoenix in the Revision, was never reached, but would have been a good place for wintering, for the excellent harbor there remains to this day. **When the south wind blew.** When this wind arose, they supposed they could attain their purpose, and sailed along the southern shore of Crete to reach, if possible, Phoenix.

14–20. Rose a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. "Euraquilo" in the Revision; a terrible northeast gale. The word and the description imply a hurricane. **When the ship was caught.** Seized by the wind and hurled out of her course. All that could be done was to drift before it. The ship was powerless. **Running under a certain island.** Getting in the shelter of it. Here they tried to put the ship in better shape for the storm. **Called Clauda.** Now named Gozo. It lies a little south of Crete. **Come by the boat.** Drew it up on deck. It had been in tow when they set out with the gentle wind. **Used helps.** The hull showed signs of giving way, and was **undergirded**, by ropes or chains, that were dropped so as to pass under the hull, and then were tightened with levers. The process is still common in wooden vessels in times of great peril. The British call it "frapping." **Should fall into the quicksands.** The Syrtis, or quicksands, on the African coast to the southwest of Crete, were greatly feared by ancient sailors. The fact that they expected to be driven there shows that the storm, at first, came from the northeast. **Strake sail.** Nautical men say that this language implies that most of their sails were furled, only a small sail remaining set. The ship was "laid to," endeavoring to ride out the storm. **So were driven.** A ship "laid to" will drift. "Laid to," she would not drift directly before the wind, but if the wind was from the northeast, and her bow laid to the north, she would drift to the west. Their aim was to keep from being driven into the quicksands (the Great Syrtis). **Next day they lightened the ship.** Cast heavy things



overboard, in order that it might ride the waves better. **The third day.** On this, the third day of the storm, the Christians aided to cast off the tackling, the spars, etc. It is evident that the situation was dangerous. **Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared.** Hence they could neither tell where they were nor direct their course. No such thing as the compass was then known. **All hope.** All hope of saving the ship or cargo was gone, and the mariners despaired of their own safety.

21–26. After long abstinence. Anxiety and necessity would enforce abstinence. The fires were all put out, the provisions water-soaked, the men constantly employed, their fear too great to prepare regular meals. If there was eating at all, it would be by snatches. **Paul stood forth.** He chose some place on deck where all could hear him. **Ye should have hearkened.** He reminds them of his advice, not to taunt, but to secure confidence for what he shall now say. The vessel and cargo shall be lost, but no man's life. **An angel.** He gives the grounds of his hope. An angel of God, the God he served, Jehovah, stood by him and declared it. **Whose I am, and whom I serve.** This short sentence is a sermon. It is the keynote of all Paul's ministry. **Fear not.** They were in the midst of terrible peril, in a ruined ship, on an unknown sea, tossed by the storm, surrounded by angry waves beneath, and angry heavens above. But God had not forgotten his servant. **God hath given thee all, etc.** Paul had then prayed for his fellow-voyagers. **Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.** Their safety and wreck on a certain island were assured; the details were not yet revealed.

27–32. Driven up and down in Adria. The central basin of the Mediterranean, between Sicily on the west and Greece on the east, was called by the old geographers "Adria," or the Adriatic Sea. The name is now confined to the Gulf of Venice. **The shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country.** They probably heard the awful roar of the breakers. **Sounded, and found it twenty fathoms.** One hundred and twenty feet. The shallowness showed that they approached a coast, especially as it grew shallower every time the lead was cast. **Fearing ... rocks.** It was night, and they could hear the sound of the breakers. By day they might avoid the rocks. Hence they *cast anchor*, and "wished for day." **Four anchors.** Because so many were needed to hold the ship. **As the shipmen were about to flee.** The sailors were about to take the boat, under false pretence, and abandon the ship. For the safety of all it was needful that they remain, in order to manage the ship when it was run ashore. Hence the centurion, at Paul's request, cut off the boat and let it drift away.

33–38. Paul besought them all to take meat. At dawn of day. He seems to have really had charge in this hour of peril. They needed the strength of the food for the work before them. **Having taken nothing.** The thought is, that for fourteen days they had had no regular meals. **This is for your health.** Essential to your welfare and safety. **There shall not a hair, etc.** A promise of absolute safety. **He took bread and gave thanks.** As Paul was wont to do before eating; as Christ himself did ([Matt. 14:19](#); [John 6:11](#)). **Began to eat.** To encourage

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them by his example. It had its effect, for “they were all of good cheer, and they also took meat.” **We were ... two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.** It can be seen from this fact that merchant vessels of that period were of large size. **They lightened the ship.** It was needful to beach it in just as shallow water as possible, and hence the cargo was thrown overboard. As might be expected in an Alexandrian ship, the cargo was wheat. Egypt was then the granary of Rome.

39–44. They discovered a certain creek with a shore. Rather, “A certain bay with a beach,” as in the Revision; a sloping beach. Into this they determined to try to thrust the ship, because here the force of the waves would be broken, the water shallow, and the beach favorable for the men's lives. **Taken up the anchors** (see [verse 29](#)). The Revision says, “Cast off their anchors.” Cut the ropes and let them go. **Loosed the rudder bands.** When anchored by the stern ([verse 29](#)), the rudder was lifted up out of the water by rudder bands to keep it out of the way of the anchor cables. Now it was let down again in order to steer the vessel. **A place where two seas met.** Where two bodies of water joined. This was due to a small island on the coast of the larger, Salmonetta on the coast of Malta. When they moved into the bay, they did not see the inlet coming in on the other side of Salmonetta, but when they saw it, they saw that “two seas met.” **Ran the ship aground.** This was what they purposed, but the violence of the waves was such as to break the stern in pieces. **The soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners.** We have here an illustration of the extreme brutality of the rank and file of the Roman army. They would rather kill the prisoners than to run the risk of their escape. **The centurion.** The interference of the centurion was in harmony with all we have stated of him. **Commanded.** The centurion took command. Those that could swim, cast themselves into the sea. Others floated on any buoyant object that could be secured, and thus all came to shore. This was not Paul's first shipwreck. Compare [2 Cor. 11:25](#), which was written at an earlier period of his life.

Luke's description of the management of the ship in the storm and shipwreck is pronounced by scholars the best description of ancient nautical methods extant.



Chapter XXVIII

Paul at Rome

Summary — *Thrown on the Island of Malta. The Kindness of the People. A Viper Fastens on Paul's Hand, but Hurts Him Not. Paul Heals the Father of Publius. After Three Months Leave in the Castor and Pollux. Land and Meet Brethren at Puteoli. Met at Apii Forum by Brethren from Rome. Paul Suffered to Dwell by Himself Under Charge of a Soldier. Preaches to the Jews of Rome. Preaches with Full Liberty for Two Years in His Own Hired House.*

1–6. The island was called Melita. They had no idea where they were cast until they were ashore, but were told by the inhabitants. It is conceded by scholars that it is the island so well known in our time as Malta. It is sixty miles from the southern point of Sicily, 200 miles from Africa, and is about sixty miles in circumference. **The barbarians.** So called because they were neither Greeks nor Romans. The word did not anciently mean uncivilized. The island was governed by the Romans, but the people were of African and Asiatic stock. The modern Maltese speak Arabic, mixed with Italian and English. **Kindled a fire.** It was winter, stormy, and the shipwrecked strangers were drenched. The fire was what a considerate kindness would suggest. **Paul had gathered ... sticks.** Instead of looking on, he helped. So while on the ship he helped to throw out the tackling. **A viper came out of the heat.** In the bundle of driftwood or brush the serpent lay, chilled with the cold, but as soon as it was carried to the fire it was awakened to activity by the heat and struck its fangs into the hand that was disposing of the sticks. **This man is a murderer.** The people pronounced it a judgment. Though he had escaped the sea, divine justice would not let him escape. They waited to see his hand swell, and him to fall dead, but when he shook it off in the fire and experienced no harm they changed their minds and in their superstition called him *a god*. We are here reminded of the sudden revulsion of feeling among the Lycaonians (14:18, 19). It is said that there are now no venomous serpents in Malta, but this is due to the enormous increase of the population and their extinction. The same fact has occurred in many places.

7–10. The chief man of the island. His name, Publius, is Roman, and he was doubtless the Roman governor of the island. It would be simply his duty to take care of the Roman officer Julius and his company. Hence, he “lodged them courteously” for three days until they could provide for themselves. **Lay sick of a fever, etc.** Dysentery was the disease. Paul, by prayer and laying on of hands, healed him. This miracle naturally was followed by others, and it is not strange that Paul was honored, and that the people “laded them with all things necessary” for their further voyage.

11–14. After three months. They remained here most of the winter. As soon as the weather would justify they would go forward. It was probably February or March when they departed. **A ship of Alexandria.** So was the one shipwrecked. This, no doubt, was also laden

with wheat. It had put into Malta, driven by bad weather, and wintered there in the excellent harbor. **Castor and Pollux.** Two favorite sea gods of the Greeks and Romans. Their figures were carried on the prow, and probably gave name to the vessel. “The great twin brothers” were famous in Roman legend. **Landing at Syracuse.** Then the leading city of the great island of Sicily, about eighty miles north of Malta. **Three days.** Probably waiting for a fair wind. **Fetches a compass.** Did not sail a straight course. **To Rhegium.** On the Italian side of the straits of Messina, opposite Messina on the Sicilian side. At this place they waited one day and then **the south wind blew**, just the wind they wanted, as their course lay north. **Came the next day to Puteoli.** About 180 miles north of Rhegium, on the bay of Naples, near the city of Naples. It is now called Pozzuoli. Ostia, near Rome, and Puteoli were the two ports where the Egyptian corn ships landed with their cargoes. In one of Seneca's letters (he was then living) he describes the crowds that would gather at the wharf of Puteoli when a great corn ship came in. **Where we found brethren.** We know from the Epistle to the Romans that there was a church at Rome that Paul was anxious to visit, and that the brethren were numerous (see [chap. 16](#)). Here we find also a church at a great seaport on the route from Palestine to Rome. **Were desired to tarry with them seven days.** Compare also [20:6, 7](#) and [21:4](#). In all these cases the object must have been to pass a Lord's day and to celebrate the Lord's Supper. The courteous Julius consenting, there was no difficulty in Paul's delay here.

15, 16. After the week they started toward Rome. Their route was along one of the great roads for which the Romans were so famous, the Consular Way to Capua, and the along the celebrated Appian Way to Rome. **When the brethren heard of us.** The church in Rome. They determined to meet the great apostle on the way. They had already received from him the Epistles to the Romans. No doubt some of his Asiatic or European converts were in the church. Aquila and Priscilla had returned to their old home ([Rom. 16:3](#)) in the Imperial city, and perhaps were of those who met him on the way. **As far as Appii Forum.** Some met them at Appii Forum, which is forty-three miles from Rome, and another band met them at the **Three Taverns**, which is ten miles nearer the great city. Both these places are mentioned by Horace and Cicero (*Hor. Sat. 1:5, 4; Cic. Letters to Atticus 2:12*). **Thanked God.** As the apostle traveled as a prisoner amid these strange scenes, along the crowded Appian Way, with so many evidences of colossal power on every hand, and of such luxury and corruption, it was a glad sight to meet a welcome from loving brethren, already numerous in Rome. See [Rom. chap. 16](#). It seemed a cheering omen that the church of the capital of the world should meet and greet him. The distance traveled by land from Puteoli to Rome as about 135 miles. **Delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard.** The commander of what was called the Prætorian Guard, the Prætorian Prefect; at this time this great officer was named Burrhus. The Prætorian camp was the permanent garrison of Rome. **But Paul was suffered to dwell by himself.** Sometimes state prisoners, sent from the provinces, awaiting trial, were thrown into a prison adjoining the Prætorian camp, and sometimes were allowed to choose their



own residence under the guard of a soldier. Paul was permitted the latter course, no doubt on account of the kindly reports sent from Cæsarea by Festus and King Agrippa to Rome. The soldier was fastened to the prisoner by a chain. See [verse 20](#).

17–22. After three days. We see indicated his restless activity. In three days after his arrival as a prisoner he begins his work. The first three days had probably been devoted to the brethren. **Called the chief of the Jews.** The leading Jews. Josephus says that fifty years earlier there were 8,000 Jews in Rome. A quarter of the city north of the Tiber was given up to them. In a.d. 49, they had been banished by decree of the Emperor Claudius, but shortly after were allowed to return. At this time they enjoyed favor, Poppæa, the wife of Nero, being a proselyte to the Jewish faith. These chiefs would include the rulers of the synagogues, the scribes, and the heads of the leading families. **Men, brethren.** In a short speech, of which we have only an abstract, he told them how he came to be there as a prisoner. No doubt he fully explained the ground of enmity and his appeal; so fully that when he said, **For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.** They knew that it was the hope of Christ and the resurrection. *This chain* is a reference to the one that bound him to the soldier. **We neither received letters, etc.** They mean official letters from the authorities at Jerusalem. They have no official tidings warning them against him. They must have known of him, and of the charges made against him. His fame was such that they **desire to hear** what he thinks, or holds; to hear him explain the gospel. **For as concerning this sect, we know that it is every where spoken against.** Everywhere the Jews “spoke against” the Christians with malignant hatred. Paul's treatment illustrates this. The Jews of Rome had known but little of the Christians, but they knew the odium of the church elsewhere. The Pagans also were beginning to regard the Christian religion as “a detestable superstition” (Tacitus), and matters were shaping for the bitter persecution of Nero, which came a few years later.

23–29. When they had appointed him a day. On the appointed day “many” came. The whole day was spent **persuading them concerning Christ.** Arguing from Moses and the prophets, that Jesus was he of whom the law and the prophets spoke. **Some believed, ... and some believed not.** As usual, some accepted and some rejected, and this difference of opinion was openly expressed among themselves. Probably the majority expressed themselves with extreme bitterness. Paul's **one word** seems to imply this. **Well spake ... Esaias the prophet.** The passage quoted is found in [Isa. 6:9, 10](#). It is quoted six times: in the [Gospels](#), here in Acts, and in [Romans](#). No other Old Testament passage is so often quoted in the New Testament, and it is always applied to Jewish unbelief. The terrible prediction of the stubborn, willful unbelief of the nation was fulfilled in Isaiah's time, in the time of Christ, in that of his apostles, and eighteen centuries of Jewish history illustrate the same fact to our times. For notes on the passage, see [Matt. 13:14–17](#). These are the *one* final word of Paul to the Jews before beginning his work among the Gentiles in Rome. After the **Jews departed, and**

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had great reasoning among themselves, we can hope that the result was that they believed and consorted with Paul and the church.

30, 31. Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house. His expense was met during this period by the church in Rome and elsewhere. See [Phil. 4:18](#), where the Philippian contributions are acknowledged. Here he was permitted to see and preach freely to all who came unto him. Here he wrote four of his epistles; the letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and the short letter to Philemon. Here, from notices in these epistles, we know that Luke, Timothy, Epaphros, Mark, Aristarchus and Tychius were with him at least part of the time. Nor is there doubt but these two years produced great results in Rome. It was at a later period, when Nero fell under the influence of the cruel Tigellinus, that he became a persecutor, and Paul had at this time full liberty. A few years after, at the time of the Neronian persecutor, the church embraced vast numbers in the city of Rome. The Roman historian, Tacitus says: "An immense multitude" were converted and put to death.

Acts comes to an end with these two years, and was almost certainly completed during this time. Why it paused here is unknown. We cannot repress a regret that it was not continued to the end of the career of its great missionary hero. His subsequent life and work can only be learned from incidental allusions in his later epistles and from tradition. The testimony of the primitive church affirms that he was acquitted when his appeal, after long delay, came to trial, probably in a.d. 63; that for several years he labored earnestly in other lands, visiting the old scene of his labors in Asia Minor once more. Prior to this visit he is supposed to have gone west to Spain, and crossed from thence into North Africa, then one of the most flourishing parts of the empire. Somewhere about a.d. 65–67 he visited once more the Greek and Asiatic churches he had founded, and from Macedonia wrote the First Epistle to Timothy, then at Ephesus, and also to Titus at Crete. The incidental allusions in these epistles confirm the view that he had been acquitted, and was at work for Christ. At Nicopolis, in Epirus, he was again arrested and taken to Rome. See [Tit. 3:12](#). While in prison awaiting trial, he wrote Second Timothy, his last words, solemn with the shadow of death. From hence he was sent to the scaffold by Nero in a.d. 67 or 68, and entered his eternal rest. While we cannot be certain of the facts of this *Post-Actian* outline, they are so probable that they may be reasonably accepted as the outline of the last years of the greatest hero of the faith that ever fought the good fight and won the crown.

**The Epistle of Paul to the
Romans**



Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans

The depth of thought, logical reasoning, and profound comprehension of the divine government shown in this Epistle have always been recognized. Luther says, "It is the chief part of the New Testament." Meyer, that it is "the grandest, boldest, most complete composition of Paul." Godet terms it "the cathedral of the Christian faith." That it should be what Coleridge says, "the most profound work in existence," is not wonderful when we bear in mind that it was written by the greatest of the apostles, in the full vigor of his manhood, at the height of his activity, and addressed to the church of the great imperial city which was the center of influence and power for the whole world. In this mighty capital, under the shadow of the palace of the Cæsars, in some unknown way, a congregation of believers had been gathered. It is certain that long before any apostle had set foot in Italy, churches had been formed in Puteoli and in Rome ([Acts 28:14, 15](#)). Possibly the "strangers of Rome," who listened to Peter on the day of Pentecost, had carried back the Gospel, and had formed the nucleus; but it is probable that the constant influx of strangers from all portions of the empire had carried many of the converts made around the Eastern Mediterranean to the great political center of the world. The greetings of the [last chapter](#) of this Epistle show that Paul had many acquaintances among the number, and the names seem to imply that most of them were Greeks. Indeed, while there was a Jewish element in the church, it can hardly be doubted that the majority of the believers were of Gentile origin. Various passages in the Epistles, such as [1:5-7](#); [11:13, 25, 28](#); [14:1](#); [15:15, 16](#), give indications of a Gentile preponderance.

The *occasion* of writing was the desire of the apostle to labor in the great city, a desire which had thus far been hindered, and the opportunity was furnished by the departure of Phoebe from Corinth to Rome. Still firm in his purpose to see and preach in Rome, a letter to the church would tend to prepare the way. As they had never been visited by an apostle, and as at that time there was no New Testament in existence to which they could go for instruction, it is not strange that there should be an imperfect comprehension, on the part of many, of great principles of Christian doctrine, and there was doubtless need that the relations of Jew and Gentile, and of the Law and the Gospel, should be set forth with all possible clearness. The great theme of the Epistle is set forth in [chap. 1:16, 17](#): "The Gospel is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The great doctrine is that salvation is not through the Law by works of the Law, but through the Gospel accepted by Faith. The righteousness of God, the righteousness which brings justification in the sight of God, does not come from legal works, but comes from God who gives this righteousness to those who believe upon and accept his Son. This great doctrinal theme is discussed with many illustrations and in various phases through [chapters 1-11](#), and in [chapters 12-14](#) the apostle passes to exhortations and practical applications,

while the [sixteenth and last chapter](#) is devoted to salutations of various saints in Rome known to the apostle. For a fuller analysis, I must refer the reader to the headings which accompany the Notes.

As to the *date* and *place* of composition, there is hardly room to doubt that it was written at Corinth, during the three months' stay in Achaia (Greece), which is mentioned in [Acts 20:3](#). According to [Rom. 15:25](#), at the time of writing, he was about to proceed to Jerusalem with offerings for the poor saints, made by the churches of Macedonia and Achaia. At Corinth, the largest city of Achaia, he directed such collections to be made. Phoebe, who is commended in [16:1](#), lived at Cenchreæ, the eastern harbor of Corinth. Four of the seven persons named in [Rom. 16:21–23](#), as being with him, Timotheus, Sosipater, Jason and Gaius, can be shown from other sources, either to have lived at Corinth, or to have been there at that time. From these facts, and other circumstances, it seems clear that it was written at Corinth in the spring of a.d. 58.

We have only space to add that even the most radical rationalistic criticism has always admitted that this Epistle had for its *author* the Apostle Paul. The testimony of the ancient church is unanimous; Renan has no doubt of its genuineness, and even Dr. Baur, of the Tubingen school of critics, admits that it is one of the Epistles which must be ascribed to the authorship of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. While not the first in order of time, for the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, that to the Galatians, and the two of the Corinthians, were written before it, it probably has the precedence in importance over all the Epistles of the New Testament.



Chapter I

Introduction: The Morals of Paganism

Summary —*Paul's Salutation to the Church at Rome. His Deep Interest in its Welfare. His Confidence in the Gospel. It the Power of God. The Argument Begun in Verse 18. The Sins of the Gentile World. The Gentile World under Condemnation.*

1–7. Paul. Instead of subscribing a name at the end of a letter, the custom was to introduce it at the beginning. See other Epistles of Paul; also [Acts 23:26](#). For a sketch of Paul, see [Introduction](#); also see notes in Vol. I. on [Acts 13:9](#). **Called to be an apostle.** “To be” is not in the original. Paul simply states that he is “a called apostle,” not one appointed by men, but called by Jesus Christ. He was called when he “saw the Lord,” an essential to apostleship. See notes [1 Cor. 9:1](#); also [Acts 26:16](#). His setting apart at Antioch ([Acts 13:2](#)) was not this call, but it came direct from Jesus Christ. As some Judaizing teachers tried to destroy his apostolic authority, he found it necessary on several occasions to show that his commission was directly from the Lord. **Separated.** Set apart to the work of the gospel. Christ set him apart, and his whole life was consecrated to his divine glory. **2. Which he had promised afore, etc.** This gospel was no innovation, but a fulfillment of God's long-cherished plans, and had been promised through the prophets of the Old Testament. Indeed the Old Testament is a system of types, shadows and promises pointing forward to the coming of Christ. “Of him have all the prophets borne witness.” **3. Concerning his Son.** The Son of God is the very center of the gospel, and the promises are all concerning him. **Born of the seed of David.** The two natures combined in the Son, **according to the flesh**, are pointed out in [this and the next verse](#). As to his human body, he was a descendant of David, his mother being of David's lineage. **4. But declared to be the Son of God.** Though in human form he was demonstrated to be divine by power, such power as he displayed in mighty miracles, and especially by the greater miracle of his own resurrection from the dead. **According to the spirit of holiness.** It must be noted that this is a contrast with *according to the flesh* in [verse 3](#), and hence must refer to our Lord's holy nature. The body was descended from David, but the pure, holy life was demonstrated to be divine. One was a human nature; the other was a divine nature. This nature is spoken of as “the spirit of holiness,” because it is contrasted with sinful flesh. **5. Through whom.** Through Jesus Christ, who is the subject spoken of. **We have received.** Paul refers to himself, and perhaps to other apostles. **Grace.** The grace, the favor and mercy of heaven granted to all saints. **Apostleship.** All saints were not apostles, but one must be a saint to be an apostle. Without the general grace he could not have the special gift of apostleship. **For obedience to the faith.** The apostleship was given in order to lead all nations to obedience to the faith. *The faith* is a synonym for the gospel. Observe that it is a system of *obedience*. In the apostolic age there were no recognized

believers but obedient believers. **6. Among whom are ye also the called.** From among “all nations” ([verse 5](#)). The members of the church at Rome, though partly Jews, were mostly Gentiles. They had heard the gospel call, had obeyed it, and were now “the called of Jesus Christ.” In the [next verse](#), they are said to be “called to be saints.” **7. To all that are in Rome.** To all Christians in Rome. The letter is addressed to the church in the great imperial city. Rome was the capital of the world, the home of Nero, the emperor, the largest city on earth, supposed to contain about two million inhabitants. **Saints.** All Christians were called saints by the New Testament writers. Any one consecrated to a holy life is a saint. **Grace to you and peace.** This is the ordinary New Testament Christian salutation. It is the expression of a prayer that God the Father and our Lord may bestow favor and peace upon them. The Father is the source, and our Lord Jesus Christ the mediator and procurer of these blessings. It is plain that Paul was not a Unitarian.

Let it be noted that this section, written, as admitted by skeptical critics, less than thirty years after the crucifixion, by Paul, to a body of believers at a distance from Judea, affirms the main facts of the Gospels: 1. That Jesus was the Son of God. 2. That he took upon himself our nature. 3. That he displayed divine power. 4. That he was raised from the dead. 5. That men are saved by the obedience of the faith.

8–15. First, I thank God. The first thing he wishes to speak of is thankfulness for a fact he is about to state, viz., their **faith is spoken of throughout the world.** The church at Rome was as “a city set on a hill.” From every country where the gospel was planted, people were constantly going to and returning from Rome, and hence the fact of there being a church in the great capital would be known everywhere. **9. For.** This introduces a reason for his thankfulness. He feels so deep an interest in the cause of Christ in that great center that he prays for them daily. **Serve with my spirit.** Not an outward service, but of the whole heart, soul and life, **in the gospel** to which he is consecrated. The spirit is the highest part of a man's nature, and service with the spirit is the highest service. **Make mention of you always.** So, too, of the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians. See [Eph. 1:15](#); [Phil. 1:3](#); [Col. 1:3](#); [1 Thess. 1:2](#). Such statements show the deep solicitude of the apostle for the saints. **10. Making request.** One of his petitions was that God might permit him to visit the church at Rome. While at Ephesus he had said ([Acts 19:21](#)), “I must also see Rome.” His prayers were granted, but not in the way that he now expected. When he went to Rome it was as “the prisoner of the Lord.” **11. I long to see you.** He had a special reason for visiting Rome. No apostle had ever visited the city. None of the spiritual gifts which were conferred by the imposition of apostolic hands had been conferred in Rome. If any of the brethren enjoyed them, as [Rom. 12:6](#) seems to imply, they have received them elsewhere, and he desires to impart them there. **Spiritual gift** is used in the sense of a supernatural gift. See [1 Cor. 12:1, 4](#). It is a gift conferred by the Spirit. Elsewhere the phrase “spiritual gifts” refers to extraordinary gifts. There is no recorded instance in the New Testament of any one working

miracles who was not an apostle, or who had not received the gift through the imposition of apostolic hands. **To the end.** All these gifts of the Spirit were imparted for a purpose. The purpose in the mind of Paul was that they **might be established**; that saints might be strengthened and the cause of Christ made stronger. The agent would be the Holy Spirit; Paul the instrument. **12. That is.** Such a result would minister to the mutual comfort of Paul and the church. If they are *established*, he will **be comforted** in them. The idea is that his faith will be a comfort and strength to them, and he will be encouraged and strengthened by their faith. Thus they will be mutual helpers. How different the humble apostolic style of address from that of a Roman bishop! **13. Oftentimes I purposed to come to you.** See [Acts 19:21](#). Thus far he has been hindered. He desired to visit Rome to do the Lord's work. He had planted Gentile churches in many cities. He wished to **have some fruit** in the greatest Gentile city in the world, as well as elsewhere. **14. I am a debtor.** He owed it, or was under obligation to preach the gospel **both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians**. The Greeks called other people but themselves barbarians, but in the apostolic age the Romans were excepted. The cultured Greeks and the proud Romans looked with contempt on all other races. Paul is a debtor to both, and must give them the gospel. Hence he is so anxious to labor at Rome. **Both to wise and unwise.** Here the division into two classes turns on knowledge, instead of race. His meaning is that the gospel must be offered to every class. **15. Ready to preach at Rome also.** Where, in the great world center, were found all classes, Greeks and barbarians, wise and unwise.

16, 17. For I am not ashamed of the gospel. Hence he is ready to preach it in Rome, in the very citadel of heathen pride and power. If there was any place where one would be ashamed of a crucified Savior that place was Rome in the reign of Nero. **The gospel.** God's plan of salvation in Christ. Its three great facts are the death, burial, and the resurrection of Christ ([1 Cor. 15:1-4](#)). **For.** He now states why he is not ashamed of the gospel. **It is the power of God unto salvation.** The gospel is God's only appointed means of salvation. The name of Jesus Christ "is the only name . whereby we must be saved." All God's saving power is manifested through the gospel. **To every one that believeth.** The great fundamental facts of the gospel (see above) must be believed, in order to the enjoyment of this saving power. They are embraced in the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The gospel does not save unconditionally. Belief is a condition. **To the Jew first.** The first to enjoy this saving power were Jews. To them the gospel was first offered. But it is offered to the **Greek** also, on the same conditions. **17. For therein.** In the gospel. It reveals **the righteousness of God**. This might mean (1) God's personal righteousness; (2) a righteousness acceptable to God; or, (3) a righteousness bestowed by God. The last is its sense in the Epistle to the Romans. The obedient believer in Christ is forgiven and clothed with Christ's righteousness. See [chap. 3:21-25](#). **From faith to faith.** This clause has caused much discussion. The generally received view is thus stated by Dr. Schaff: "The righteousness is revealed from faith, or

through means of faith, in order to produce faith in others.” It is revealed to us by *believing* (faith), and the duty of the believer is to extend the gospel, or to extend the faith. “Believing,” says Dr. Schaff, “includes knowledge and belief, assent and surrender, appropriation and application.” **As it is written.** [Hab. 2:4](#). The Old Testament had predicted this system of righteousness by faith, for the prophet had said, **The just shall live by faith. The just.** Those who have been forgiven and justified by the gospel.

18–32. For. Now follows a declaration of the world's unrighteousness, of the wrath of God against unrighteousness, and hence the need of the righteousness of God through the gospel received by faith in order to salvation. The “for” introduces an argument which shows that Christ's gospel is the world's only hope. **The wrath of God.** His displeasure. **Is revealed.** Not only by the declarations of the Holy Scriptures, and his judgments, but by nature's teachings, and by the human conscience. **Ungodliness.** Irreligiousness. This is the fountain of unrighteousness. **Hold the truth in unrighteousness.** There is a measure of truth revealed to every man. See [next verse](#). Many refuse to profit by the light they have, and love the darkness rather than the light. All who do not live up to the knowledge they possess, who do worse than they know, hold the truth in unrighteousness. They obstruct the truth, rather than let it have free scope. **19. Because.** Here he begins to show why God's wrath is manifest. They are inexcusable because “that which may be known of God is manifest in them.” The [next verse](#) shows what may be known of God by all. **20. The invisible things of God.** God's attributes. **Are clearly seen.** Are manifested by his works. Nature speaks of nature's God. **His eternal power and divinity.** The attributes are especially shown in his works. The earth and the heavenly bodies are effects which must be due to eternal power and divinity. **So that they are without excuse.** No excuse is left for worshiping helpless idols. **21. When they knew God.** Had the knowledge shown in [verse 20](#). They turned from their knowledge, did not glorify the invisible Creator, yielded neither adoration nor gratitude. **Became vain in their imaginations.** Thoughts or reasonings. When men turn willfully from truth, they will run to the extremes of error. The world (the pagan world) yielded to idle fancies, and were involved in deeper darkness. He who shuts out the light will finally be unable to bear it. **Vain.** Empty, useless. See [Deut. 32:21](#). **22. Became fools.** The Greeks and Roman heathen boasted of their wisdom and held the rest of the world in contempt, but at the same time their idolatry showed their utter folly. **23. Changed the glory of the uncorruptible God.** Turning from the glorious revelation of God in nature, they showed that they were fools by making an image, like man, or lower animals, and calling it a god. **Man.** The Greeks made their gods like men. Many statues still exist that were taken from old Greek or Roman temples. **Birds.** The Egyptians worshiped birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles. **24. Wherefore.** Having chosen folly, God gave them up to the consequences of their folly, and there followed an awful moral degradation which is now described. Their false religion was no check upon their lusts. They engaged in the lowest and most disgusting lusts. Language cannot describe

the pollution of the Gentile world, when Paul wrote, as revealed by the pagan writers of that period. **25. Who changed the truth of God into a lie.** By giving up the worship of the great unseen God to worship an idol; a creature, rather than the Creator. At first, idols were probably designed as only representations, but they finally became objects of worship. Just so, the images in Roman Catholic churches were intended at first as helps in worship, but have become to great multitudes really idols. **26. For this cause.** Because of the apostasy just described. **God gave them up.** Abandoned them to their own course, and thus it was shown to what depths men will fall without God. **To vile passions.** Vile, shameless, sensual indulgence, such as cannot now be named. The sodomy referred to here was common in the first century among the Romans, and is often spoken of without a sense of shame by their writers. It was prohibited neither by religion nor law, and was acknowledged without shame. **28. God gave them over to a reprobate mind.** A thought is repeated here that has already been hinted, and is often taught in the Scriptures. The man who turns from the truth will be allowed to have his way, will fall deeper and deeper into error, and will reap all the evil consequences of loving darkness rather than light. Those who hate the truth are “given over” to a reprobate mind. A reprobate mind is one rejected of God. **Which are not convenient.** Not decent, or honorable. **29. Being filled.** The characteristics of those given over to a reprobate mind are now described. **Whisperers.** Secret slanderers. **30. Haters of God.** “Hateful to God,” in the Revision. Hateful, because so polluted with sin. **31. Without understanding.** Senseless, foolish. **32. Who knowing the judgment of God.** The ordinance or decree of God condemning such sinners. That ordinance is next stated. It is that those who do such deeds are worthy of death. The heathen moralists admitted this. Yet in spite of this knowledge they not only continued in their vile sins, but took pleasure in them. No deeper degree of depravity can be found than when men call evil good, and cherish it. This dark picture of heathen vices, from [verse 18 to 32](#), is not overdrawn. It is fully confirmed by such heathen writers as Tacitus, Horace, Seneca, and Juvenal. The conclusion, from these facts, is that *all such guilty persons are under condemnation.*



Chapter II

The Sinfulness of the Jews; Their Need of the Gospel

Summary —*He who Condemns Others Condemns Himself. God's Judgments According to Truth; without Respects of Persons or Race. Having the Law does not Justify without Obedience to the Law. The Jews Condemned by their own Law. Circumcision Cannot Save. The True Circumcision that of the Heart.*

1–16. Therefore thou art inexcusable. Paul has just shown that the Gentiles are great sinner, and are without excuse before God (1:32). The Jew, however, would pronounce that conclusion just, but would excuse himself. Hence Paul makes the application to them also. **Whosoever thou art.** Verse 17 shows that the Jews are in the apostle's mind. Besides, the Jews, filled with spiritual pride, were greatly given to judging others. **Another.** The Greek says “the other;” the other division of the world, the Gentiles. **Thou condemnest thyself.** Because he practices the very thing he condemns in others. **2. The judgment of God is according to truth.** According to the facts, to character. God does not show partiality. All guilty persons are under condemnation alike, whether Jew or Gentile. **3. Thinkest thou.** It seems to us strange folly for the Jew to regard Gentile sinners under condemnation, but fancy that he might do the same things, and yet **escape the judgment of God.** Still this error is not confined to the Jews. Many a sinner persuades himself that his own sins, the very sins he condemns in others, will go unpunished. **4. Or despisest thou?** Dost thou go further still, and not only expect to escape God's wrath for sin, but dost thou even abuse his love? **The riches.** The overflowing abundance. **Long-suffering.** Shown in long bearing with the sinner. **Leadeth thee to repentance.** The purpose of God's goodness and forbearance is not to encourage sin, but to appeal to man's better nature, give him further opportunity, and lead him to repentance. **5. But.** Instead of being led to repentance by God's mercy, the sinner has abused it with **a hard and impenitent heart**, and thus has aggravated his sin. **Treasured up ... wrath.** By continuing in sin he has made his guilt and condemnation greater. **Against the day of wrath.** The day, surely to come, when God's judgments will be inflicted. **Revelation of the righteous judgment.** This will only be fully revealed at the day of judgment. That day is meant. **6. Who will render.** Sinners escape punishment for a time, and hence think they will escape altogether, but God will render, at the final day of judgment, **to every man according to his works**, whether he be sinner or saint, Jew or Gentile. **7. To them.** First, the apostle speaks of the reward that shall be given to those that live holy lives. **By patient continuance.** No one can please God who only lives a holy life at times. The Christian life is not spasmodic. There must be constant effort, patient perseverance, a constant seeking. **Luke 8:15**, in the parable of the sower, says the good ground represents those “who have the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” **Seek.** Future salvation is thus described

as an object of pursuit. It is “glory,” because of a glorious life; “honor,” because it is a reward. **Immortality.** This is rendered by the Revision, “Incorruption;” it is not subject to decay. **Eternal life.** This sums up what God bestows on those who seek glory, etc., by “a patient continuance in well doing.” **8. But unto them.** God rewards the righteous according to their works as described in [verse 7](#); so also the wicked, as this verse describes. **Contentious.** Who seek their own way, instead of God’s way, and contend against God. **Do not obey the truth.** God’s law is truth. Sinners fight against God and “obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness.” This verse describes the character of the wicked. The [next verse](#) declares God’s judgment upon them. **9. Tribulation and anguish.** God, the righteous ruler, is displeased and indignant, and hence sends the sore punishment of “tribulation and anguish.” “One refers to the external weight of affliction; the other to the inward sense of that weight.” **Upon every soul.** Upon every evil doer, whether Jew or Gentile. **Of the Jew first.** The Jew stood first in opportunity ([1:16](#)); hence is first in responsibility. **The Greek.** The whole Gentile world is meant, as in [1:16](#); the great race whose culture had spread over the world being taken as the representative of all but the Jews. The emphatic thought is that the *Jew*, as well as the Gentile, shall be rendered unto according to his works. **10. Glory, honor, peace.** The blessed reward of those who **work good**, in contrast with him that “worketh evil,” is presented in these terms. See notes on [verse 7](#). **Peace.** Full content. He whose cup of blessing is full enjoys peace in its fullest sense. **11. There is no respect of persons.** Greek, as well as Jew, if he works good, shall have the same blessed rewards. Compare [Acts 10:34, 35](#). God is impartial in the blessings conferred, as well as in his punishments. **12. For as many as have sinned without law.** As many as shall be found in sin, at the judgment, without a special revelation of the law of God. While the Mosaic law is in the mind of the apostle, the statement is general. The principle is one of universal application. Those **have sinned** who have not lived up to their light. **Shall perish without law.** They shall be judged and condemned without reference to the standards of revealed law. Law, in this verse, has no article in the Greek. When so used it means law in general. When, as occurs so often in Romans, it has the Greek definite article before it, the Mosaic law is meant. Observe that the Revision omits the article (*the*) in this verse. **As many as have sinned under the law.** Under a revelation of God’s will. These shall be judged by it, and condemned for disobedience to its commands. **13. For not the hearers of the law.** Not *the* law, but a law, as in the Revision. The possession of a revelation will not save, but obedience to it. While a general statement is made, Paul has an eye upon the Jews. Their law could not make them righteous unless it was obeyed. **Justified.** Accounted righteous; not held to be guilty. **14. When Gentiles, which have no law.** No revelation, such as the Jews had. They had a law of nature ([1:18, 32](#)). **Do by nature the things of the law.** Paul has shown how the general principle that God “will render to every man according to his works” applies to the Jews; they will be judged by law, and only law-doers will be justified. He now shows that the same principle

applies to the Gentiles. They have no revealed and written law like the Jews, but in case Gentiles, without it, should keep the things contained in the law, the moral principles of the law of Moses, they **are a law unto themselves**. Their consciences and moral sense are a law. The apostle does not say that this was the rule among the Gentiles, but applies the principle to the very rare instances of Gentiles of pure character. **15. Which shew.** Such Gentiles, not having the law, are a law to themselves, for they show forth in their lives that the essential principles of the law are **written in their hearts**. Not only do their outward acts testify, but **their consciences**, which condemn or approve their own acts, or those of others. That is, their consciences testify as to distinctions between right and wrong. They have a moral sense. **16. In the day.** These principles of judgment shall prevail in the day when God shall judge the world. **The secrets of men.** Men's lives are often hidden from their fellow-men, but at the judgment every secret shall be made manifest. He now adds that this judgment, which all are ready to admit, will be through **Jesus Christ**. He shall be the Judge; and it will be according to the gospel which Paul preached. The gospel will save or condemn men. By the words of Christ shall men be judged.

17–24. Behold, thou art called a Jew. Already, in the argument of [verses 1–16](#), Paul has shown that all men, Jew or Gentile, will be judged according to their deeds, whether they have the law or not. Now he applies the argument directly to the Jew, in order to show his need of the gospel as well as the Gentile. [Verses 17–20](#) state what the Jew claimed for himself. **Called a Jew.** To him the word “Jew” had a meaning much like “Christian” to us. It meant to him one of God's people. **Rested upon law.** There is no article before law in the Greek. The Jew had law, in this case *the* law, for his foundation. **Makest thy boast of God.** Boasted of God's favor to his race. **18. Knowest his will.** As revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures in the hands of the Jews. **Approvest the things that are more excellent.** Instructed in the law, the Jew approved by word its excellent moral principles. **19. A guide to the blind.** It was God's purpose that in choosing Israel the Israelites should become teachers of the truth; but their sin was that while they boasted of this privilege they failed to do their duty. Such a boast as this was current among the Jews of Paul's time. He heaps phrase on phrase to exalt their claims, in order to show in what follows how far short their lives fell of their professions. **20. Which hast the form of knowledge.** In the law they had the form, the pattern, of knowledge and of the truth. The truth in its fulness came with Jesus Christ ([John 1:17](#)), but the law was the pattern, the typical form, of this truth. **21. Thou therefore who teachest another.** Having just described the proud claims of the Jews, he next inquires how their practice corresponds. He who teaches others how to live, does he teach himself how to live? **Dost thou steal?** Some of the essential principles of the law which the Jews supposed to teach to others. The decalogue forbade stealing, but the Jews were already proverbial for their tricky methods of trade. **22. Commit adultery.** In spite of the strictness of their decalogue and moral code, the lax divorce practices of the Jews permitted adultery

([Matt. 19:8, 9](#)), and the Talmud says that some of the most celebrated rabbis were guilty of the same sin. See also [John 4. Thou that abhorrest idols](#). The question that follows has caused much discussion. The best rendering is, **Dost thou rob temples?** or, Are you a temple robber? Schaff suggests that the meaning is as follows: “Dost thou abhor idols, according to thy law, and yet engage in traffic whereby thou makest gain off the temples where this idol worship is practiced?” Macknight says that the reference is to robbing the temple at Jerusalem of what was due it. I think not. The apostles refers to practices which dishonor God among the Gentiles. **23. Dishonest thou God?** The first part of this verse is a summary of the claims of the Jews as given in [verses 17–20](#); the last part is a decisive answer, in an interrogative form, of the four reproachful questions just asked. Through the whole passage privilege and practice are contrasted. **24. For the name of God.** The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles on account of the vices of the Jews. They make the religion which God has revealed contemptible among the heathen. They judged their religion by the scandalous conduct. Outsiders always judge a religion by the conduct of its votaries. **As it is written.** In [Isa. 52:5](#) is found the passage to which Paul refers.

25–29. For circumcision verily profiteth. The Jew was wont to fall back on his circumcision, as some still do on some outward ordinance. His answer to Paul is, Are we not the circumcised? Are not the circumcised the people of the covenant? He replied, “I admit that circumcision availeth, if one keeps law. The outward observance profits if one be a law-doer; that is, complies with its moral commandments. But if he fails to do this, his circumcision is as worthless as though he was uncircumcised.” The effect of habitual transgression is to annul the covenant. **26.** The converse of this is also true. If the Jewish law-breaker can annul his circumcision thus, then **if the uncircumcision** (the Gentiles) **keep the righteousness of the law**, his uncircumcised state will not be counted against him. He supposes the possible case of a Gentile who might render such an obedience to the moral precepts of the law as a pious Jew could render, and argues that his uncircumcision would not make his obedience less acceptable. Circumcision is not, then, the thing that the Gentile needs, but righteousness. The disobedient Jew virtually becomes a Gentile, and the obedient Gentile virtually becomes a Jew. **27. Uncircumcision which is by nature.** The Gentiles, who are of uncircumcised races. If such an one keeps the essential principles of the law, his obedience is a rebuke to the Jewish transgressor who has covenanted to keep the law. **28. For he is not a Jew.** He is not a Jew, in the religious sense of one of God's chosen people, who is one outwardly alone. **Neither is that circumcision**, the true circumcision, that which makes one a member of God's covenanted church, “which is outward in the flesh.” **29. But he is a Jew**, such a Jew as just described, **who is one inwardly**, whose heart is given to God; **and circumcision is that of the heart.** Circumcision of the heart is a figurative expression for inward purity, as old as the book of Deuteronomy. See [Deut. 10:16, and 30:6](#); also [Jer. 9:26](#). This circumcision is not an outward mark in the flesh of the body, but is **in the spirit**. The spirit of man is

under the influence of the Spirit. **Not in the letter.** Not literal. **Whose praise is not of men.** The Jew, as we have seen, made his boasts, and praised his privileges, but though the true Jew, such as Paul describes, shall be ill-spoken of by men, but shall have **praise of God.** The whole section shows that religious privileges, resulting from birth, the revelation of God's will, ritual observances and knowledge, increase the guilt of those whose morality does not correspond. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, were very eager for the praise of men, but the true Jew, the real child of Abraham's by faith, will have what is infinitely better, the praise of God.



Chapter III

The Condemnation of Israel

Summary — *The Special Privileges of Israel. The Special Claim of the Jew. God's Faithfulness Shown in Keeping his Covenant with the Children of Faith. No Difference between Jew and Gentile. By the Law no Flesh Justified. Justification to the Believer in Christ.*

1–4. What advantage then hath the Jew? In the second chapter Paul has shown that the Jews as well as the Gentiles are included under sin, and that the possession of the law and the rite of circumcision were of no avail unless the law was kept faithfully. In this chapter the Jew is supposed to object to this conclusion; his objections are presented, and answered. The first is, “What advantage is it then to the Jew to have the law and the rite of circumcision at all, if all, both Jew and Gentile, will be judged on the same principles in the judgment day?” The **second verse** gives the answer. **2. Much every way.** The Jew had great advantages. He had greater light, more knowledge, better privileges, higher honors. The greatest advantage was that they had **the oracles of God**, the Holy Scriptures, and hence the promises which revealed a Messiah of mankind. This was not the only advantage, but the first. **3. What if some did not believe?** In this verse the Jew raises a second objection. God has made a promise to Abraham to be a God to him and to his seed in all generations. “Shall God's faithfulness be made of none effect, his promise be broken, because a great part of Israel does not believe upon the promised Seed of Abraham, who was to bless all nations?” **4. God forbid.** The Greek means, literally, “Not so.” It does not follow that God is unfaithful, because he rejects unbelieving Israel, for his covenant with Israel and his promise to Abraham were conditional. **Let God be true, but every man a liar.** That is, Let us believe all men to have broken their word, rather than God his. **As it is written. Psalm 51:4.** One of the penitential psalms, in which David mourns over his own sins. God's sayings, his threatenings, are justified by his judgments. They were in the case of David. They were also in the rejection of the Jewish nation, in spite of the promise, when it had rejected the Holy One of Israel.

5–9. But if our unrighteousness commendeth the righteousness of God, etc. Here is presented the Jews' third objection to the conclusion that Israel is under judgment for sin. Paul has just shown that God's righteousness is shown forth in condemning the Jews for their unbelief. “But,” says the Jew, “if our unrighteousness demonstrates God's faithfulness, when he condemns us for unbelief, is it right that we should be punished? Our sin gives occasion for God's holiness to be shown forth. Why, then, should we be punished for furnishing such an occasion? Speaking after the manner of men, is not God unrighteous, when he sends wrath on our nation for its unbelief?” **6. God forbid.** Rather, “By no means.” **How shall God judge the world?** How, if no sin is punished which God turns to some good purpose, shall he judge all men according to their deeds? **7. Why yet am I also judged as**

a sinner? Here the Jew is supposed to repeat the last objection in another form. "God's truth is shown by our lie. His threatenings are demonstrated to be absolutely true by his rejection of the Jewish nation. If our lie, our false life, has thus shown forth his glory, why should we be individually condemned?" **8. Let us do evil that good may come.** The apostle replies to this argument with a *reductio ad absurdum*. This amounts to saying, "Do evil that good may come," an abominable doctrine, slanderously charged upon Paul by enemies, would justify every iniquity. This doctrine, so strongly condemned, has been taught by the Jesuits. **Whose damnation is just.** All who teach such doctrine are justly condemned. **9. Are we better than they?** If Jews shall be judged as well as Gentiles, are not we Jews, having the oracles of God, better than they, and hence likely to be justified? The Jew is still supposed to be speaking. To this Paul replies, **In no wise**, for he had already shown ([chapters 1 and 2](#)) that both Jews and Gentiles were sinners before God.

10–18. As it is written. Psalms 14:1–3 and 53:1–3. Paul quotes the Jewish Scriptures to confirm his statement. **None righteous.** None absolutely free from sin. **11. None that seeketh after God.** A general statement of the sinfulness of Jew as well as Gentile. **12. None that doeth good.** Not one absolutely good. According to the flesh all tended to evil. **13. Their throat is an open sepulchre.** Thus far the statements have been general. Now we come to particulars. If the grave is opened, corruption is manifest. So corruption comes from the throats of men when they speak. **The poison of asps.** The venom of falsehood, as deadly as the deadly serpent. **15. Their feet are swift to shed blood.** To carry their owners on a mission of murder. **18. There is no fear of God, etc.** David, in the psalms quoted, has affirmed in the strongest possible language, the universal sinfulness. The Jews accepted David's words as inspired. These words included Jews as well as Gentiles; hence all are included under sin.

19–26. Whatsoever the law saith, etc. The law of Moses was written for the Jews especially, and whatsoever it saith, it saith to those under it, to the Jews; just as the United States law is addressed to the people of the United States. **That every mouth may be stopped.** It has just been seen that even the mouth of the Jew is stopped, since "none are righteous, no, not one;" hence **all the world**, Jew as well as Gentile, are guilty before God. **20. Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.** Since all are found to be sinners, law-breakers, none can be counted sinless; or, in other words, justified. **Works of the law.** In the Greek, this reads, *Works of law*. The statement is general, and of course would include the law of Moses. **For by the law is the knowledge of sin.** Again the article is not found in the Greek before *law*. Law, generally, when once known, reveals to us that we are transgressors. The savage steals as a legitimate pursuit, but when once he hears the law, "Thou shalt not steal," his sin is revealed. **21. The righteousness of God without the law** (Greek, *without law*) **is manifested.** A righteousness that does not spring from perfect obedience to law (without law), is predicted both by the law of Moses and the prophets of Israel. **22.**

Even the righteousness ... by faith of Jesus Christ. The Gospel, wherein we are “justified by faith, and have peace with God through Jesus Christ.” All were guilty under the law, but the law and prophets pointed to forgiveness in Christ. **Unto all them that believe.** There is justification for every sincere believer, whether Jew or Gentile, for there is no difference between them, but not for the unbelieving impenitent. **23. For all have sinned.** This has been already shown. **And come short of the glory of God.** Wickliffe says, “Have need of the glory of God.” I believe this suggests the idea. Man was made originally in the image of God. He was then sinless. No sinner is in the Divine image. All have sinned, and to have the divine likeness restored, need to have their sins blotted out. Until this is done they come short of the glory of God. **24. Being justified freely by his grace.** All who believe upon Jesus Christ have their sins thus blotted out, being freely, as a divine gift, justified (that is, counted just, or sinless) by grace, **through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.** Christ redeems the sinner who puts his trust in him. His blood pays the debt that the sinner owes to justice. Since Christ, the sinless One, has suffered for sin, God will accept his suffering for the debt of those who love and trust in him. **25. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.** Christ was publicly shown forth as a MERCY SEAT (a Propitiatory). As God of old met Israel at the mercy seat when the blood of the atonement was offered, so Christ on the Cross is our mercy seat. There we meet God who comes to us then in tender mercy, **to declare his righteousness,** to show it to us, in bestowing righteousness upon us in forgiving out past sins. This system of forgiveness, or righteousness through the cross of Christ, is the righteousness without law predicted by the Law and the Prophets. **26. That he might be just.** Can God be just, and yet justify the sinner? Only, because justice was fully satisfied when the sinless Christ died, not for himself, but for his people. The believer in Christ Jesus, trusting in him, baptized into Christ, into his death, is in Christ, and Christ hath paid the penalty for all who are found in him ([Rom. 8:1](#)).

27–31. Where is boasting then? If we are justified, not by our own righteous works, not by the law of Moses, but as a free gift of God through a law of faith, where is the ground for Jew or Gentile to boast? **28. Therefore.** The conclusion of the line of argument is now reached. No man is justified by **works of law** (no article in the Greek), but by faith, the faith that brings into loving obedience to Christ. **29. Is he the God of the Jews only?** If God is the God of all nations, it ought to be regarded a reasonable thing that he would justify through faith Gentiles as well as Jews. **30.** As there is one God, there is one plan of justification. **The circumcision,** the Jews are justified by faith, a faith not in God, whom they already acknowledged, but a faith in Christ, God manifest in the flesh. In the same way the **uncircumcision,** the Gentile world, are justified **through the faith.** The Gospel is meant by *the* faith (the article is found in the Greek). The salvation of both is by faith in Christ crucified. **31. Do we then make void the law?** Do we make it useless through *the* faith; i. e., through the Gospel? (the article is found before *faith* in the Greek). **We establish the law.** Rather,

law (the article is not found in the Greek). Law is confirmed and rendered sacred, when its just demands are met by the suffering of the Son of God himself.



Chapter IV

Abraham Justified While Still a Gentile

Summary —*Abraham not Justified by Works, but by Faith. His Faith Reckoned for Righteousness. David Describes the same Blessedness. This Blessedness of Forgiveness for Gentiles as well as Jews. Abraham Counted Righteous Before He Was Circumcised. The Promise of a Redeemer and of a Land Made to Abraham Before He Was Circumcised. The Greatness of Abraham's Faith. To All, Whether Jew or Gentile, Righteousness will be Imputed, Who have Abraham's Faith.*

The word *justify*, which Paul uses so frequently, should be clearly apprehended. To be justified is to be counted righteous, or guiltless, before God. He who has one sin recorded against him is not justified. He whose sins are all blotted out is justified. The sinner who believes upon Jesus Christ, clings to the *mercy seat* by an obedient, trusting faith, and finds mercy through Christ's redeeming blood, is justified. As no man could keep the law perfectly, no man could be justified by the works of the law. As we obtain God's mercy, the righteousness God bestows in Christ, by faith in Christ Jesus, so we are justified by a faith that leads us to Christ.

1–5. What shall we say then? Paul, having shown that faith is the essential principle of justification, now inquires concerning Abraham's faith and justification. **Abraham, our father.** “Our forefather according to the flesh,” in the Revision. The ancestor of the Jewish race. **Hath found.** The thought is, Hath he found justification by works, or by faith? **2. Hath whereof to glory.** If Abraham was justified by his own righteous works, he would have ground for glorying in himself. **3. What saith the Scripture?** The passage quoted is found in [Genesis 15:6](#), and is quoted three times in the New Testament—here, and in [Gal. 3:6](#) and in [James 2:23](#). God promised an heir to Abraham, and, although it seemed contrary to nature, he believed the promise. His faith in the promise was **reckoned as righteousness**. It was the ground of his acceptance with God. His faith was a trusting faith, which contained in it the element of obedience. No other faith justifies (see [James 2:23](#)). **4. To him that worketh.** Who earns wages as a servant. To that one a reward is not **of grace**, a free gift, but a **debt**. If one has rendered himself righteous by his works, this is true of him. **5. But to him that worketh not.** Does not trust his works for acceptance with God. **But believeth, etc.** Trusts in the mercy of him who justifies sinners who come to him penitent and believing. **His faith, etc.** It is made the ground of his acceptance with God. By faith he clings to Christ, the Savior.

6–8. David also. Paul has shown that Abraham's justification was through faith, rather than through works. He next cites David as describing a justification which is not due to our own righteousness, but to God's mercy. Such names as that of Abraham, the father of

their race, and David, the great king, would be authoritative with the Jews. The quotation is from [Psalm 32:1, 2](#). David himself had been a great sinner, and had been forgiven. **7. Blessed are they.** The class described as blessed are those whose sins are **forgiven**, counted righteous because their sins are blotted out. **8. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.** This is another form of the thought of [verse 7](#). One whose sins have been forgiven will not find them imputed to him at judgment. We obtain this blessedness by a faith in Christ which leads us to accept the gospel.

9–12. Cometh this blessedness upon the circumcision only. The next question is, Who shall enjoy this blessing of forgiveness? Shall it be Jews only, or shall the **uncircumcision**, the Gentiles, enjoy it? Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness; will this be true of all, both Jews and Gentiles? **10. How was it then reckoned?** To settle the question, whether this blessedness applies to Gentiles as well as Jews, the inquiry is made whether Abraham was a Jew or Gentile when it was said of him, "His faith was counted for righteousness." He was not circumcised for at least fourteen years after this statement was made of him. Compare [Gen. 15:6](#) with [Gen. 17:25](#). He was then justified, without circumcision, while yet a Gentile. **11. He received the sign of circumcision.** The outward mark in the flesh. **A seal.** A seal is often appended to a legal document as a proof. The covenant is made before the seal is annexed. Circumcision was not the covenant, but an outward mark of a covenant that before existed. The righteousness, of which it was a seal, had been acknowledged many years before. **That he might be the father of all them that believe.** Both Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised. The righteous, uncircumcised Abraham belonged to the latter class. **12. The father of circumcision.** Of the circumcision described in [chap. 2:29](#). Abraham is the "great father," the father, **not of the circumcision only**, but of all who have such faith as he had before he was circumcised. When Abraham was "counted righteous through faith," there was no difference between Jew and Gentile. Christianity, by its revelation of "righteousness through faith," leads back to the same condition.

13–15. For the promise. The reference is to the substance of various promises to Abraham for himself and his seed. See [Gen. 12:7; 13:14; 15:18](#). **Was not ... through the law.** Was not through law, the article being wanting in the Greek. No body of law had been given. The Mosaic law was given many years afterward. The law of circumcision had not been enacted. It was **through the righteousness of faith**, not of law, or works of law, that Abraham secured the promise. **14. For if they which are of the law (of law, the article wanting) are heirs.** If keeping law makes men heirs, then **faith is void**. It sets aside God's plan of "counting faith as righteousness," and destroys the promise which depends on faith. **15. Because the law worketh wrath.** The law threatens punishment to all who break its enactments, and since none keep it perfectly, it works punishment for all. Whereas, if no law had been given, there could be **no transgression** of its demands.

16–22. Therefore it is of faith. The inheritance promised to Abraham and his seed. It comes through faith, and hence is a free gift (of grace). **That it might be sure.** It could not be sure if it had to be secured by the righteousness that is of law, since none can keep the law perfectly. But all can secure it through faith. **To all the seed.** To all children of Abraham, whether those **of the law**, the Jews, or those **of the faith of Abraham**, who become his children by exercising his faith, whether Jew or Gentile. See [Gal. 3:7](#). **17. As it is written. Gen. 17:5. A father of many nations.** The name of the patriarch was changed from Abram (a father) to Abraham (father of a multitude). **Before him whom he believed.** This is to be joined with [verse 16](#), “who is the father of us all ... before ... God.” **Who quickeneth the dead.** Abraham had to believe that the Divine power, which can give life to the dead, would give new life to his aged body and that of Sarah. **18. Who against hope.** Though an old man, and his wife an aged woman, far beyond the time of child-bearing, he yet believed the promise that he would have numerous offspring. **19. Being not weak in faith.** Strong in faith, though weak in body. **His own body now dead.** Its vital powers exhausted. But God could quicken the dead, and he had the promise of God. **20. He staggered not.** He accepted the promise with unfaltering faith. **21. Being fully persuaded.** He was certain that God not only could, but would do what he promised. **22. Therefore it was imputed, etc.** The faith that secures God's righteousness is a faith that does not falter, but accepts and acts upon God's promises.

23–25. Now it was not written for his sake alone. But in order that we might have an example of God's plan of justification. **24. For us also.** If we believe our faith shall save us. **On him that raised Jesus.** The same God who quickened Abraham's body, as good as dead, raised up our Lord. **25. Who was delivered for our offences.** “He died for us;” “was made sin for us.” He was to be “cut off, but not for himself.” **Raised again for our justification.** The resurrection of Christ was his own justification against the condemnation of the world. In his justification, all for whom he died, who have laid hold on him by faith and are found in him, are justified with him, in that their sins are forgiven. Without the resurrection, the sepulcher of Christ would be the grave of all our hopes. This is beautifully symbolized in baptism. “We are buried by baptism into death,” his death, “planted in the likeness of his death,” figuratively die with him. We are also “planted in the likeness of his resurrection.” We rise with him, “new creatures,” justified by his resurrection.



Chapter V

Reconciliation Through Christ

Summary — *Justification by Faith. Peace, Hope and Joy. Christ Died for the Ungodly. His Surpassing Love. Death Through Adam's Sin. Life Through Christ's Righteousness. Law and Grace.*

1–5. Therefore being justified by faith. Paul has just shown that men are counted righteous before God, not through obedience to the law, but through faith in Christ. Not law, but faith justifies. The faith that justifies is (1) a faith in Christ; (2) a faith of the heart ([Rom. 10:9](#)) which brings the whole life into obedience ([Rom. 1:5](#)). **Peace with God.** While sinners, we are rebels against God. When our rebellion ceases and we are forgiven we are at peace. This blessed peace with God, which brings peace to the soul, is **through Jesus Christ**. **2. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace.** Two things are essential before one can enter into the state of peace (“grace”): (1) Christ, our Mediator; (2) a living faith in him. Having entered into this covenant relation, we can **rejoice in hope** of enjoying the glory of God in heaven. **3. We glory in tribulations also.** The peace of Christ is so sweet, and the hope of the saint so glorious, that the Christian can even exult in present sufferings, since he has assurance that even these minister to his eternal joy. Various steps of progress are named here in order. Affliction works out **patience**, and patience secures *approval*. Such is probably the meaning of the word rendered in the Common Version “experience.” So Macknight and Schaff render it. Patient endurance of affliction secures the divine approval. **4. Experience, hope.** The sense of the divine approval fills the soul with hope. **5. And hope maketh not ashamed.** A hope disappointed would fill with shame, but that we will not be put to shame is shown by the fact that **the love of God is shed abroad**, diffused in our hearts, by means of his Spirit given us. This may mean that our hearts are filled with the love of God; or it may mean that our hearts are conscious of the love of God. What follows seems to point to the second meaning.

6–11. For when we were without strength. Were powerless to save ourselves. **In due time.** In God's own chosen time. **Christ died for the ungodly.** For sinners. He came to save, not the righteous, but to “save his people from their sins.” **7. Scarcely for a righteous man will one die .** The great love of Jesus is now set forth. If “scarcely for a righteous man will one die,” who would die for the ungodly? **Yet peradventure.** One might die for a good man. The world had instances of those who would die for their friends. The “righteous” man is one who is regarded just; the good man is benevolent. **8. But God commendeth his love.** His love is not like human love. Christ died, not for friends, but for enemies. It was **while we were yet sinners**, that he died for us. **9. Much more then.** The argument is: If while *we were yet sinners*, God loved us so well that Christ died for us, much more now shall we,



having been justified, freed from sin, by his blood, be saved from the displeasure of God. **By his blood.** By dying for us. The keynote is “Christ died for us.” **10. For if ... we were reconciled.** As sinners, we are the enemies of God, rebels, under his divine displeasure. Through the gospel of the Crucified Redeemer, we obtain peace with God. We turn to him, and are reconciled to him, obtaining forgiveness through faith. God is not reconciled to us, but we to him. His love ever shines, and is shown in his gospel. He is ever ready to pardon, and when we cease our rebellion, and come to him, through Christ, for mercy, he receives us. **Shall be saved by his life.** He who gave his blood for our reconciliation, will not leave his work incomplete. He died, has risen and ascended on high, and he will not leave us in the grave, but we shall rise with him (1 Cor. 15:22). **11. We also joy in God.** The ground of rejoicing is *the reconciliation* with God which has been effected through Jesus Christ. **Atonement**, in Common Version, is rendered, as it should be, in the Revision, “reconciliation.” The same Greek word is found also in [verses 10 and 11](#). The thought is the same as that of [verse 1](#), when “peace with God” is spoken of. The steps of the divine plan, as shown in these verses, are (1) The death of Christ for us. (2) The satisfaction thus made to the demands of justice. (3) The propitiation, or God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for us. (4) Reconciliation. Our acceptance of Christ. “We love God because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). (5) Forgiveness of sin, or justification. Our sins are blotted out. (6) Our redemption from the grave. (7) Our glorification in heaven.

12–14. Wherefore. The section which now follows is one of the most difficult in the Bible to explain clearly in the compass of a few words. It opens up one of the profoundest questions of theology. The “wherefore” refers to the reconciliation (atonement) of Christ spoken of in [verse 11](#). Christ's work of atonement and the effect of Adam's sins are contrasted. **As by one man's sin.** By the sin of Adam. Thus **sin entered into the world.** The world of mankind is meant. **Death by sin.** Death was led in by sin. Had there been no sin, there had been no death. “The tree of life stood in the midst of the garden.” **So death passed upon all men.** As the result of one man's sin. **For that all have sinned.** The personal sins of responsible persons are not now spoken of, but all the race sinned in Adam, its representative, infants, idiots, and all. Hence all die. **13. For until the law.** Paul now shows that all must have sinned in Adam. Until law is given sin is not imputed. Yet sin must have been in the world from the time of Adam until the law of Moses, because death, which is due to sin, reigned. The prevalence of death proved the existence of sin. **14. Death reigned from Adam to Moses.** None could escape his universal dominion. He reigned, (1) although law had not come; (2) and those over whom he reigned had not repeated Adam's sin. (3) Unconscious infants could not have sinned against natural law. Hence the inference is that all had sinned *in Adam*. Hence, again, Adam is a representative man, a representative of all the race, **a figure of him that was to come.** A type of Christ, likewise a representative of all the race. Through



the one all have sinned; through the other all are made righteous, as far as the sin in Adam is involved.

15–19. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. While Adam is a type of Christ, there is a great difference. One kills, the other makes alive. “If through the sins of the one the many (the world of mankind) died,” through the gracious gift of God, through **one man, Jesus Christ**, life has been given to the many. All will be raised at the last day. **16. And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift.** A second difference between Adam and Christ is pointed out. One offence of Adam caused condemnation to be sent on Adam and all his race. All have been under death. **But the free gift**, through Jesus Christ, not only pardons the connection of our race with Adam's sin, but provides a way for the pardon of **many offences**, all our offences, so as to secure justification. One sin of Adam destroyed all, but the atonement of Jesus Christ provides conditions for forgiveness of all sins. **17. For if by one man's offence.** The superabounding grace of Christ is still further shown. As a result of Adam's one offence, death reigned over men. So, on the other hand, those who accept Christ's grace, and enjoy his righteousness, shall, through him, reign in life. The life spoken of is the resurrection from the grave, and the privilege, not the guarantee, of eternal life that is offered through the gospel. **18. Therefore as by the offence of one.** By Adam's offence, which brought the sentence of death on all our race. **Even so by the righteousness of one.** Jesus Christ. **The free gift came upon all to justification of life.** This passage shows that Christ's death brought for all men all that had been lost by Adam's sin. Adam's sin brought (1) Natural death. (2) Spiritual death to all who continued in sin. Christ's death brings (1) Life for all. All shall be resurrected from the dead. (2) Therefore it brings the full pardon of the sin of our race in Adam. (3) Therefore all infants and irresponsible persons are now sinless. (4) It brings eternal life to all who are freed from Adam's sin, and have no personal sins of their own; and (5) It brings the opportunity of forgiveness of personal sins through the gospel, and hence, of securing eternal life. **19. For as by one man's disobedience.** By Adam's disobedience, all disobeyed and were counted sinners. **So by the obedience of one**, all are counted obedient, and hence, righteous. That is, all inherited penalty for Adam's sin is blotted out for the whole race. All who have not personal sins are held to be justified. Hence all infants are sinless. The basis of infant baptism is removed. Baptism is for those who have personally sinned.

20, 21. Moreover law entered. Not *the* law, but law. The reference is not only to the law of Moses, but to all divine law, the law written on the hearts of the Gentiles. The effect of its entrance was that offences abounded. Law was continually broken. The reference here is not to Adam's sin, but to the personal sins of each man. **Grace did much more abound.** The grace of the gospel offers a free pardon to all who have broken law if they will come to



God through Christ. **21. That as sin hath reigned.** Hence, with this gracious gospel of mercy for every penitent believer, even as sin once reigned and caused universal death, **so might grace reign.** All might accept the gospel, and enjoy the divine favor, and thus secure eternal life through Jesus Christ. The scope of God's plan of salvation is wide enough for all. If there are those who are unsaved, it is because they will not come to Christ that they might have life.



Chapter VI

Dying and Living with Christ

Summary — *Death by Sin. Burial with Christ. Rising to a New Life. Those Dead not under the Dominion of Sin. Hence, Consecrated to a New Life. Once the Servants of Sin, but after Baptism the Servants of Jesus Christ. The Wages of Sin. The Gift of God.*

1, 2. Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? In the last chapter the apostle has shown that the existence of sin called out the grace of God in forgiveness. Now the objection is raised. If that is so, why not continue in sin so that God's grace would more abound? **2. God forbid.** The answer is emphatic. The thought is abhorrent, and the thing impossible from the very nature of the Christian life. The Christian life begins with a death to sin. **How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?** The Revision says, *Who died to sin.* That is correct. The Greek verb is in the past tense. A fact is referred to that occurred in the past. Death is a separation. When we severed our relation with sin, we died to it. If we have cut loose from it, how can we continue in it?

3–5. So many of us as were baptized into Christ, etc. The fact that every follower of Christ has died to sin is shown by his baptism. All its symbolism points to death. To be *baptized into Christ* means to enter into a vital union with him, so as to be found in him ([Gal. 3:27](#)). But this baptism into Christ implies death, for it is a baptism into the death of Christ. That the subjects of baptism are partakers of his death is shown by the form of baptism. It is a burial. **4. We are buried** (Revision) **through baptism into death.** The argument is that a burial implies death. Baptism is a burial, therefore its subject has died. As Christ died through sin, we die to sin; as the Crucified Christ was buried, we who have died to sin through the gospel are buried with him. As death and burial separate from the natural life, so death to sin and burial into Christ should completely sever our relation to sin. **That like as Christ was raised up from the dead.** The glorious power of the Father lifted up Christ from the tomb. So we, too, rise from the watery burial, with death and burial between us and the old life of sin, in order to **walk in newness of life.** “This passage cannot be understood unless it is borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion.”—*Conybeare and Howson*. “That the custom of baptism by immersion is alluded to is generally admitted, but the *emersion* is as significant as the immersion.”—*Dr. Philip Schaff*. “It seems to us very probable that the apostle alludes to the external form of the baptismal rite in the primitive church.”—*Godet*. “The apostle alludes to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.”—*John Wesley*. **5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death.** As the seed, planted, buried out of sight, rises again in a new life, so we are planted in the likeness of Christ's death when we are buried in baptism, and rise in the likeness of his re-

surrection, when we are lifted out of the water, and are found henceforth to have a new life. Compare [Col. 2:12](#): “Buried by baptism, wherein ye are also *risen* with him.”

6–14. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him. The cross of Christ slew our old sinful nature. The gospel was the power that moved us to trample it down, separate from it, and cling to Christ. When this old nature was crucified, we died to sin. Compare [Eph. 4:22](#); [Col. 3:9](#). **That the body of sin.** Sin is conceived of as a living power, with an organism, reigning over us through out bodily members. Our death to sin destroys this dominion. **7. For he that is dead is freed from sin.** When a slave died he was freed from his master's service; so when one has died to sin, he is no longer the slave of sin, and is freed from his service. His power over the bodily members should be destroyed. **8. Now if we be dead with Christ, etc.** This fact has been established. We have been baptized into his death, and are partakers of it. Then, having died with him, we who have risen with him from the symbolical burial to a new life, **shall also live with him.** **9.** This is certain because, **Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more.** He now lives eternally, and we who are in him, having shared his death, must share his eternal life. **10. He died unto sin once.** Once for all. It laid hands on him and slew him, but henceforth it has nought to do with him. **He liveth unto God.** Here on earth his godly life was troubled by the contradiction of sinners, but now he lives in holy union with God. **11. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead, etc.** So the Christian, buried and risen with Christ, must be like Christ in life, dead to sin, but living a godly life through Christ. **12. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.** This must not be, and cannot be, if we are really dead to sin. The body must be mortal, and subject to death, but it must not be subject to sin. **13. Neither yield ye your members.** The organs and appetites of the body must not be turned over to sin to use as instruments of unrighteousness. These have all been consecrated to God, by our rising to a new life, and we, as alive with the divine life, living to God, should use them all as **instruments of righteousness unto God**; *i. e.*, as means of glorifying him and doing his will. **14. For sin shall not have dominion over you.** Hence, has no right to the use of our bodily members. We are dead to sin. **Are not under the law, but under grace.** Paul has shown that law revealed sin. Where law exists, and the sinful nature remains, sin will continually manifest itself. But we are under grace. Our sins were forgiven on the ground that we have died to sin, been buried and risen with Christ. Hence, unless we trample all this under foot, there is no room for the dominion of sin.

15–23. Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? This is the old question referred to in [verse 1](#). The caviller in Paul's time, as well as in our time, objected that grace, forgiveness of sin, was an encouragement to sin. Paul shows, with much emphasis, that this is a false charge, since *grace*, forgiveness, implied that the sinner had died to sin. It is those who have been freed from the dominion of sin who are delivered from its penalties. **16. Know ye not?** This is utterly impossible, as they will see if they will remember one

principle. **His servants ye are to whom ye obey.** If we obey sin, we are sin's servants, under his reign, and will receive, not grace, but sin's wages, which is death; or, on the other hand, if we obey Christ, we are his servants, and enjoy his righteousness. None enjoy this blessedness but those who turn from sin and obey Christ. **17. But God be thanked.** Not that they have been sinners, but that, having been sinners, they had become obedient to Christ. **Obedied from the heart.** No outward obedience is of the slightest value unless the heart turns to God. **The form of doctrine.** Macknight paraphrases this: "I thank God, that although you were formerly the slaves of sin, ye have willingly obeyed the mould of doctrine into which ye were cast at baptism." Others, Chrysostom for example, says it refers "to Christian teaching as a type of holy living." The nature of Paul's argument, and the fact that it is founded on the significance of baptism, makes Macknight's explanation probable. **18. Being made free from sin.** When we died to sin, and were buried into Christ ([verse 3](#)). Hence, being no longer sin's servants, we become servants of righteousness. **19. I speak after the manner of men.** Use figures taken from human relations, those of master and slave. At that time slavery existed everywhere. **Because of the infirmity of your flesh.** Because of infirmity of understanding due to the flesh. **For as.** As they had been servants of sin in its various forms, **uncleanness, and iniquity unto iniquity** (working out iniquity), so now being freed from that service, let them serve **righteousness unto holiness**, with the result of showing forth holy lives. **20. Were free from righteousness.** While servants of sin they did not serve righteousness at all. **21. What fruit had ye then?** Men ought to seriously ask this question. What fruit do the shameful practices of sin bring us? Only shame and death. **The end is death.** That is, the inevitable outcome, eternal death. **22. But now being made free from sin.** Now being freed from the bondage of sin, sin should not be served at all, because they have **become servants of God.** He has the right to their full service. The fruit borne should be **holiness**, holy lives. **The end everlasting life.** The result of the service of sin is death ([verse 21](#)); but that of the service of God is everlasting life. **23. The wages of sin.** Sin is a master of his servants and pays wages. The wages is **death**, one of the saddest, but profoundest truths of the world. **But the gift of God.** God gives to those who turn from sin, life eternal. It is his gracious gift, conditioned on refusing to be the servant of sin longer, and is through *Christ*.



Chapter VII

Deliverance from Bondage

Summary — *Death Releases from the Power of the Law. This Illustrated by Marriage. But We are Dead to the Law. It Slew Christ and We Have Died with Him. We are also Dead to Sin. While the Law Reveals Sin It is Holy. The Struggle of the Carnal Nature Under the Law. The Deliverance Through Jesus Christ.*

1–4. I speak to them who know the law. Not *the* law, but law; know the powers of law. The argument of the Jews was that the law of Moses was of perpetual obligation, but they knew that death released a man from its power. It reigned only over the living. **2. For the woman who hath an husband.** This principle of law is shown from the marriage relation. Death severs it, and after it the marriage covenant is not binding. A woman can marry again without committing adultery. **4. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are dead to the law.** This principle, under the figure of marriage, is applied to those church members who were once under the law of Moses. They were then related to it as a wife to a husband. But in the [chapter VI](#), it has been shown that all disciples of Christ had died, been buried, and risen with him ([verses 2–5](#)); hence, having died, they had been released from the law. As new creatures, they could, as those freed from the marriage to law, be espoused to another, even Christ. Christians are so united to Christ, living by vital union with him, being found in him, that whatever was done to him is said to have been done to them in his person, or through his body. The church is spiritually the Body of Christ.

5, 6. For when in the flesh. When we were in an unconverted condition, under the influence of our carnal nature. The insufficiency of law to deliver us from its power is now shown. **The motions of sins.** The sinful passions. **Which were by the law.** How the law set in motion these sinful passions is set forth in [verses 7 and 8](#). See notes on them. **Did work in our members.** Seized the control of our bodily organs, and thus made us so sin as to be subject to the penalty of death. See [6:21](#); also [James 1:15](#). **6. But now we have been delivered from the law.** By death. Having died in Christ ([6:2–4](#)), we are released from the dominion of the law. See [verse 1](#). **So that we should serve in the newness of the spirit.** This service of Christ is the new service of those living new lives. It is a spiritual service: “God must be worshiped in spirit and truth.” God's law under the new covenant is “written in the hearts” ([Heb. 8:10](#)); hence it is not a bondage, but a free, willing service.

7–12. Is the law sin? In [verse 5](#) Paul intimates that the law was the *occasion* of sin. Does he mean that the law in itself sinful? This thought he indignantly repels. **Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law.** The restraints of the law brought to his knowledge his own sinful nature. Paul describes his own experiences when seeking the righteousness of the law, and thus describes those of human nature. The experiences here given are his own, but what

he says is applicable to all men. The experiences are those of Saul of Tarsus; not those of Paul the apostle. **For I had not known lust.** Greedy desire for the possessions of others. All evil desire is embraced. **8. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment.** Strange a psychological fact as it is, it is nevertheless true that to the carnal nature what is forbidden seems especially desirable. Adam and Eve would hardly have desired the forbidden fruit had it not been forbidden. When sinful men's freedom is limited, he rages against the limitation. One of the agnostic Ingersoll's pleas against the Divine government is that it is a limitation of freedom. **Concupiscence.** Evil desire. **For apart from the law sin is dead.** Apart from law. There is no article before law. If there was no law to be broken, sin would be quiescent, and would be lifeless. The restraint of law makes it spring into vigorous life. Our carnal nature rebels whenever it is restrained. **9. For I was alive once without the law.** Without law. It would be much better if the translators would omit the article where Paul did not use it. Paul was alive, that is, was unconscious of condemnation, once. His conscience did not trouble him. He was like the young Ruler who said of the commandments: "All these have I kept from my youth up." "As touching the righteousness which is of the law, he was "blameless" (Phil. 3:6). **But when the commandment came,** when he realized that it required a heart service as well as an outward service, then **sin revived.** The dormant sin was brought to light when restraints came. **I died.** Realized that I was a sinner; was convicted of sin. It is possible that reference is made to some supreme struggle. Perhaps in the stern persecution of the saints he was struggling for the righteousness of the law. Perhaps it was when Christ said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest," that he first realized that "Christ was the end of the law," and *he died.* **10. And the commandment, which was ordained unto life.** The commandments had a promise of Life. "The man which doeth those things shall live by them" (10:5). **I found to be unto death.** When he found that, instead of keeping the commandments, he had broken them, he realized he was under condemnation. **11. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me.** Sin is always a deceiver, however. I cannot explain this save by referring it to a period of life when he was self-deceived, and sinned, thinking he was doing God service. It exactly describes the persecuting Saul of Tarsus. Sin deceived him. When he found he was deceived, it slew him. He was convicted before God. **12. Wherefore the law is holy.** The law is holy; it occasions sin only because our carnal nature rebels against its holy restraints.

13. Was that then which is good made death to me? He has just shown that the law, even though it occasions sin, is just and good. He also showed that through it sin slew him. Is the law death? Nay, far from it. It is sin, not the law, that is the source of death. Sin is so exceedingly sinful, that it seizes upon the law, that which is holy, and just, and good, to work death. It stirs up the carnal nature to rebel against the law, to break it, and hence, to pass under the condemnation of death. Thus the **commandment** shows forth sin as **exceeding sinful.**

14–23. For we know that the law is spiritual. The apostle continues still further to show that, not the law, but sin is the source of death. The law is “spiritual,” that is, is divine and adapted to our spiritual nature. While there were “carnal ordinances,” its essential principles were spiritual. **I am carnal.** Paul describes his condition while under the law. It was spiritual; but he was carnal, and hence, there was a conflict. **Sold under sin.** Hence, in a state of slavery. Though Paul uses the present tense, in order to make the description more vivid, he describes his condition before he became a Christian. **16. If then I do.** Rather, “But if I do.” If he sins, against his purpose and inclination, he condemns his sin, and thus acknowledges the law, which he disobeyed, to be just and good. **17. Now then it is no more I.** Not Paul as a freeman who sins, but Paul as the bond-servant of sin (see [verse 15](#)), and hence it is sin who reigns over him, who sins in him, as the instrument. He describes the sinful state as one of bondage. How often a man does what he “would not!” **18. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh.** In his unregenerated human nature. In this **dwells no good thing.** The tendency of the carnal nature of man is evil. Its conflict with the will and conscience is now described. **To will is present with me.** Who has not had the same experience? How often we resolve to do better, and break out resolves as soon as temptation comes! **19. The good that I would I do not.** This verse proves the statement of the [last one](#). It is the strongest expression of sinfulness yet made. What could better demonstrate the bondage to sin? Yet how true to human experience! **20. But if what I would not, etc.** This experience sustains [verse 17](#), and shows that sin had predominated over human nature and rules it. Sin controls, rather than good intentions. A man wills one thing and does another. **21. I find then a law.** It is then the law of our unregenerate state that, even if we would do good, and purpose to be better, evil will be present, and will be practiced. **22. For I delight in the law of God.** The inner man, the better nature, our spiritual being, approves of and delights in the law of God. This is the part of our being that “wills to do good,” spoken of in [verse 21](#), but is overcome by evil. **23. But I see another law in my members.** One law of our being is the approval of righteousness; another is the inclination of the flesh to do evil. This law wars against the **law of the mind**, the conscience and will, and brings it into captivity. It prevails. Hence, unregenerate man is a captive. There is a struggle in the nature of man; of the “inward man,” with the flesh, with the result of captivity of the soul.

24, 25. O wretched man that I am! Wretched because he has no power in himself of deliverance. **Who shall deliver me from this body of death?** He is a captive, a captive to the body, the members of which are controlled by sin. Hence, he is a helpless slave of sin, and as such is under the condemnation of death. The body, the seat of the fleshly desires, has become “a body of death,” since it is controlled by sin. Who shall deliver him from its power? In [verse 14 to 24](#) Paul has described the bondage of the will to the flesh which is the condition of the natural man, and closes with the cry for deliverance. **25. I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.** Through him the deliverance comes. **So then with the**



mind I myself. I myself, that is, by myself and without Christ. In that state of mind delights in the law of God ([verse 22](#)), but the flesh is devoted to the service of sin. Hence the struggle, the captivity, the bondage, the cry for deliverance. Hence the failure of the law to deliver, and the need of Christ.

One of the best comments on the whole passage is [Gal. 5:16–18](#): “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh; for the desire of the flesh fights against the Spirit, and the desire of the Spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”



Chapter VIII

The Privileges of the Children of God

Summary — *No Condemnation to Those in Christ. Walking After the Spirit. To be Carnally Minded, Death. To be Spiritually Minded, Life and Peace. The Spirit of Adoption. Heirs of God. The Sufferings of Saints. The Groanings of the Creation. All things Working for Good to Saints. The Purpose and Foreordination of God. God's Protection of His Children.*

1–4. There is therefore. The “therefore” points to the argument of [chapter VII.](#), which shows that in Christ we are delivered from sin and from the curse of the law. **No condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.** As those in Christ have died with him ([6:1–4](#)), they have in him satisfied the law, and hence they cannot be under condemnation. He, the sinless One, “was made sin for us;” so we, forgiven through him, are “made the righteousness of God in him” ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)). This blessed condition depends on a vital union with Christ. “Baptized into Christ,” we must walk in him, **not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.** Compare [John 15:1–7](#), and [Eph. 1:23](#). **2. For the law of the Spirit of life.** The Spirit of life must be the Holy Spirit. The whole phrase is equivalent to the Gospel, which has been given to men by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has quickened us into a new life, and as we have died to the law and to sin, we are freed from them. Wesley says that the meaning is the “Gospel has freed us from the Mosaic law.” That the law of the Spirit of life describes the Gospel is shown by [verse 3](#), which explains [verse 2](#). **3. What the law could not do.** Because of the resistance it met in human nature. It was not strong enough to overcome the tendency of the flesh, the carnal nature, to evil. God did this by **sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.** When Christ came in human form he took the likeness of sinful flesh. **And for sin.** As a sacrifice for our sins. See [John 1:29](#). **Condemned sin in the flesh.** To “condemn” is to sentence and to devote to destruction. Sin is condemned, (1) By the spotless life of Christ. In the flesh he was without sin. (2) By his death for sin our past sins are forgiven. (3) By our vital union with his death and life we rise to walk in a new life, with a new spirit, and hence, not under the power of the flesh. See [6:4](#). **4. That the righteousness of the law.** The righteous demand of the law, its substance, is a loving obedience to God (see [Luke 10:27](#)). By the Gospel the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Spirit. Hence, we comply with its righteous demands when we **walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.** To walk after the flesh is to obey the dictates of the flesh; to walk after the Spirit is to obey its dictates. It dwells in the believer to help him, but its dictates are found in the “words of the Holy Spirit.”

5–8. They that are after the flesh. The unconverted. Those still in a state of nature. These are put in contrast with the converted, believers, who **are after the Spirit.** These classes are easily distinguished. The first obeys the dictates of the flesh; the other obeys the

dictates of the Spirit. “The things of the Spirit” are not revealed to us by internal impulses, but by the words of the Spirit, the Holy Scriptures. The indwelling Spirit helps the new man in Christ to keep these words. **6. To be carnally minded.** To be under the dominion of the fleshly impulses of the body. **Is death.** Is sure proof that one is spiritually dead and under condemnation. **To be spiritually minded.** To be walking in obedience to the Spirit of Christ. This gives life to the soul, maintains a vital union with Christ, and brings peace, or conscious enjoyment of the grace of God. **7. Because the carnal mind is enmity to God.** Is opposed to God's law, and demand for a righteous life. Hence, since it fights against God, it is under condemnation. He does not say that it is impossible for a wicked man to become good, but that it cannot be done while he retains a carnal mind. He must be converted first. **8. So then.** The result naturally follows that a “carnally-minded man,” one “in the flesh” and under its dominion, “cannot please God.” This is impossible while he continues to mind the things of the flesh.

9–11. But ye are not in the flesh, etc. It has just been shown that he who is under the sway of his fleshly passions is at war with God, cannot please him, and is spiritually dead. But the Christian is under the influence of the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in him. It does dwell in him if he is a new creature, “minding the things of the Spirit.” **Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.** The proof that we have this indwelling Spirit is that we “mind the things of the Spirit” (verse 5), and bear its fruit (Gal. 5:22, 23). Observe that the Spirit is spoken of in this verse both as the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ. **10. But if Christ be in you.** Christ is in us by his Spirit. Notice that the indwelling of the Spirit of God, having the Spirit of Christ, belonging to Christ, having Christ in us, are all varied expressions of the same great fact. **The body is dead because of sin.** Our bodies have died physically because death came into the world through sin. **But the Spirit is life.** Our spirit is made alive by union with Christ, and partaking of his righteousness. **11. But if the Spirit of him, etc.** The Holy Spirit. That Spirit in us is a pledge that God will raise us, even as Christ was raised from the tomb. **Shall also quicken your mortal bodies.** Though the body be doomed to death “because of sin,” it shall be “quicken” for those who have God's Spirit dwelling in them. Even our mortal bodies shall be raised, not in corruption, but in incorruption (1 Cor. 15:42–44).

12–17. Therefore. Seeing that we are to enjoy such glorious privileges in Christ. These are described in this section. **We are debtors.** Under obligation. Since the flesh, or carnal nature is death, we are under no obligation to obey its dictates. **13. But if through the Spirit.** By following the Spirit, “minding the things of the Spirit,” we secure life. This is shown in verse 11. **The deeds of the body** are the sinful deeds suggested by the fleshly desires. We cannot in our own strength **mortify**, *i. e.*, put an end to, the deeds of the body. It is accomplished by the aid of the Spirit, helping our spirit in the effort. **14. For as many as are led by the Spirit.** Those who “through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body” are led by



the Spirit. They obey it rather than the flesh. The presence of the Spirit in leading them shows that they are sons of God. How are they led? (1) They have given up their own wills to do God's will, and seek to obey him in all things. (2) To them the Spirit is given as a helper of their weakness ([verse 26 below](#)), and by its aid they overcome the flesh. **Sons of God.** We become sons of God when we are born again, born of water and the Spirit ([John 3:5](#)), and we maintain the sonship by being led by the Spirit. **15. For ye did not receive the spirit of bondage.** The time is referred to when they were born again, and entered the kingdom of God. They did not receive the spirit of bondage, of slavery to sin, so that they would obey its dictates, and thus be in fear of death. Instead, they received the Holy Spirit according to promise ([Acts 2:38](#)). **The Spirit of adoption.** The Spirit God bestows upon those who are accepted as his children. Paul was writing to the Romans, among whom the adoption of children, not their own by nature, was common. They would understand this to mean that those converted, or born again, are adopted as children of God; upon those thus adopted he bestows his Spirit; this Spirit in their hearts produces a loving trust that enables them to address God as Father. **Abba, Father.** Abba, Chaldee for Father. **16. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.** The Spirit of God is one witness to the fact. Our spirit is a corroborative witness. How do each bear witness? (1) Witness is usually borne in words, but not always. God's Spirit bears witness in words (see [Heb. 10:15](#)). The Holy Spirit shows us how we must become God's children, and how to continue the Christian life. (2) It bears testimony in our lives by its fruits. Do we bear the fruit of the Spirit? (See [Gal. 5:22, 23](#)). (3) Does our own spirit testify that we "mind the things of the Spirit?" Does our consciousness recognize its fruits, inward as well as outward? If the testimony of our spirit is that what God's Spirit witnesseth of the sons of God is true of us, then they concur in the testimony that we are the children of God. **17. If children, then heirs.** Observe the chain of argument: (1) We are the sons of God. (2) This is shown by our having received the Spirit of adoption. (3) Both God's Spirit and our own spirit witness together that we are children of God. (4) But children are heirs; hence we are "heirs of God; **joint heirs with Christ.**" Under the Jewish law the older brother had a double portion, but Christ admits all to a joint share of the great inheritance. **If so be that we suffer with him.** In the figure, we suffer with him when we are "baptized into his death" ([6:3](#)). We are crucified ([6:6](#)); become dead ([6:2](#)); "are buried with him" ([6:4](#)); "are planted in the likeness of his death" ([6:5](#)). Hence, in these respects we have the "fellowship of his sufferings" ([Phil. 3:10](#)). But we must be ready, for his sake, to bear the cross through life. If we do all these things, we shall be "glorified with him also." We shall share with him in all things.

18–25. The sufferings of this present time. The Christian of our time has little conception of the sufferings of the ancient saints, counted as outcasts, despised, persecuted, slain (see [verse 36 below](#); also [2 Cor. 11:23–28](#)). Yet Paul counted these as nothing in view of the hope of eternal glory. **Revealed in us.** In the saints when they shall have received the inher-

itance which God bestows in Christ. The comforts of the saint in the midst of suffering are now given: (1) The hope of glory for which all creation, ruined by the Fall, is looking. (2) The present help of the Spirit. (3) The overruling providence of God. **19. The earnest expectation of the creature.** “Creature” is rendered *creation* in the Revision, and this rendering is approved by all the best critics. Chrysostom says “Paul personifies the world, just as the prophets do when they make the floods to clap their hands.” The whole world is represented earnestly looking forward to that day of future glory when the sons of God will have reached their high estate and be revealed as his children. It is a fine, poetic figure, a grand conception. **20. For the creature was made subject to vanity.** The *creation* was subjected to vanity; *i. e.*, became empty; lost its original significance. The Greek word rendered “vanity,” means “to seek without finding.” God placed “the creation” under man’s dominion, and when man fell the whole was subject to vanity by God. **In hope.** A hope was left to creation in its fallen estate. A promise of final redemption was made to fallen man ([Gen. 3:15](#)), and the creation is represented as sharing that hope. **21. Because the creature itself shall be delivered.** The Revision reads, “The creation was subjected ... in hope that the creation itself also,” etc. Though “subjected to vanity,” it still retained the hope of final deliverance. **Bondage of corruption.** Decay and death. **Into the glorious liberty.** “The liberty of the glory.” The present state is “bondage to corruption.” The hope is deliverance from the bondage into “the liberty,” etc. In the day of the revelation of that glory, “all things shall become new” ([Rev. 21:5](#)). **22. For we know that the whole creation groaneth, etc.** The world is in travail, groaning for deliverance. That it is in travail is certain; there is unrest and crying for deliverance everywhere. It may not understand its trouble, nor even what it wants, but the meaning is that it is fallen, its wishes frustrated, and it is sighing for deliverance. These groans and sorrows are a prophecy of a time of deliverance when “there shall be a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” **23. Not only they, but ourselves also.** Not only does the world groan, but Christians, “though they have the first fruits of the Spirit,” a pledge of a rich and full harvest, **groan.** There is an eager longing for the fuller enjoyment promised. **Waiting for our adoption.** We are already adopted children, but rather in expectation than in realization. We have not received the inheritance, the full “revelation of the sons of God.” **The redemption of our body.** When the full adoption comes, we will not have these poor, frail, dying bodies, subject to weakness, sinfulness and decay, but spiritual bodies. “For in this we do groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” ([2 Cor. 5:2](#)). **24. For we were saved by hope.** Were saved when we became Christians, not that we had received all the fruits of salvation, but were enabled to hope for all, even for the redemption of the body. *In* hope would be a better rendering than *by* hope. Hope grasped the full salvation, though not yet attained. We do not hope for what we have, or see. **25. But if we hope, etc.** Hope has its blessed office. If

we hope for a blessed realization to come, we can labor for it and wait for it with patience. The hopeless soul despairs.

26, 27. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. While we are waiting in hope, but suffering, the Spirit is a helper of our weakness. It not only strengthens us, but helps us in prayer. **We know not what to pray for as we ought.** We often do not know, in our ignorance, what is best. This is especially true in the times of the greatest trial. It was even an experience of our Lord in extremity ([John 12:27, 28](#)) and of Paul ([Phil. 1:22, 23](#)). **But the Spirit itself.** Observe the climax: The creation groans; we ourselves groan; the Spirit himself groans. The Spirit within us intercedes by groaning which are his, in that they are prompted by the Spirit. Augustine says: "It is not in himself, nor in the substance of the Eternal and Blessed Trinity that he groans, but in us because he makes us groan." **Groanings that cannot be uttered.** Speechless groanings. **27. Knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.** These speechless groanings are understood by God, because it is according to his will that the Spirit intercedes.

28–30. All things work together for good. The third ground of encouragement to saints in suffering is now given. To them, under God's providence, all things, even their sorrows, trials and persecutions, work together for blessing. This precious assurance is not to all mankind, saint and sinner, but is limited to a class. **To them that love God; the called according to his purpose.** These are those who enjoy the blessed assurance just given. These two expressions are different ways of describing the same class. Notice the order in the Revision, which is the order of the Greek. The love of God is the very foundation of the Christian life. See [Luke 10:28](#), and [John 14:23](#). The expression, "Those that love God," is synonymous with "Followers of Christ." See [1 Cor. 2:9](#); [Eph. 6:24](#); [2 Tim. 4:8](#); [James 2:5](#). **The called.** These have been called by the gospel and have accepted the call. Many others are called, Jews and Gentiles, but only those who hear and obey are chosen ([Matt. 20:16](#); [20:14](#)). Paul uses the term of the latter class; those who hear and obey. The evidence that we are "the called" is that we love God. **According to his purpose.** This call was purposed from the time that God promised a Deliverer of the fallen race. **29. For whom he foreknew, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.** To foreknow and to predestinate are not the same thing. One is an act of foreknowledge, or knowing something before it occurs; the other is to decree something. We only have knowledge of the past, but God foresees the future even as he sees the past; foresees it, not because he has decreed it, but because there are no limitations on his knowledge. Augustine says: "There can be no predestination without foreknowledge; but there can be foreknowledge without predestination." *Whom does God foreknow?* Those who shall love God. As he looked into the future these were present to his mind; foreknown. *What did he predestinate of them?* Not that they should love God. Not that they should believe; nor that some should be saved and others damned; but that those who he saw beforehand would love God, should be *conformed to*



the image of his Son. The only thing predestinated, or foreordained, is that those who love God as revealed in Christ shall become Christlike in life, and like Christ in eternity. This is the only decree in the passage. **30. Whom he predestinated.** He now shows how this is accomplished for those thus foreknown as the lovers of God. **He also called.** They are “called” by the preaching of the gospel, as in [2 Thess. 2:14](#): “Whereunto he called you by our gospel.” It is not stated that these alone are called. We know that many others are called. **Justified.** The called, accepting the call, are justified. Their sins are blotted out. **Glorified.** These are made heirs of eternal glory. As stated by Godet, the purpose of the whole passage may be expressed as follows: “I see thou dost love God; art a believer; I therefore decree of thee that thou shalt become like my Son and be glorified with him.” The steps by which this is accomplished are calling, justification, and final glorification.

31–39. What shall we say to these things? The rest of the chapter is a hymn of triumph over this assurance of salvation. **If God be for us.** What has been shown shows that he is for all who love God. If he is on our side, we must prevail. **32. He that spared not his own Son.** If he gave his Son to die for us, it is impossible that he should refuse us anything that will help or bless us. He has nothing he values more than his Son. **33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?** No one can, since God himself has justified them. **34. Who is he that condemneth?** There can be no condemnation ([8:1](#)) since **Christ died ... is risen ... and maketh intercession for us.** There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. **35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Can anything? Can the sufferings of the Christian calling in a time of persecution, such as the prophet described and the early Christians suffered? **36. As it is written.** In [Psalm 44:22](#). Will such persecution lead us to abandon Christ? **37. Nay.** Not all these sufferings can lead us from Christ, for **in all these things we are more than conquerors.** We overcome by the aid of **him that loved us.** **38. For I am persuaded.** No hostile power of the universe can lead us away, is the apostle's holy confidence. **Death nor life.** These adversaries seem to advance in pairs. Death is named first, because death by martyrdom threatens. The next pair is **angels, and principalities and powers.** “The angels” are good angels, while malignant angels are meant by the other terms. **Nor things present, nor the things to come.** The present or the future. **39. Nor height, nor depth.** Perhaps, the things which exalt us and the things which cast us down. Things high and things low. **Nor any other creature.** Any other created thing. **Shall be able.** None of these, “I am persuaded,” shall have power enough to tear us away from Christ, by causing us to apostatize. **The love of God, which is in Christ.** God's great love for us is all shown through Christ. Nowhere has Paul shown more exultation, more overflowing emotion, than in this close of a profound argument, which shows the complete and full salvation of those who believe upon Christ and are found in him.

Chapter IX

The Rejection of the Jews

Summary — Paul's Deep Sympathy for His Nation. God's Promise to the Jewish Race not Void. The Argument that it is not. The Promise is not to the Seed According to the Flesh, but a Spiritual Seed. God has a Right to Choose what Race He Will. As the Potter has the Right to Choose what Race He Will. As the Potter has the Right to Shape His Clay, so God can Exalt or Reject a Race. The Acceptance of the Gentiles and the Rejection of the Jews Foretold. A Remnant of Israel Saved.

To understand the reasoning of this chapter, the reader must keep in mind the aim of the apostle. He had in the beginning of this letter ([Rom. 1:16, 17](#)) shown that the gospel was God's power of salvation ... "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." But the Jews as a nation had rejected Christ, and God had rejected them. They were soon to be destroyed as a people and their land taken away. But the Jew fell back on the promises made to Abraham. Has God broken his promises? If Christ was the true Messiah, and the Jewish nation rejected, he held that the promise was made void. To answer their objection Paul shows (1) that the promise was not to all the fleshly seed of Abraham, but to the seed according to the promise; and (2) that God, in his sovereignty, has the right to choose a race or to pass it by at his will. The subject of individual and personal election is not in the mind of the apostle, but of the election of the Jews to be the chosen people, their rejection afterwards, and the choice of the Gentiles. Isaac, Esau and Jacob are the representatives of races.

1-5. I say the truth in Christ. This affirmation is made so solemn because the Jews charged Paul with having forsaken his race. He speaks as in the presence of Christ, with a conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit. **2. That I have great heaviness, etc.** Not so much that his countrymen are estranged from him, as that they were without the blessing of Christ. **3. For I could wish myself accursed from Christ.** He could wish this, if that would avail anything, to save his Jewish brethren. **Accursed.** "Anathema," in the Revision. Rejected from Christ and lost. **My brethren.** His Jewish brethren, those of the same Jewish stock as himself. **4. Who are Israelites.** He now enumerates some of the glories of the Jewish race. Jacob, their ancestor, had been called Israel ([Gen. 32:28](#)) by the angel. This means a Prince with God, and this proud title was borne by his descendants. **Whose is the adoption.** Six high privileges of the chosen people are named in the [4th and 5th verses](#). They were adopted as the chosen people ([Deut. 7:6](#)). **And the glory.** The presence of the ark of God and the glory of the Divine Presence ([1 Sam. 4:21](#)). **The covenants.** The covenants made with Abraham and at Sinai. **The giving of the law.** The law of Moses given to the children of Israel. **And the service of God.** The worship of the tabernacle and temple. **And the promises.** Especially the blessed promise of Christ. **5. Whose are the fathers.** The patriarchs and

prophets. **Of whom ... Christ came.** Greatest of all, Christ, in his fleshly nature, was of their race, of the tribe of Judah, and of the seed of David. **Who is over all.** See [Matt. 28:18](#). He is our King and our Judge. **God blessed forever.** More than man; Divine.

6–9. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. The Jew might reply, “Why, then, if Israel had such privileges, covenants and promises, is the nation rejected? Has God, if Jesus is really the Christ, made his word of none effect?” The apostle in the rest of the chapter answers this objection. The first point is that there is a wider, greater Israel than that of the flesh. Those **of Israel are not all Israel.** There is an Israel according to the promise as well as according to the flesh. **7. Neither because they are Abraham's seed are they all children.** Abraham had other children besides Isaac, notably Ishmael, but none of these belonged to the chosen people, for it was said ([Gen. 21:12](#)), **In Isaac shall thy seed be called.** **8. That is, not the children of the flesh, etc.** Since Ishmael, born according to natural laws, was not of the chosen race, but Isaac, the child of promise, born contrary to natural law, because the chosen people, it follows that the children of God are not the children of the flesh, the mere fleshly descendants of Abraham, but the children of the promise; those who are of the seed according to the conditions of the promise. This argument is a reply to those who based all upon their fleshly relation to Abraham: “We have Abraham to our Father” ([Matt. 3:9](#)). In order to show this more fully Paul recalls the incidents recorded in [Gen. 18:10–14](#). **9. This is the word of promise.** This promise was made when Sarah was far beyond the natural age of bearing children, and when Abraham was an old man. So the chosen seed are children of promise.

10–13. And not only this. The first argument is that the true seed are children of the promise, a spiritual seed rather than of the flesh. The second argument, now begun, is that God has the right to reject what nation he will, including the Jews, and to choose other races if he will. This is shown by facts from history. He did exercise the right of choice when he chose Jacob as the chosen nation, instead of Esau. The facts are recited to show this. **11. For the children.** The children, yet unborn, were both Isaac's seed according to the flesh; hence, according to the flesh, of the promised seed, and both equally without works, **neither having done good nor evil. That the purpose of God according to election might stand.** That it might stand forth that he made the choice of his own will, freely. Of his own will he chose Jacob, yet unborn, to become the head of the chosen race, rather than Esau. Note that this election was not to eternal salvation, but to become the head of a people. As Moses, Samuel, and John the Baptist were raised up for a great work of God, so was Jacob. **12. It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.** See [Gen. 25:23](#). It was said to Rebecca, “Two nations are in thy womb, ... one people shall be stronger than the other, and the elder (people) shall serve the younger” Esau never served Jacob, but the Edomites, descended



from Jacob, served the Israelites. The election here is that of a race. **13. As it is written.** In [Mal. 1:2, 3](#). The language of Malachi, in its connection, shows that this is spoken of the two races. [Verse 3](#) says, “I hated Esau and laid waste his mountains and his heritage.” This was not true of Esau as a person, but was true of his descendants. One race was loved and the other race hated. God has then asserted his right to freely choose or to reject races. There is not the slightest hint of electing some *persons* to eternal salvation and others to damnation.

14–18. Is there unrighteousness with God? Does not this liberty of God, in his election of races, do violence to his justice? Is it not unjust that God should choose one nation and reject another? The answer to this is now given. Paul shows that the Scriptures recognize this liberty, and these Scriptures, revered by the Jewish objector to whom he is writing, would not assign injustice to God. The argument is wholly scriptural. **15. I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy.** This is in [Exod. 33:19](#), and is in answer to a request of Moses for a high privilege. The Lord grants it, not because he merits it, but of grace, because he “will be gracious to whom he willeth, and will have mercy where he will.” The passage, as applied by Paul, asserts that God favors nations according to his pleasure. He exercises free choice. **16. So then it is not of him that willeth.** When God is gracious, it is not because a human will (him that willeth), or a human work (him that runneth) lays him under obligation, and forces him to give, but the gift is of him, due to his mercy, which he has the right to bestow where he will. Isaac *willed* to bestow the blessing on Esau, and the latter *run* to obtain the venison ([Gen. 27:5](#)), but Jacob had been chosen to become the founder of the chosen people, and received the blessing, which promised that he should be the father of a great nation. **17. The Scripture saith to Pharaoh. Exod. 9:16.** It is not said that Pharaoh was born for, but was raised to the throne for a particular purpose. That purpose was **that I might shew my power in thee.** It is not said that God raised him up to destroy him. His power might have been shown by Pharaoh yielding to his power. Pharaoh's conduct made it necessary to abase him. Here, again, the election is not of an individual to destruction, but of a man to be a king for a particular purpose. The destruction came upon him because, in that position, he resisted God. **18. Therefore hath he mercy.** [Verse 15](#) has shown that he hath mercy according to his own sense of right, not according to any human code. The case of Pharaoh shows, in addition, that **whom he will, he hardeneth.** “What must not be forgotten, and what appears distinctly, from the whole narrative in Exodus, is that Pharaoh's hardening was at first *his own act*. Five times it is said of him that he himself hardened, or made heavy his heart ([Exod. 7:13; 7:22; 8:15; 8:32; 9:7](#)), before the time when it is at last said that God hardened him ([Exod. 9:12](#)), and even after that it is said that he hardened himself ([Exod. 9:34](#)). Thus he at first closed his own heart to God's appeals; grew harder by stubborn resistance under God's judgments, until at last God, as a punishment for his obstinate rejection of right, gave him over to his mad folly and took away his judgment.”—*Godet*. At first Pharaoh hardened his own heart; God's judgments only made it harder, and then God “gave

him over.” God only made harder, by his judgments and by leaving him to his folly, one who had already hardened his own heart. That he was given over to madness is shown in the record. Even his magician said, “This is the finger of God” (Exod. 8:19). He himself once said, “I have sinned; the Lord is righteous” (Exod. 9:27). Had he not hardened himself again, the result would have been different. Then God gave him up to his own folly, “to hardness of heart and reprobacy of mind.” The Jews approved of all this in the case of Pharaoh, but held that God could never abandon them on account of their sinful course. Paul’s argument is, that if they, the favored people, should pursue Pharaoh’s course, they might experience Pharaoh’s fate. They, also, hardening themselves, might be “delivered over to hardness,” for God is not limited by race, or by any limitation, but hardens whom he wills. *He wills to harden those who harden themselves.* I have dwelt upon this passage at greater length than usual because it is so little understood. Godet well says that in this whole passage Paul is not writing theology, but answering the arrogant pretensions of Jewish Pharisaism, and hence he asserts the Divine liberty. Had he been replying to those who have exaggerated this liberty into a purely arbitrary and tyrannical will, he would have brought out the opposite side of truth.

19–24. Who withstandeth his will? He now meets another objection of the Jewish adversary. If God’s will is paramount, why should he find fault, for no one nation can withstand his will. If God hardens, the nation that is hardened only submits to him. Paul does not stop to show that this objection is far-fetched, and illogical, but in substance says: “Let that be granted. Then what right has the Jewish nation to object? It is nothing but a lump of clay in the hands of the potter.” **20. Who art thou that repliest against God?** Shall men charge God with injustice? We have no right to strive with our Maker. He has the right to declare his own conditions upon which he will have mercy. **21. Hath not right over the clay?** So God, as far as right is involved, has the right to make of his creatures what he will. It is not said that we are as clay in the potter’s hands, but that God has the right over us that the potter has over his clay. One lump the potter can use for a splendid vase; another for a vessel for base uses. **22. What if God.** Now if God, in the exercise of his undoubted right, has done something like this, in his dealings with the Jew and Gentile. **Willing to show his wrath.** Though provoked to visit punishment on the Jewish nation for its sin in rejecting Christ, and thus to demonstrate his power, yet thus far he has **endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath.** The unbelieving Jewish nation, so sinful before God, yet long endured, is meant. God, in the exercise of his sovereign will, has thus far deferred the exhibition of his wrath in its destruction. This verse began with a question. It implies, If God does all this, where is the fault? **23. And that he might make known.** “The vessels of mercy” are both Gentile and Jewish believers. What if God endured vessels fitted for destruction (verse 22), was there wrong in this? What if he thus made known the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy, was there wrong in this? **Which he had afore prepared unto glory.**

The preparation referred to is not that of individuals for eternal life, but the preparation made was to save the Gentiles as well as Jews. The [next verse](#) shows what is meant. **24. Even us whom he hath called.** He “endured the vessels of wrath” that he might make known his mercy in calling both Jews and Gentiles. The destruction of the Jewish nation, predicted by the Savior in [Matt. 24](#), was delayed in mercy until tens of thousands of Jews, as well as of Gentiles, accepted Christ. The whole passage shows that God suffered the sins of the Jewish nation, without cutting it off, because its existence was essential in his plans for saving the world. Of it Christ came. From it the apostles were chosen. In it the church was formed, and from it went forth the gospel preachers.

25–29. As he saith also in Hosea. [Hosea 2:23](#). That it was God's plan aforetime to call the Gentiles to salvation he shows by this prophecy. In [Hosea 1:10](#), there is a prediction of the same import, which Paul quotes in [verse 26](#). Both passages show that the gospel call to the Gentiles is only in harmony with the long-declared purpose of God. **27. And Isaiah crieth.** [Isa. 10:22, 23](#). Not only do the prophets show that the Gentiles are to be called, but that a great part of Israel is to fall from God. The passage says that though the people of Israel become numerous as the sands of the seashore, only **a remnant shall be saved**. This prophecy originally applies to the return of the Jews from the Captivity, but, like many other prophecies, has a double application. **28. For he will finish the work.** This verse, quoted from [Isaiah](#), shows why only a remnant will be left. God's righteous judgment will cut the rest off from his favor. **29. As Esaias said before.** Isaiah spoke this before he wrote what is quoted in [verses 27 and 28](#). This is found in [Isaiah 1:9](#). This passage, like the other, shows that only “a remnant of Israel shall be saved.” **We had been as Sodom.** Sodom and Gomorrah had perished on account of their sins. Had it not been for God's mercy, Israel would have been blotted out for the same cause.

30–33. What shall we say then? What conclusion shall we reach? It has been shown that the word of God is not of none effect ([verse 6](#)), for it has foreshown all that has taken place. The conclusion is this: **That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness,** had no knowledge of it, had secured righteousness by accepting Christ, through faith in him, while ([verse 31](#)) **Israel, following after the law of righteousness,** hath failed of righteousness before God through unbelief. **32. Wherefore.** Why this failure on the part of Israel? Not because God willed that they should be rejected, not because of any foreordination, but because of their unbelief in Christ. **They sought it not by faith.** Sought not the righteousness that comes from faith in Christ, but a righteousness of works by keeping the law of Moses. **They stumbled at the stumbling-stone.** At faith in Christ, in a Crucified Christ. This is the one cause of Israel's failure. They fell through unbelief. **33. As it is written.** That Christ would be a stumbling-stone to Israel had been foretold in [Isaiah 8:14, and 28:16](#). When Jesus

came as a lowly one, and was crucified, the Jews, who expected the Christ to be a mighty earthly king, stumbled and fell.



Chapter X

The Jews Excluded from Unbelief

Summary —*Paul's Desire for Israel. The Jews Zealous, but not According to Knowledge. They Seek a Righteousness of Their Own Rather than God's Plan of Righteousness. The Righteousness by Faith Described. Shown to be for Gentiles as well as Jews. Hence, the Gospel must be Preached to All Men. The Unbelief of the Jews Predicted by the Prophets.*

1–4. Brethren. In 9:3, the “brethren” refers to his countrymen, his Jewish kinsmen, brethren according to the flesh. Here it means his brethren in Christ, those united by spiritual ties. **My heart's desire and prayer for Israel.** Concerning Paul's deep solicitude for the salvation of his countrymen. See 9:1–3. **2. They have a zeal of God.** They were religious, conscientious, zealous, but mistaken and fanatical. For examples of their mistaken zeal, see Acts 21:27–31; also 22:3. Even mistaken zeal is better than indifference. **3. Being ignorant of God's righteousness.** It is now shown that their zeal was not according to knowledge. They had no knowledge of God's plan of righteousness, righteousness by believing upon Christ, but rejecting it they sought a righteousness of their own, of works, secured by keeping the law, and by obeying the traditions of men (Mark 7:7, 8). On the other hand, they refused to submit to God's righteousness through faith. **4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.** The meaning is that the whole law pointed to Christ, and his righteousness. They were its object. Yet the Jews clung to the law, and refused to believe upon Christ, in whom the law met its fulfillment. **To every one that believeth.** As long as the Jews remained in unbelief, they were cut off from Christ. He who believes submits to God's plan of righteousness.

5–11. For Moses describeth the righteousness of the law. Paul now shows the Jews who cling to the law that the law itself is against the law as a way of securing righteousness. **Moses writeth.** In Lev. 18:5. **That doeth the righteousness, etc.** He who keeps the law in all respects blameless shall have life. But Paul has elsewhere shown that no one can keep the law perfectly. That righteousness, then, requires a perfect obedience, a sinless life. What Jew could say that he had never sinned? **6. But the righteousness which is of faith.** That is, “God's righteousness” in contrast with that of the law. The passage that follows is quoted freely from Deut. 30:11–14. Paul modifies it somewhat in order to bring out more strongly its spiritual application. It was applied at first to certain commands addressed by Moses to Israel, but its spirit applies to the gospel. **Say not, Who shall ascend into heaven?** The Jews expected a Savior, reigning upon the earth, a visible king of an earthly kingdom, and hence said, “Bring down Christ from heaven, where you say he is, and we will believe upon him.” **7. Or who shall descend into the abyss?** Another stumbling block with the Jews was the death and burial of Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, they held it to be proof that he

was not the Christ. They still were wont to demand that they should see the Risen Christ with their own eyes, or that he be produced from the realms of the dead. To have met the demands of the Jews would have been *sight* rather than *faith*. **8. But what saith it?** What does God's righteousness demand? It replies that we do not have to go either to heaven or to hades to lay hold of salvation, but that **the word is nigh thee**. The gospel is at hand. Faith in it, nourished in the heart and openly confessed, will secure salvation. This is more fully explained in the [next verse](#). **9. Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord.** For the importance which Jesus attached to confession, see [Matt. 10:32](#); [Luke 12:8](#), and [compare Acts 8:37](#). To openly confess Christ in those days of persecution was a trial of faith of the severest kind. Note distinctly that there is no promise here to a concealed faith. **And shalt believe in thine heart.** That is, with all the heart. The belief must not be only a mental assent, but a belief that brings the whole man into loving trust and obedience to Christ. Such a faith is referred to in [1:5](#), where the "obedience of faith" is described. **Thou shalt be saved.** Such a faith confessed unites its subject to Christ as his loving subject, and imparts to him the righteousness of those who have died to sin and been freed from the law. See [6:1-4](#). **10. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.** Such a belief, the faith that saves, is a power over the life. It influences the actions and brings us into "the obedience of faith," in yielding to Christ, wherein is found pardon. **With the mouth.** The faith of the heart must be openly confessed. This is a test of the faith. Unless Christ had provided such tests as confession and obedience we could not know whether ours was really a belief of the heart. That our faith moves us to confession is to us an assurance of salvation. The whole Christian life is a confession. **11. For the Scripture saith.** The Scripture ([Isa. 28:16](#)) has predicted a salvation by faith, when it says, "He that believeth shall not be put to shame," and hence such a plan of righteousness was provided for in the Jewish Scriptures.

12-15. For there is no difference. The Jew objected to salvation by faith, instead of by the law. Paul has just shown that righteousness could not be obtained by the law, secondly, that the prophets had predicted salvation by faith. But the Jew is now supposed to object that this salvation was for Jews only, yet Paul is preaching it to the Gentiles. Hence he declares that it is for **Greek** (Gentile), as well as Jew, as shown by the passage just quoted in [verse 11](#). It says, *Every one that believeth, etc.* ([Isa. 28:16](#)). He further shows that "the same Lord is rich to all that call upon him," of whatever race, by a second quotation from the prophets, found in [Joel 2:32](#). **13. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.** To "call upon the name of the Lord" implies, (1) That the true God (Jehovah, in the Hebrew quotation) shall be approached in worship, and (2) that there shall be something more than saying, "Lord, Lord," etc. ([Matt. 7:21, 22](#)). The language, wherever used, implies coming to the Lord and calling on him in his appointed way. Compare [Acts 22:16](#); [2:21](#); [Gen. 12:8](#). This promise of [Joel](#), since it says "whosoever," is not limited to the Jewish race. **14. How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?** The passages quoted from the

prophets show that the Gentiles also were to have the opportunity of salvation. Hence the duty of preaching to them is now shown. They could not “call upon the Lord” (see [verse 13](#)) without faith. But there could be no faith in the Lord unless they had heard of him, since knowledge is an element of faith. But they could not hear the gospel story until it was preached to them. Hence, preaching to the Gentiles was essential to carry out the purposes of God. **15. But how shall they preach, except they be sent?** Those must go out to them who have knowledge of the gospel. Hence it was needful that the apostles and evangelists be *sent*. Hence Christ said, “Go into all the world and preach to every creature.” Thus Paul shows the duty was laid upon him to preach to Greek as well as Jew. **As it is written. Isaiah 52:7.** This message was to the Gentiles blessed tidings, and the passage quoted from Isaiah shows, under a figure, how those would rejoice who believed the glad news. See [Acts 13:48](#).

16–18. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. All had not yet heard it, and hence could not obey it. To those who receive the gospel it is glad tidings. These fulfill the prediction of the prophets. But many are in unbelief, and hence do not obey the gospel. (Note that the gospel is to be obeyed.) This need not surprise us, for Isaiah predicted this also, when he said ([Isa. 53:1](#)), **Lord, who hath believed our report? 17. So, then, faith cometh by hearing.** Hence the need of preaching. If God by a miracle wrought faith in the heart, he could dispense with the preacher. But the divine arrangement is that it should result from hearing the word of God preached. For an example of the gospel plan, see [Acts 18:8](#). **18. Have they not heard?** Who are alluded to? Both Jews and Gentiles. The objector might say, Well, if faith comes by hearing, so few have heard that we are not responsible for our unbelief. Nay, says the apostle, the opportunity to hear has been very widely extended. In the language of the Psalmist ([19:4](#)), **Their sound** (that of the preachers of the gospel) **is gone out into all the earth.** When the vast multitude converted on Pentecost were scattered to their homes, they carried the gospel into all parts of the civilized world. Paul was now writing to the church in Rome, where no apostle had ever been.

19–21. Did not Israel know? Why, the Jew is supposed to object, if the gospel has been extended so widely, is the greater portion of Israel in ignorance that the Gentiles were to be saved? Paul replies that Israel should have known: (1) Moses foretells the call of another people to the favor of God. (2) **20.** Isaiah still more plainly predicts the salvation of the Gentiles in [65:1](#), and (3) in the next verse ([65:2](#)) he predicts the falling away of Israel. **21. All day long, etc.** Quoted from [Isaiah 65:2](#). It presents the figure of a parent, with hands extended, appealing to a wayward child. That child was the Jewish nation. It was cast off because it *would* be cast off. It refused to listen to appeals. See [Matt. 23:37](#). The apostle is far from ascribing the rejection of Israel to a divine decree, but he assigns the cause to Israel itself. Just so the Savior says in the passage ([Matt. 23:37](#)) just referred to, “How often *would*

I have gathered, etc., ... but ye would not." The divine wish was that Israel should be saved, but Israel stubbornly refused.



Chapter XI

The Two Olive Trees

Summary — *A Part of Israel Saved. The Rest Blinded by their Hardness of Heart. The Salvation of the Gentiles through the Fall of Israel. The Figure of the Two Olive Trees. The Jewish Branches Broken Off. The Gentile Branches Grafted In. Yet Israel Shall Be Saved. God's Unsearchable Judgments.*

1–4. Hath God cast away his people? In [chapter 10](#) Paul has shown that the Gentiles were to come into God's favor, and the Jews, the chosen people, to be rejected. He now asks whether the Jews were finally cast off. He shows that the rejection was not total, but partial, many Jews being saved; and secondly, that it was not eternal, but finally all Israel would come to Christ. **I also am an Israelite.** Hence all Israel is not cast off, since he, an Israelite, is an apostle of Christ. He shows that he is of approved Jewish descent. **2. God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew.** Israel was the people foreknown, “the chosen people.” In [verse 1](#), “his people” refers to the nation; here it must mean the same, not individuals. The nation foreknown and chosen is not totally and eternally cast off. This is what Paul means, and what he devotes the rest of the chapter to proving. He first shows that a portion of Israel is saved. **Know ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias?** The passage referred to is found in [1 Kings 19:10](#). Elijah, a fugitive for his life, in his appeal to God, assumes that all Israel had fallen into the idol worship of Ahab and Jezebel. But there were true worshipers left, although the nation seemed to have fallen away. In what seemed a general apostasy, there were seven thousand left. So, argues the apostle, there are faithful ones left now in Israel. **4. Not bowed the knee to Baal.** Baal was the principal deity of the Phoenicians, and represented the sun. Jezebel, the queen of Ahab, was a Phoenician, and sought to supplant the worship of Jehovah with the worship of Baal. Though it seemed as though she had succeeded, still there were those left who had not bowed the knee to the false God.

5, 6. Even so ... there is a remnant. As in the times of Ahab, there is “a remnant,” a portion of Israel left, which is faithful. **According to the election of grace.** “The ideas contained in these words is this: In virtue of the election of Israel as the salvation-people, God has not left them in our days without a faithful remnant any more than he did the in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes at the period when a far grosser heathenism prevailed.”—*Godet*. The idea is that Israel was the elected (chosen people), and out of it God had always preserved a remnant by his grace. The election of individuals is not referred to, but the election of a remnant to represent the race. **6. If by grace, then is it no more of works.** The salvation of the gospel is by *grace*, that is, it is the gift which springs from the love of God. If that be true, it is not to be earned by the works of the Jewish law. Paul is very emphatic in showing



that the Jewish Christians were saved, not because they deserved it on account of keeping the law blameless, but because they accepted the offered mercy of God.

7–10. What then? What is the inference from the fact that the greater part of Israel has fallen away? It is that Israel has not obtained what it hoped and sought for, justification by the law, and is under condemnation, **but that the election hath obtained it.** “The election” means “the elect,” and this term is applied to all believers. Here it is limited to that portion of the elect people, Israel, which had accepted Christ, and hence were an elect remnant. That “election” does not mean a decree that an individual shall be eternally saved is shown by [2 Peter 1:10](#): “Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” If an individual was elected before time began to eternal salvation by a divine decree, no act of his could render his election surer. The scriptural election is one that requires diligence on our part, and effort to keep from falling. **The rest were blinded.** Israel had eyes and saw not. See [Isaiah 6:9](#); also [Matt. 13:14, 15](#). The Savior says they were blinded because they closed their eyes. It was their own act. **8. As it is written. Isaiah 29:10.** The deep sleep spoken of by the prophet was sent because Israel abused its opportunities. They who love darkness will finally be left in darkness. **9. And David saith. Psalm 69:22, 23. Let their table be made a snare, etc.** This prediction is applied to the enemies of Christ. Its meaning is that their enmity shall react upon and injure themselves. Even their table shall become a place of danger. **10. Let their eyes be darkened.** Darkness shall come upon them because they love darkness rather than light. **Bow thou down their back.** This implies a condition of bondage on account of their sins.

11–15. Have they stumbled that they should fall? Shall we conclude that Israel has fallen forever? The apostle now proceeds to the second branch of his argument, and shows that God, for wise reasons, has cast off Israel for a time, but that finally the nation will be converted. **Through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles.** Christ said, “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” He referred to the cross. Rejected by the Jewish nation, and sent to the cross, he became the Savior of all mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews. So, too, the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, accelerated the preaching among the Gentiles. See [Acts 8:4; 13:46](#). So, too, when the Jews crucified Christ, “the handwriting of ordinances was nailed to the cross,” the “partition wall” between Jews and Gentiles was broken down. So the result of the Jews hardening themselves and rejecting Christ was, under the providence of God, that the Gentiles should be saved. **To provoke them to jealousy.** The elder brother, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, was filled with jealousy when he saw the younger son accepted by the father. **12. If the fall of them be the riches of the world.** In contributing to the conversion of the Gentiles their fall has been “riches.” **How much more their fulness?** In the remaining part of the chapter the apostle shows the grand results which will follow the final conversion of the Jewish nation as a body. **13. I speak to you as Gentiles.** As an apostle to the Gentiles he reminded them of what they owed to the falling away of the Jews, and

was active in his office (**magnify mine office**), seeking to convert as many Gentiles as possible, hoping thus ([verse 14](#)) **to provoke to emulation** his Jewish brethren. **15. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world.** See the notes on [Rom. 11:11](#). Their unbelief caused the preaching of the gospel of reconciliation to the Gentiles. **But life from the dead.** The apostle, under this strong expression, describes a wonderful resurrection of spiritual life which will follow the national conversion of Israel.

16–24. For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy. See [Numbers 15:18–21](#). Some explain the first fruits by Abraham and the patriarchs. It probably refers, rather, to the Jewish Christians, “the election by grace” ([verse 5](#)). If a portion of the nation has been saved, it is an assurance that the whole nation can be saved. **And if the root be holy.** The root may refer to Abraham. The figure is that of a tree, with the patriarchs for the root. “Holy” is used in the sense of acceptable to God, a common sense in the Scriptures. In the [next verse](#) the figure of the root, the stalk and the tree, is expanded. **17. Now if some of the branches were broken off.** To understand the [next seven verses](#) we must have a clear idea of what is meant by the olive tree. That it means the chosen family of Abraham, not his children merely of the flesh, but his believing children, the heirs of the promise, is clear. The Jewish nation inherited the temporal promises as Abraham's children; we become heirs of the promise when we become his children by faith. See [Gal. 3:28, 29](#). The Jews, the natural branches of this olive tree, “were broken off” by unbelief. The root is Abraham. **Thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in.** When the Jews, the natural branches, were broken off by their unbelief, the Gentile Christians, not natural branches, not of the seed of Abraham, but wild olive, “were grafted in;” that is, were adopted into God's family, and became Abraham's children. **With them partakest of the root.** With Jewish Christians, these Gentile Christians became partakers of all the blessings belonging to Abraham's seed. **18. Boast not over the branches.** There is too much of this in the prejudice against the Jewish race. **The root beareth thee.** The riches of grace of the Gentile Christian are due to the fact that he is “grafted in” upon the Abrahamic stock, and becomes his child by faith. **19. Thou wilt say.** Perhaps the Gentile believer might boast over the Jews: “The Jewish branches were broken off, that we Gentiles might be grafted in. Is not this a preference of the Gentile?” **20.** It is not. **Because of unbelief they were broken off.** Had they believed, they would have remained. The Gentile is grafted in when he believes. **Thou standest by faith.** Unbelief would cut off the Gentile branch as well as the Jew. **21. For if God spared not the natural branches,** the Jews, but broke them off on account of their unbelief, certainly he would not spare the Gentile, not a natural branch, if he was an unbeliever. **22. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God.** “Severity” is shown in breaking off the Jewish branches on account of their unbelief; “goodness,” in admitting Gentile believers. **23. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief.** As Gentile believers will be cut off unless they “continue in the goodness of God,” so the Jews, if they abandon their unbelief, shall again be grafted in. They are not cut off by

a decree of God casting them away, but by their own unbelief. **24. For if thou, etc.** This argument is to the Gentile. If wild branches were grafted into the good olive tree, the Gentiles grafted into the spiritual stock of Abraham, how much more likely is it that the natural branches, the Jews, shall be grafted again into their own olive tree, the seed of Abraham to which they belong by nature.

25–27. I would not ... have you ignorant of this mystery. Any secret thing, known to but a few, is called “a mystery.” The mystery that Paul is about to unfold is concerning the conversion of Israel. He unfolds it lest the Gentile Christians may have incorrect views, or **be wise in their own conceits.** The first thing noted in explaining this mystery, is that **hardening hath happened to Israel.** This blindness, or hardening, had been due to Israel's sins, especially to unbelief. The second fact is that it would continue **until the fulness of the Gentiles had come in,** or the greater part of the Gentile world been converted. **26. So all Israel shall be saved.** After the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, the Jews, as a people, shall be saved. That is, of the Jews then living, the great part shall be converted. The nation shall turn to the Lord. **Even as it is written.** Paul does not quote literally in what follows, but cites the sense of [Isa. 59:20, 21,](#) and [Isa. 27:9.](#) **There shall come a Deliverer out of Zion.** Christ. **He shall turn ungodliness from Jacob.** Convert to righteousness the descendants of Jacob, the Jews. **27. This is my covenant unto them.** The Lord's covenant unto them is what follows, “Take away their sins.” Hence these passages imply the restoration of Israel to the divine favor.

28–32. As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. Their rejection of the gospel had proved a blessing to the Gentile world. See [verse 11.](#) Hence their enmity was allowed for the sake of the conversion of the Gentiles. **As touching the election.** The nation was a chosen nation. Though enemies of God, God still remembered that they were children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and did not cast them off forever, but remembered them in love. To this day he has preserved Israel, and yet purposes the salvation of the nation. **29. For the gifts and calling, etc.** God does not change his purposes or fail to keep his covenant. What he has promised concerning Israel will be fulfilled. **30. For as ye, etc.** The Gentiles. Formerly they were without God, but had now obtained mercy. This was due, indirectly, as shown, to the Jewish unbelief. **31. Even so have these also now not believed.** These Jews who were now in unbelief. Their disobedience had opened the door for the Gentiles. But the mercy shown the Gentiles, the fact that they are honoring and worshiping God, shall be a means of converting the Jews. Thus shall **they also** (the Jews) **may also obtain mercy.** **32. For God hath shut up all unto disobedience.** Hath included all under disobedience. First the Gentiles were disobedient, but now were called. Now the Jews were disobedient, but would finally be saved. God would have mercy on all, both Jew and Gentile.

33–36. O the depth of the riches. The rest of the chapter is an outburst of wonder and praise. From a mountain height the apostle surveys the sublime plan of God, and his soul

breaks out in a transport of delight. In this wonderful plan for the salvation of Jew and Gentile there is an unfathomable depth of riches, and wisdom, and knowledge. The depth of the *knowledge* is shown in the latter part of [verse 33](#). The *wisdom* is described in [verse 34](#), and the *riches* in [verse 35](#).



Chapter XII

Christian Life

Summary — *The Divine Mercy should Move Us. Being Transformed. Humility. Faithfulness in Our Own Personal Duties. Loving with Pure Hearts. Blessing for Cursing; Good for Evil. Leaving Vengeance to the Lord. Treatment of Enemies.*

1, 2. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God. The depth of the riches of the divine mercy has been shown in the argument of the preceding chapters, mercy for Jew and Gentile believers, and mercy in prospect for all Israel. The argument is now ended; God's plans have been explained, and the apostle appeals to those who have found mercy, in the name of that mercy, "to continue in the goodness of God." **That you present your bodies a living sacrifice.** The Jewish dispensation with its sacrifices was ended; it closed when Christ, "our passover," was offered for us. But a new order of sacrifice has come in. We should give ourselves. As the victim on the altar was surrendered wholly to God, so our bodies with all their members should be consecrated to his service; not as slain, but as "living sacrifices." We do this when they become the temple of the Holy Spirit, and are used to serve God. **Reasonable service.** The consecration of the body to God is not an outward act, like the sacrifice on the altar, but an act of the mind, or reason; hence "a reasonable service." **2. Be not conformed to this world.** The spirit of the world is opposed to that of Christ. Satan is "the Prince of this world." Christ died ([Gal. 1:4](#)) "to deliver us from this present wicked world." Hence the service of Christ renders necessary a refusal to fashion ourselves after its ways. **But be ye transformed.** Instead of following the ways of the world, the Christian must be "transformed," changed into a new form of life by the **renewing of your mind**, by having a new spirit, and walking after the Spirit. **That ye may prove.** Demonstrate, show forth. The saint, transformed, renewed, will show forth in his life "the will of God."

3–5. For I say, through the grace given unto me. The grace given unto him, specially, was that of apostleship. See [Rom. 1:5](#); [15:15](#); [1 Cor. 3:10](#). **Not to think more highly, etc.** A much needed exhortation. To be puffed up in one's own conceits is the end of progress. It is the *humble* who are exalted; those that *hunger* are filled. **Think soberly.** Let each one take a sober judgment of himself, of his powers, and duties. **The measure of faith.** That measure of faith which would enable one to exercise spiritual gifts. The [verses that follow](#) show that this is Paul's meaning. It is not the ordinary faith that saves the soul, but the extraordinary faith, which was accompanied in the first century by supernatural gifts, that is meant. **4. For as we have many members, etc.** The church is likened to the human body in which the

various organs each has its own office; so (verse 5) in the church, **we being many, are one body in Christ**, and all related to each other as the organs of the body are related.

6–8. Having then gifts. Each in the church had his duties, just as the hand, or foot, or eye of the body. These duties were indicated by the “gift” dealt out by “the measure of faith.” They differed according to the **grace that was given**. Compare verse 3. One gift was given to one, as he was seen to be fitted for it, and another gift to another. Seven gifts are now spoken of in succession. The first four are official, and some of them are extraordinary. **Whether prophecy.** To prophesy was to speak by inspiration. As the early church did not yet have the New Testament, many were thus inspired to speak. One would be called to this work. **7. Or ministry.** If instead of prophecy, our gift be the more lowly one of ministering, let us give our time and attention to it. The word rendered “ministry” is *Diakonia*, “Deaconship,” service. **Or he that teacheth.** The work of an elder, or bishop, who must be “apt to teach.” If this was one’s work, his soul must be put into it. **8. Or he that exhorteth.** He whose peculiar strength was to encourage feeble saints, and to stir up Christians to duty. **He that giveth.** A duty of all, which must be discharged without ostentation. See [Matt. 6:2](#). **He that ruleth.** One who is an elder should attend to his duty with diligence, an exhortation that a great many elders have overlooked. Every leader should be diligent. **He that sheweth mercy.** Whenever called upon to show compassion.

9–13. Let love be without dissimulation. Not a deceitful profession of love, but genuine; not like that of Judas to Christ, or Joab to Abner: a kiss and a stab. **Abhor that which is evil.** Evil must be repulsive to the saint; good, on the other hand, attractive. **10. With brotherly love.** The brotherhood of the saints was not a name only, but a real tie of tenderness and love; and each, in the spirit of true brotherhood, was to seek the honor of his Christian brother. **11. Not slothful in business.** See the Revision. The idea is, “Give all diligence.” **Fervent in spirit.** Zealous, enthusiastic, not indifferent. **Serving the Lord.** Whatever we find to do is to be done with our might, but above all, the service of Christ. **12. Rejoicing in hope.** Hopeful, and hence rejoicing in the prospect. **Patient in tribulation.** Patient in sorrow, suffering and persecution. Patience implies steadfastness. **In prayer.** “Praying always and fainting not” ([Luke 18:1](#)). **13. Distributing.** Making the needs of fellow saints your own and helping them. **Given to hospitality.** This duty was especially needful in those early days when Christians were so often driven from their homes by persecution.

14–17. Bless them that persecute you. See [Matt. 5:44](#). Thus did Christ on the cross, and the martyred Stephen. He who can obey this precept is a transformed man. **15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, etc.** Sympathize with the joys and sorrows of others. **16. Be of the same mind, etc.** Let there be harmony; a spirit of concord. **Mind not high things.** Do not seek for official or social distinction. Obedience to this would eliminate caste from the church. **Condescend to things that are lowly.** So reads the Revision. Instead of seeking pre-

eminence, we are to walk in lowly spirit like our Savior. **Be not wise in your own conceits.** Conceited and opinionated as the result.

18–21. Live peaceably with all men. If you can do so. Sometimes it is impossible. Sometimes sinners are exceedingly mad against the saints. But we are to be “peacemakers” ([Matt. 5:9](#)). **19. Beloved, avenge not yourselves.** If we are injured, we are to leave the matter in the hands of God and **give place unto his wrath.** He sees and resents the injuries of his children. **For it is written. Deut. 32:35.** The Lord claims it as his prerogative to avenge what needs to be avenged. When we do it, we trample on the divine rights. **20. If thine enemy hunger, feed him.** This is the spirit of Christ's command, to return good for evil. Compare [Prov. 25:21, 23](#). **Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.** Thou wilt by this kindness most readily subdue him, and make him feel most keenly the wrong he has done. **21. Be not overcome by evil.** Don't let the fact that you are treated wickedly induce you to do wrong, but **overcome evil** by returning good for evil. This sums up the whole matter respecting the treatment of adversaries. Happy would it be if the Christian world could come up to these requirements! The logic of kind deeds is more powerful than the logic of argument.



Chapter XIII

The Christians and CIVIL Government

Summary — *Civil Government an Appointment of God. A Protection to the Law-Abiding. A Terror to Evil Doers. Must be Supported by Taxes and Customs. Love the Fulfillment of the Divine Law. The Christian to Live a Holy, Spiritual Life.*

1–5. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. To the established civil government. Why should Paul, in this portion of the epistle devoted to Christian life, give this exhortation to obedience to civil government? Perhaps for several reasons: (1) The Christians at that early period were usually associated by the heathen with the Jews, and the Jews were noted for turbulence. See [Acts 18:2](#). (2) The fires that broke forth a few years later, in the Jewish uprising that led to the destruction of Jerusalem, were already smouldering wherever there were those of Jewish blood. Many Christians were Jews by birth. (3) There was danger that Christians, especially under persecution, should be inclined to make disturbance. (4) Some even held that since Christ's kingdom was established human governments had no rightful existence. **There is no power but of God.** He is the source of all authority, and he has appointed human governments for the welfare of man. The existing government over us is to be regarded as a divine arrangement. **2. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power.** It follows that he who seeks to break down his government is fighting the ordinance of God, and shall be liable to punishment. This implies a loyal submission to the forms of government over us. It does not imply that we shall obey wicked magistrates when they command us to disobey God. See [Acts 4:19](#). **3. For rulers are not a terror to the good work.** This is the general rule. Of course there have been occasional exceptions, when some human monster has been invested with absolute power, but the principle is true. It is not the law-abiding, but the lawless, who fear the law. Rulers as a class are a blessing. There was an exception a few years later when Nero developed his fiendish hate of all good. **4. For he is the minister of God to thee for good.** The ruler, the guardian of order and the preserver of peace is, as a rule, a blessing. **He beareth not the sword in vain.** Not only did the magistrate wear the sword, but one was borne before him in public processions as an emblem of his right to use it in the interests of order and justice. **5. Wherefore ... not only for wrath, but also for conscience's sake.** There are two reasons for obedience to the civil ruler: (1) If one fails to obey him, he will be a subject of his *wrath* (judgment) and be punished. (2) It is God's will that we should obey our civil rulers. Hence, conscience should be a motive.

6, 7. For this cause pay ye tribute also. Taxes. The taxes gathered from the Roman provinces were called tribute. As the rulers are God's ministers, his agents to attend to necessary duties, it is right that they should be supported. **7. Render therefore to all their dues.** To all rulers. Render them whatever they have a right to claim. **Tribute.** Direct taxes,



whether upon persons or property. **Custom.** A toll on goods, similar to the modern tariff. It was usually collected at the gates of cities on all goods entering. See [Matt. 9:9](#).

8–10. Owe no man any thing, save to love one another. Not only pay all tribute due, but all that is due every man. Every obligation must be discharged. The church member, who makes debts and does not meet them, violates this command. Bengel says: “Pay every debt; let none remain due to any man, save that immortal debt of mutual love, which, though fully paid, is still forever due.” **Hath fulfilled the law.** He who loves his neighbor will not do to his neighbor any of the things forbidden by the law; will not steal, kill, commit adultery, bear false witness, covet, and hence his love fulfills the Mosaic law. **9. It is briefly comprehended.** It is summed up in the single sentence **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** The several laws that flow from love are gathered up in this saying as a fountain head. **10. Love worketh no ill, etc.** Neither the ills forbidden in the commandments, nor any other. **Love is the fulfilling of the law.** Not *the* law, but law. There is no article in the Greek. All divine law is fulfilled by love. God requires nothing which is not comprehended in this word.

11–14. It is high time to awake out of sleep. To awake from carelessness and indifference. **For now is our salvation nearer, etc.** Their eternal salvation. That was certainly true of them, and is true of every believer now. Some have thought that Paul referred to the speedy second coming of the Lord. He did not know the time of that event, nor did any man ([Matt. 24:36](#)), but it might be that he shared the hope of the early, suffering church, that it would be speedy. See [1 Thess. 5:1, 2](#); [2 Thess. 2:1](#). **12. The night is far spent.** The night is the period before the full realization of that salvation named in [verse 11](#), whether that be when Christ comes, or when we are called to Christ. That salvation is **the day. The works of darkness.** Such sinful deeds as men do under the cover of darkness, and all sinful deeds. **The armour of light.** The armor worn in the light, and with which the Christian will be clad when “the day” comes. See [Eph. 6:11](#). **13. Let us walk honestly.** Dishonesty seeks the night. The children of the day will walk honestly. This implies honest, upright, pure lives, which need no concealments. **Not in rioting.** Nocturnal revels. **Chambering and wantonness.** In lascivious vice. **Not in strife and envying.** These followed naturally upon revels and drunkenness, and shameless sensuality. This passage is referred to by the great Augustine as the cause of his conversion. It rebuked his own sins, which were the common sins of his time. (*Confessions*, 8.12.). **14. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.** See [Gal. 3:27](#), for the way to put on Christ. To put on Christ is to enter into fellowship with him. He who is in fellowship with Christ cannot fulfill the lusts of the flesh. “He walks after the Spirit, and not after the flesh.”

Chapter XIV

Differences of Opinion

Summary —*Differences Concerning Food and Holy Days. We May not Condemn One Another for Things Indifferent. Let Us not Judge One Another. Let Us be Charitable to Each Other. The Kingdom Higher than Meats, Drinks, or Days. Do Nothing Doubtful in your Mind.*

1–4. Him that is weak in the faith. Not firmly established; “not rooted and grounded in the faith;” not fully instructed in Christian knowledge. **Receive ye, etc.** Take him into your fellowship, but not to discuss and pass judgments on any doubts he may entertain. “Literally, not acting so as to make distinctions about disputatious reasonings.”—*Conybeare and Howson*. The idea is that disputes over doubtful questions must not be in the way of Christian fellowship. **2. For one believeth, etc.** The apostle now names one of those differences of opinion that had made trouble. Differences had risen over food. The flesh of animals offered in idol sacrifices was offered in the markets, and one buying could not always be sure that he did not get it. Others, Jewish Christians, or of Judaizing tendencies, believed it wrong to eat any food forbidden by the law. Perhaps others believed, like the Essenes, that the regenerate man should eat only vegetables, like the primitive race in Eden. Hence, for one or all of these causes, some thought meat ought to be abstained from entirely. Disputes arose over the difference. **3. Let not him that eateth despise, etc.** Look with contempt on what he considers the weakness of the other. **Let not him that eateth not judge, etc.** Condemn as guilty of sinful practices. **For God hath received him.** God hath taken him into his church without making conditions concerning meats. Hence, you have no right to reject him. **4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?** Since God has received him, he is God's servant, and his accountability is not to you, but to God. **God is able to make him stand.** In spite of what some of you think is an error, he shall stand, for God is able to keep him. This conduct shall not cut him off from the grace of God in which we all stand.

5–9. One man esteemeth one day above another. A second difference of opinion is now cited. Some, Jewish converts or Gentiles who did not understand that the old covenant was ended, believed that the Jewish Sabbaths and new moons should be kept sacred. Compare [Col. 2:16](#), and [Gal. 4:10](#). **Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.** Let each act as he thinks right. If he thinks he ought to observe the days, let him do as his conscience demands. If he thinks otherwise, let him not observe them. **6. He that regardeth the day, etc.** It is regarded unto the Lord if he keeps it, because he thinks it is the Lord's will. If another refuses to keep it, because he believes it is the Lord's will that he should not, his non-keeping is to the Lord. **He that eateth.** Meats. See [verse 2](#). He who obeys what he regards the Lord's will in this, either eating or abstaining, does it with reference to the Lord. **7. For none of us liveth to himself.** No Christian lives to please himself, but with the conscious

aim of pleasing the Lord. **8. We are the Lord's.** While living, the aim must be to do the Lord's will, and even when we die we will be fully resigned to his will. We are not at our own disposal. **9. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, etc.** The life of the Christian is a new life that springs out of Christ's death ([Rom. 6:4](#)); we die with him; we rise with him; hence, since our life comes from him, and springs from his death and resurrection, these make him our Lord, whether we be living or dead.

10–13. Why dost thou judge thy brother? Christ, the Lord of all, is his Lord. He shall judge him and us alike. We are not the judges, **for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.** **11. For it is written.** In [Isaiah 45:23](#). The passage quoted declares that the whole world will yet make humble acknowledgment of the sovereignty of Jehovah. **12. So then every one of us shall give account.** God's universal sovereignty gives him the right to call every mortal to account. Hence, we should leave judgment to God. **13. Let us not therefore judge one another.** Since God is to judge us all, brethren should not condemn each other for differences of opinion over some untaught question. **But judge this rather.** Rather condemn severely throwing a stumbling-block in a brother's way. A stumbling-block is anything which might cause a brother to fall.

14, 15. I know ... in the Lord Jesus. The conviction is that of a mind in communion with Christ, enlightened by his Spirit. **That nothing.** No kind of food. **Is unclean of itself.** Is by its own nature such that it is a sin to partake of it. The legal distinction between clean and unclean animals is abolished. **But to him.** If one, uninstructed, considers anything unclean, to his conscience it is so. It is wrong for him to eat it. **15. If thy brother is grieved with thy meat.** If his feelings are hurt because you eat food that he thinks it is sinful to eat, it would be charitable for you to abstain from it for his sake. **Destroy not him.** His grief, and the effect upon him of seeing you do what he regards as sinful, may be to destroy him. It is kinder to give up the meat than to risk his destruction. If **Christ died** for him, you surely can do that much.

16–18. Let not then your good be evil spoken of. You have greater knowledge than these weak brethren, and know that “nothing is unclean.” That is “good.” But if you sternly insist on your right to do what the weak regard as sinful, your “good” will be evil spoken of. **17. For the kingdom of God.** Christ's dominion; the church visibly; personally, his sway over your soul. This does not depend on **meat and drink.** It rises higher than food questions. Personally, its essence is not in external things. It consists of **righteousness.** Justification; the forgiveness of sins. **Peace.** Reconciliation to God, and peace of soul as the result. **Joy in the Holy Ghost.** The rejoicing of those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Seek these rather than to eat and drink what you will.

19–23. Let us therefore follow ... peace. Hence, charitably yield what grieves a brother. **May edify.** Build up and make strong. Compare [1 Thess. 5:11](#). **20. For meat destroy not.** A rigid insistence on eating the meat so offensive to some of the brethren may rend the

church. **All things indeed are pure.** All kinds of food are morally clean. See [verse 14](#). **But it is evil.** It is morally unclean to him who eateth with hurt to his conscience. **21. It is good neither to eat flesh, etc.** If eating any kind of food, or drinking wine, is the way of your brother's peace and security, it is better to abstain from both. Deny yourself rather than offend a brother. Compare [1 Cor. 8:13](#). This maxim applies to all things indifferent. It applies to wine-drinking at our time. No Christian ought ever to set an example that may destroy another. **22. Hast thou faith?** Art thou strong in the faith, and possessed of knowledge that the weaker brethren have not? Let God take not of it, but do not parade it before the weak. **Happy is he that condemneth not himself, etc.** If one "allowed" that he had the right to eat all kinds of meats, etc., and did it to the injury of his brother, he would condemn himself, because he trampled on the law of love. **23. He that doubteth is damned if he eat.** He is contrasted with him "who has faith" ([verse 22](#)). He has not faith, or does not believe that it is right to eat these meats. Hence he is *condemned* ("damned") by his own conscience. **Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.** The context shows that Paul means that whenever actions are done by a Christian which he does not believe are right, he sins in doing them. If he is doubtful whether they are right, he must not do them.



Chapter XV

Mutual Love and Forbearance Enjoined

Summary — *The Strong Must Bear with the Weak. Not to Seek to Please Ourselves. Christ Did Not. As Christ Received Us, So We Should Receive Each Other. Christ the Savior of Both Jews and Gentiles. Paul's Apostleship. His Work Among the Gentiles. His Purpose to Visit Rome.*

1–3. We that are strong. In the last chapter Paul contrasts the strong and the weak. The first are those, like himself, who know that no kind of food “is unclean of itself,” and are emancipated from Jewish prejudices. These strong ones are to bear with the “infirmities of the weak,” as has been enjoined in the [preceding chapter](#). The lesson is a practical one of all ages. **2. Let every one please his neighbor.** We are not to seek to please ourselves, but to please others. Nor are we to seek to please them for our own selfish purpose, as is often the case, but for their **good to edification**, with a view to their good and upbuilding in Christ. **3. For even Christ pleased not himself.** Our duty to others is enforced by the example of Christ. He forgot himself in his work of saving men. So ought we to do. **As it is written.** In [Psalm 69:9](#). The passage affirms that the Messiah, instead of pleasing himself, became the subject of “the reproaches of them who reproached” his Father.

4–6. For whatsoever things were written. The passage just quoted applies to Christ, and all things written in the Old Scriptures are for our instruction. **Learning.** Instruction. **Might have hope.** The purpose of the Scriptures is to impart a present blessed hope through the patience and the comfort they impart to those who suffer for God. **5. Grant you to be like-minded one toward another.** The apostle does not pray that they may be of the same opinion, but that there be harmony of feeling. **According to Christ Jesus.** Let each be so conformed to Christ that all may be of one mind. See [Phil. 2:5](#). **6. That ye may with one mind, etc.** That being in full accord you may with one voice (mouth) utter the praises of God.

7–12. Wherefore receive ye one another. Let the strong receive the weak, all receive each other into full fellowship, even as “Christ has received us.” **To the glory of God.** All must be done so as to glorify God. So Christ hath done. **8. Now I say.** Rather, “For I say.” The work of Christ is given to show the spirit we ought to have. **A minister of the circumcision.** Christ became a minister of the circumcision; that is, a Jew, of the seed of Abraham, **for the truth of God.** The Scriptures had declared that he would be of the seed of Abraham. **To confirm the promises.** Had he not been of the circumcision, the promises would not have applied to him. **9. That the Gentiles might glorify God.** It was a part of this plan, all the while, that Christ, “born under the law,” should save the Gentiles, and enable them to

glorify God for his mercy to them. **As it is written.** Various passages from the Old Testament are now quoted to show God's purpose to give the gospel to the Gentiles. **For this cause, etc.** This quotation is from [Psalm 18:49](#), and implies that God shall be confessed, and his praises sung among the Gentiles. **10. Rejoice, ye Gentiles, etc.** This is found in [Deut. 32:43](#), and is a direct command to Gentiles to worship with the Lord's people. **11. Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles.** This command to the Gentiles, still clearer and stronger, is found in [Psalm 97:1](#). **12. Again Isaiah saith.** The quotation that follows is from [Isaiah 11:10](#), a chapter which is throughout a prediction of Christ and his kingdom. Jesse, the father of David, was an ancestor of Jesus. The passage quoted shows very clearly that Christ was to be the Savior of the Gentiles.

13–16. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy. Paul has quoted from Isaiah, “In him shall the Gentiles hope,” and follows it by a prayer that the God who has given them the blessed hope may fill them with joy and peace, so that they may abound in hope. The hope we have in Christ is the source of a great part of our joy. **14. Filled with all knowledge.** Compare [1 Cor. 8:1](#); [7:10](#), [11](#). It is evident that the knowledge of spiritual truth, professed by the strong in faith, is meant. **Able also to admonish one another.** Therefore having less need of the admonition of the apostle. **15. Nevertheless, brethren.** Though they were able to admonish each other, he has written to them boldly and plainly, as was his right, **because of the grace**, the apostleship to the Gentiles, given him of God. **16. That I should be a minister to the Gentiles.** This is the grace just referred to. **Ministering.** The Greek reads, “Ministering in sacrifice.” The figure is that of Paul, as a priest, bringing the converted Gentiles as offerings, which are placed upon the altar of God and dedicated to his service. This offering, the Gentiles, is made acceptable through the gospel, they being sanctified, set apart, by the Holy Spirit. See [Rom. 8:1](#), [2](#).

17–21. I have therefore whereof I may glory. Because of his wonderfully successful ministry among the Gentiles. Yet he glories not in himself, but only **through Jesus Christ**. See [1 Cor. 15:31](#). **In those things which pertain to God.** In his ministry as an apostle of Christ. **18. I will not dare to speak, etc.** The meaning is: “I will not dare to speak of the signs of grace and the work of others, but only of the mighty works of God hath wrought through me to make the Gentiles obedient.” **19. Through mighty signs and wonders.** This describes what extraordinary help had been given—the power to work miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. **So that from Jerusalem, and around about unto Illyricum.** Jerusalem was near the southeast corner of the Mediterranean; Illyricum lay north of Greece, on the Adriatic, so that his gospel labors had embraced a circuit clear around the east and northeast shores of the sea. **20. Yea, so have I strived to preach.** He declares the fixed policy of his ministry not to preach where Christ had been heard, but in new fields. Where other apostles or evangelists had laid a foundation, he did not seek to build. Compare [2 Cor. 10:12–16](#). As no apostle or great evangelist had yet visited Rome, his letter to the Romans was no violation

of his principle. **21. But as it is written.** In [Isaiah 52:15](#). The passage declares that God's name shall be carried where it was unknown; hence, Paul's course was in harmony with the will of God.

22–24. For which cause I have been much hindered. The greatest hindrance to his coming to Rome hitherto was the duty of preaching in places where Christ was unknown. **23. But now having no more place in these parts.** Everywhere around the eastern Mediterranean the name of Christ had been preached, so that churches were formed in all the chief cities. Hence, Paul wished to seek new fields. **Having a great desire ... to come unto you.** See [Rom. 1:11](#), and [Acts 19:21](#). **24. Whensoever I take my journey into Spain.** It was his purpose to go to Spain as a new field. The New Testament does not record that he ever carried out this purpose, though it is the testimony of the early church that he did. **To see you in my journey.** He only intended to stop for a season, in passing through, for the reason that there was already a church there. God willed that it should be otherwise.

25–27. Now I go unto Jerusalem, etc. See [Acts 20:3](#), for account of the undertaking of this journey. Also [Acts 24:17](#). He is going to Jerusalem to minister to the poor saints. **26. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia, etc.** Concerning the contribution, see [1 Cor. 16:1](#); [2 Cor. 8:1](#), and [9:2](#). **Certain contribution.** The Greek word is the same rendered *fellowship* in [Acts 2:42](#). **27. Their debtors they are.** It pleased these Gentile Christians to help those at Jerusalem, and, besides, they were under obligation to them, for the church at Jerusalem was the center from which the gospel had been spread abroad.

Why the need of this contribution for the church at Jerusalem? This is often asked. (1) Because it was mainly composed in the start of the poor. (2) Because it had undergone persecution, and this always impoverishes, not only because members are spoiled of their goods, but because they are driven from their employments. Hence, this church, at the center of conflict, and with a great number of poor, had need of the aid of the saints elsewhere, where they were more favored with the worldly blessings.

28, 29. When therefore I have performed this. As soon as he has discharged this office, it is his purpose to start to Spain, and to take Rome in on the way. **Sealed to them this fruit.** Made this contribution safe to them. What is sealed is made secure. **29. I am sure that, when I come.** He assures them that his coming will be full of blessing to them in Christ. Godet says, with force, "Would a forger of this epistle, in the second century, have drawn a picture of the future so opposite to the way in which things really came to pass?" These allusions to his future movements are positive proof that this was written before Paul was a prisoner.

30–33. Now I beseech you, etc. This urgent request of the apostle for his brethren's prayers, shows a strong confidence in their faith and devotion. Compare [verse 29](#). **31. That I may be delivered.** Paul knew too well the bitter hostility of the Jews to him, and that his visit to Jerusalem would be beset with dangers. He goes there with some forebodings. See



[Acts 20:22](#), and [21:13](#). **And that my service ... may be accepted of the saints.** We learn from [Acts 21:21](#), that the Jewish brethren looked with great prejudice on Paul's work among the Gentiles, and that various rumors were circulated among them. **32. That I may come, etc.** Three things he desires through their prayers: (1) That he may be delivered from his Jewish enemies; (2) be cordially received by his Jewish brethren; (3) **come unto them with joy by the will of God.** He did come to Rome, submissive to the will of God, but not "in joy," though no doubt God was with him and "refreshed" him. **33. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.** Asking their prayers, it was but natural that he should ask God to bless them. Compare other benedictions, in [2 Cor. 13:11](#); [Phil. 4:9](#); [1 Thess. 5:23](#).



Chapter XVI

Personal Salutations

Summary — *The Bearer of the Letter Commended. The Church Asked to Give Her Aid in the Work that Calls Her to Rome. Greetings for Old Friends and Fellow-Laborers. A Household Church. Warned Against Divisions. Farewell Benediction.*

1, 2. I commend unto you Phoebe. Evidently the bearer of the letter, a sister in Christ. In this list of persons greeted, a number are women, and the greetings show how highly Paul esteemed woman's work in the church. **A servant.** The word is *deacon* in the Greek. The word also means "servant," as rendered, but we know that there were deaconesses in the church of the first century, and Paul, in giving her a recommendation, no doubt mentions her office. To say that she was a servant of the church, would convey no special distinction. In the East, where women were so much secluded, deaconesses would be a necessity. Paul evidently refers to them. **1 Tim. 5:9, 10**, evidently refers to them; Ignatius, a companion of the apostles, mentions them in one of his epistles, and Pliny does also, in his famous letter to Trajan, early in the second century. **Which is at Cenchræ.** Paul wrote this letter at Corinth; Cenchræ was its seaport, on the Ægean Sea, about nine miles from the city. A small town with the old name still marks its site. **2. That ye receive her in the Lord.** Give her a Christian welcome. **And that ye assist her.** The term used in the Greek is a legal one; hence it is supposed that some kind of legal business called her to Rome. **She hath been a succorer of many.** This would result from her office as a deaconess. Among those ministered to was the apostle himself.

3–5. Greet Priscilla and Aquila. These active fellow-workers had first aided Paul at Corinth (**Acts 18:2**); then they went to Ephesus, and prepared the way for his work there (**Acts 18:26**); they had now returned to Rome, their former home. Some have argued that this greeting could not have been sent to Rome, from the fact that Paul had left them at Ephesus. It was the natural thing for them to go back home, when they could safely do so, and Godet says that from two or three years had passed since Paul left them at Ephesus, which gives ample time for a change of residence. The fact that the name of the wife comes first here, and in **Acts 18:2**, seems to imply that she was the more efficient. They are also named in **1 Cor. 16:19**, and in **2 Tim. 4:19**. **4. Who have for my life laid down, etc.** It is evident that at some time they had endured great peril for Paul's sake. We know from **2 Cor. 11:23–27**, that only a small part of his perils have been recorded. **Also all the churches of the Gentiles.** Are under a debt of gratitude to Priscilla and Aquila. **5. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.** As the early Christians had no houses of worship, they met in the homes of prominent brethren. In the large cities there would be several such groups. One of these in Rome met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. **Salute Epænetus.** He is not

mentioned elsewhere. **The first fruits of Achaia.** “Asia,” as in the Revision, is the true reading. The family of Stephanas were the first converts of Achaia (1 Cor. 16:15).

6–16. Greet Mary. A large number of those named were personal acquaintances of Paul; some had rendered him special service; many were, no doubt, his own converts. Of most of them we know nothing, save that he places them in this honorable roll. **7. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen.** Countrymen. **My fellow-prisoners.** When confined with Paul, we do not know. **Of note among the apostles.** Well and favorably known to the apostles. **10. Salute them who are of the household of Aristobulus.** Aristobulus was either dead, or not a believer. The household is, perhaps, his slaves. Great Romans had hundreds of slaves, usually white, many of them cultured. Thousands of the early Christians were gathered from these. **11. The household of Narcissus.** At the time Paul wrote, a favorite of Nero, named Narcissus, was all powerful in Rome. He probably meant a number of his servants having accepted Christ. **12. Tryphæna, Tryphosa, ... Persis.** These are the names of women. From the fact stated of them, they were probably deaconesses. **13. Salute Rufus.** Some have supposed this to be the Rufus named in Mark 15:21. His father was of Cyrene. Paul had certainly met his mother elsewhere, for he not only greets her, but says she had been a mother to him. **14. Hermas.** Supposed by some to have been the author of an early Christian writing, called “The Shepherd of Hermas,” which still remains. **15. And all the saints which are with them.** Probably another household church, which met with those just named. **16. Salute one another with a holy kiss.** The kiss is still a common salutation in the East, and was in New Testament times. See Luke 7:45; also 2 Sam. 20:9, and 1 Pet. 5:14. The custom is still preserved in the Greek churches.

17–20. Mark them which cause divisions. Judaizing, or other false teachers, who disturbed the Gentile churches by urging them to keep the law of Moses, or by teaching some heresy. Read the Epistle to the Galatians. They were not to listen to them, and were to avoid them. **18. Serve not our Lord Jesus Christ.** These men, like many other false teachers, were more devoted to their own appetites than to Christ. **The simple.** The unsuspecting. **19. For your obedience is come abroad.** Your reputation as good Christians is so well known that you ought not to be deceived by these false teachers. **20. The God of peace shall bruise Satan.** Shall give you the victory.

21–23. Timothy. We learn from Acts 20:4, that Timothy was with Paul at this time. He joins with other companions of Paul in greetings. **Lucius.** Possibly, “Lucius of Cyrene” (Acts 13:1). **Jason.** Possibly the one named in Acts 17:5. **Sosipater.** The same name as Sopater. See Acts 20:4. **Kinsmen.** Countrymen; Jews. **22. I, Tertius.** Otherwise unknown. Paul dictated the letter, and Tertius acted as scribe. **23. Gaius, mine host.** Paul baptized a Gaius at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14). The name occurs several times. He was noted for his hospitality. **Erastus the chamberlain.** The city treasurer, hence a man of high position. The name occurs in Acts 19:22, and in 2 Tim. 4:20.

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24–27. The grace of our Lord. At the close of his greetings, Paul adds his benediction. He had already given it in [verse 20](#). It is now written with his own hand ([2 Thess. 3:17](#)). He also adds a doxology, which makes a noble conclusion. **25. To him.** They are commended to God. **According to the revelation of the mystery.** The mystery of the gospel, and especially of the salvation of the Gentiles. See [Rom. 11:25](#). A mystery is a divine purpose that had been kept secret. When God's glorious purpose was revealed, the mystery was made known. **26.** This mystery **now is made manifest.** The apostles were engaged in declaring this mystery to the world. **27. To God only wise.** The source of all wisdom.

**The First Epistle of Paul to the
Corinthians**



Introduction to First Corinthians

The Epistles of Paul, like the prophecies of Jeremiah or Amos, were often called out by the mistakes, errors, and sins of the churches which he had planted, and were intended to correct them. The newly planted churches were in the midst of heathens and were composed in great part of those who had early heathen training. It is not wonderful that converts from such populations, unused to Christian morality, knowing little of the Old Testament Scriptures, and without the New Testament, should sometimes go astray, or become the victims of false teachers. Yet the church of all ages has reason to be thankful for the circumstances which called out the collection of Inspired Letters on practical Christian life so essential to its instructions as we find in the Epistles of Paul. In order to gain the greatest profit from these it is necessary that the reader be informed concerning the conditions which called out each letter, what were the circumstances of each church, what were the wants the Apostle sought to supply and the sins he sought to correct.

I will endeavor to explain in the case of the church at Corinth, what were these conditions. Though letters were written to other churches planted by Paul earlier than the one we are now considering, the First Epistle to the church of Corinth is the first of the letters of this class that we reach in the present arrangement of the New Testament. In the [eighteenth chapter of Acts](#) the account is found of the planting of this church. At that time, about a.d. 54, the Apostle sojourned in that great city for the space of a year and six months, preaching at first in the synagogue and afterwards in the house of Justus. A large congregation was gathered as the result of his labors, composed in part of Jews, but with a much larger number of Gentiles. After Paul departed to other fields of labor Apollos, an eloquent and learned Alexandrian Jew who has been instructed in the gospel by Priscilla and Aquila, the companions of Paul, visited Corinth and continued the work. Paul “planted, Apollos watered” ([1 Cor. 3:6](#)).

The congregation which had begun its career so auspiciously was in a great commercial center, with a mixed and dissolute population, and could not but meet with many temptations. The city, situated on the Isthmus which connected southern Greece with the mainland of Europe, with the advantage of two harbors on either sea, and of a citadel as impregnable as Gibraltar on the lofty Acrocorinthus, had for centuries been influential in Grecian history but had in b.c. 146 been taken by the Romans and reduced to ruins. One hundred years later Julius Cæsar had founded it a second time, planting a Roman military colony on the old site, and the commanding situation soon restored its ancient prosperity and splendor. It was about a century after its second founding that it was visited by Paul. It was then the great commercial city in Europe with the exception of Rome, and no cities of the East surpassed it save Antioch and Alexandria. It is estimated to have had a population of about

four hundred thousand people, as cosmopolitan as is usually found in a great commercial center; Romans, Greeks, Jews, Syrians, Egyptians, sailors, traders and slaves.

It would be strange if there was a high standard of morals in the mixed population of a commercial metropolis, nor were morals held in high regard anywhere in the heathen world. One fact will illustrate the shameless condition of the city. At the date of this Epistle there was standing there a vast and renowned temple of Venus, called the temple of *Aphrodite Pandemos*, “the Venus of all the people,” which had a thousand consecrated priestesses, every priestess dedicated to the service of Aphrodite, or in other words to harlotry. The temple of worship, consecrated to religion, was a gigantic brothel! Indeed, even in that dissolute age when immorality was the rule in all the heathen world, Corinth had so bad an eminence that the word “to Corinthianize” had become a synonym for an impure life. It is not wonderful that amid such influences some of the Gentiles who had become members of the Corinthian Church showed the influence of their old habits, nor that the apostle found it necessary to rebuke licentiousness again and again. See the [Chapter V](#). and other passages here and there.

But what especially called out this Epistle were the tidings of divisions in the church which had been brought to him at Ephesus by members of the household of Chloe, one of the principal members. Paul had confined himself while at Corinth to the simple principles of the gospel and scrupulously abstained from the philosophical discussions so dear to the Greek mind ([1 Cor. 1:17–22; 2:1–5](#)). Apollos, schooled in the philosophy of Alexandria, and not yet so thoroughly grounded in the gospel as Paul, evidently engaged in some philosophical speculations. It is also manifest that some of the Judaizing teachers who constantly followed in the footsteps of the great Apostle and sought to Judaize the churches, had come to Corinth, and by exalting Peter, in order to depreciate Paul, had formed another party. Hence there were various factions whose discords rent the body of Christ; one party claiming to be Pauline; another making Apollos its leader; still another claiming to be of Cephas, and still a fourth, whatever it may have been, claiming to be of Christ. The [four chapters of the Epistle](#), the first in order, are a vigorous and indignant arraignment of these schisms.

Other questions discussed were suggested to him by a letter brought to him at Ephesus by Corinthian brethren begging a solution of various difficulties; on marriage, the veiling of women in assemblies, on sacrificial feasts, and perhaps on the nature of the resurrection from the dead. See [Chap. VII. 1](#). These questions and various irregularities which are rebuked will be duly considered in the Notes.

This Epistle was written at Ephesus while Paul was engaged in his ministry of three years in that city ([Acts 19:1–41; Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 16:8](#)). The time when it was written can

be determined with no little certainty to have been the spring of a.d. 57. That this Epistle is genuine has been conceded by all respectable critics, both ancient and modern.



Chapter I

The Divisions in the Church Brought to Light

Summary — *Greetings to the Church. Thanksgiving for the Grace of God. An Exhortation to Unity. Schisms Rebuked. The Sin of Honoring Human Leaders Instead of Christ. The Preaching of the Cross the Power of God to Salvation. Not the Worldly Wise and Proud, but the Humble and Lowly Converted.*

1–3. Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. Some of the Judaizing teachers, who had visited the church at Corinth after the departure of Paul, in order to lessen his authority, had asserted that he was not an apostle, divinely called like the Twelve. Hence, at the beginning, he asserts his apostleship, and refers to his divine call. See [1 Cor. 9:1](#), and [2 Cor. 12:12](#). **Sosthenes, our brother.** A Sosthenes is named in [Acts 18:17](#), who was then the chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth. The Sosthenes whom Paul associated with himself in the letter must have been well known to, and influential among, the Corinthians, and was probably the former chief ruler, who had been converted. Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, all well known to the church, were at Ephesus with Paul (see [chap. 16](#)), but Sosthenes is chosen to appear with him in the salutation. **2. Unto the church of God.** This designation of the church appears oftener than any other in the New Testament. **To them that are sanctified.** All of “the church of God at Corinth” were “sanctified in Christ Jesus;” that is, they were set apart from the world and consecrated to God. All Christians are “sanctified” in the sense of the term in the New Testament, and “called to be saints.” The humblest Christian is a saint, as well as Peter or Paul. **With all that in every place call, etc.** The letter is intended for all Christians, as well as for those at Corinth. **Call upon the name of Jesus Christ.** Recognize him as their divine Savior. **Both theirs and ours.** The Lord of the saints everywhere as well as ours ([8:6](#); [Eph. 4:5](#)). Since there is only one Lord and Master, all Christians should be brethren. **3. Grace be unto you.** The favor of God; the divine blessing. This is the apostolical benediction. **Peace.** This is always an appropriate benediction, since peace is one of the greatest blessings, but was especially appropriate to a church which was torn by dissensions.

4–9. I thank my God always on your behalf. Before speaking of the faults which he must rebuke, he speaks of the grounds for praise and hope. He did not forget these, because there was much that he could not praise. He could see their improvement on their former condition, as well as their present faults. A good example for all critics. **5. That in every thing ye are enriched by him.** “The grace of God” ([verse 4](#)) had “enriched” them. **In all utterance.** The reference is especially, but not exclusively, to the supernatural gifts of tongues and of knowledge which were imparted to the early church. See [12:8–10](#); and [2 Cor. 8:7](#); [11:6](#). **6. Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.** It was confirmed by the fruits which it brought forth; their belief and the spiritual gifts which were bestowed upon



some of them. **7. So that ye come behind in no gift.** They were “enriched” by the grace of God, so that they were not inferior to other Christians in privileges. **Waiting for the coming.** They, like other Christians, were eagerly waiting for the return of the Lord to the earth. **8. Who shall confirm you.** He will do his part to confirm you; give you strength to the end, **that ye may be blameless in the day, etc.** Free from blame when they are called to meet the Lord. **9. God is faithful.** Hence he will faithfully discharge his part of the covenant. His promises may be relied upon. The fact that he had called the saints to fellowship with his Son, is proof that their salvation will be completed.

10–17. Now I beseech you, brethren, etc. How earnest and imploring is the Apostle's exhortation that they should maintain unity! **That ye all speak the same thing.** Have no distinctive party declarations. This is violated in the modern sectarian symbols and confessions. **That there be no divisions.** “No schisms,” in the Greek. If there were none, and all “were perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,” all would “speak the same thing.” There would be no variance in their declarations. It is evident, from what follows, that, while the Corinthians had not separated into various church organizations, they had formed several parties within the church. Organized sects, claiming to be “branches of the church,” were unknown till centuries later. **11. For it hath been declared unto me.** He candidly tells them how he had learned of their dissensions. **Them which are of the house of Chloe.** Whether these were her children or her servants, or whether she lived at Corinth and these members of her household had come to visit Paul at Ephesus, or whether she lived at Ephesus and these persons had made a visit to Corinth, these are all unknown. Chloe is not elsewhere name. **12. Now this I say.** I explain more fully what I mean. He shows that there were four existing parties: A Pauline party, clinging to the founder of their church; a party of Apollos, who were probably carried away by their admiration of his Alexandrian philosophy; a party of Judaizer, who claimed to be following Peter, called here by his Hebrew name of Cephas; and a fourth party, who claimed to turn away from all these human leaders, and to be only of Christ. **13. Is Christ divided?** The church is “the Body of Christ” (12:12, 13). Can that body be cut into parts, and these assigned to human leaders? **Was Paul crucified for you?** The cross binds us to Christ alone. By baptism we are baptized in Christ's name, into his death, and into Christ (Rom. 6:3). **14. I thank God that I baptized none of you, etc.** “The Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8), but the fellow-ministers of Paul usually administered the baptismal rite. Since some of the Corinthians were claiming to be of his party, he was glad that he had not personally baptized them, lest some of them should say he had baptized in his own name (verse 15). **Crispus.** Formerly chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth (Acts 18:8). **Gaius.** See Romans 16:23. He was Paul's host at Corinth when the Epistle to the Romans was written. **16. I baptized also the household of Stephanas.** This household was “the first fruits of Achaia” (16:15); Stephanas was one of the three Corinthian brethren then visiting Paul at Ephesus (16:17).

There is no proof that this, or any other household named in Scripture, contained infants, but there is proof that most of them did not. “The household” does not mean the same as “the family,” but those dwelling in the house; often the servants only. **17. For Christ sent me not to baptize.** Paul does not intend to disparage baptism, but to say that, in the division of labor, the work assigned him was to preach, while others did the baptizing. If the common views of his physical condition are correct, he was hardly strong enough to do a great deal of baptizing. **Not with wisdom of words.** Instead of seeking eloquence or philosophical speculation, which might hide the cross, he told the simple story of the gospel in plain and simple language.

18–21. The preaching of the cross. The gospel of a Crucified Savior. **To them that perish.** Those who are unregenerate. **Is foolishness.** The Greek philosopher and the Jewish scribe scoffed at the thought of a Savior who had been crucified. They held that his crucifixion proved that he was not divine. **Unto us who are saved.** There are two sections of mankind—the unsaved and the saved. To the first, the cross is folly; to the second, the gospel of the Crucified One comes as the **power of God.** See [Rom. 1:16](#). To the unsaved, the cross is a pillar of cloud; to the saved, a pillar of light. **19. I will destroy the wisdom of the wise** ([Isa. 29:14](#)). By turning to the passage in Isaiah, its meaning is clear. God will put aside the wisdom and understanding of men; these will not save; but he will save by what the world called foolishness. **20. Where is the wise?** The Greek philosophers. In Greek, the term “philosopher” means a lover of wisdom. **The scribe?** The scribes were the Jewish learned class. **The disputer? etc.** Probably the Greek teachers who “disputed daily” in the public places. **Hath not God made foolish? etc.** All their worldly wisdom is excluded from the gospel. **21. For ... knew not God.** Worldly wisdom did not search out the true God. Intellectual speculation had done its utmost, and failed. Hence it was rejected, and the Divine Wisdom chose **by the foolishness of preaching to save, etc.** That is, by preaching what the wise and puffed up of the this world called foolishness. They called the gospel foolishness.

22–25. For the Jews require a sign. Not merely miracles, such as the apostles worked, but a sign from heaven ([Matt. 12:38](#)). They said, “Let Christ come down from heaven, if he be risen.” **And the Greeks seek after wisdom.** While the Jews asked for a sign from heaven, the Greeks demanded a well-argued system of philosophy ([Acts 17:18](#)). **23. But we preach Christ crucified.** Not merely Christ, but Christ Crucified; a Crucified Savior. **Unto the Jews a stumbling-block.** Because they had an entirely different conception of the Christ. Yet it was predicted that he should be “a stone of stumbling” ([Matt. 21:42](#)). **Unto the Greeks foolishness.** It seemed to the Greeks that a being who died so ignominious a death could not be divine. **24. But to them which are called.** But to those who obey the gospel call, whether Jews or Gentiles, the Crucified Christ is found to be **the power of God, and the wisdom of God.** The gospel not only is found to be mighty, but wise in meeting the wants of the soul. **25. The foolishness of God.** In one thing that men call foolishness, in Christ

Crucified, there is greater wisdom than in all the philosophers, and though it seemed **weakness of God** to let Christ be crucified, yet the Crucified Savior is mightier than all the strength of men. If folly and weakness be of God, these will be wiser and stronger than men.

26–31. Not many wise men after the flesh. Paul now shows the weakness of the *human* instrumentality chosen to convert the world; not those the world called wise, not the mighty, not the noble, yet the work was moving on with wonderful power. **27. But God hath chosen the foolish things.** Men whom the world would call foolish, with a gospel that it called foolishness; yet these “confounded the wise” and upturned the world’s philosophies. **28. Base things.** Those of lowly birth. **Things which are not.** People that the world would call “nobodies,” and things that it counts as nothing. These are chosen **to bring to nought things that are;** the existing state of things; the pagan religions, governments, and civilization; these were to be overthrown through the influence of the gospel. **29. That no flesh should glory, etc.** That it should be shown that the power was of God. **30. Who of God is made unto us wisdom.** “Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God” ([verse 24](#)), is wisdom to us. **And righteousness.** In him we are made righteous, and obtain sanctification and redemption. Christ is all of these to us. **31. He that glorieth, etc.** ([Jer. 9:23](#)). As Christ is our all, imparts every grace that we enjoy, and bestows every blessing, there is no ground for glorying in Paul, Apollos or Cephas, but in the Lord alone.



Chapter II

Christ Crucified

Summary —*The One Theme of Preaching Christ Crucified. Not Eloquence or Human Wisdom, but the Power of the Spirit Needed. A Divine Wisdom in the Cross of Christ. This is a Mystery Revealed to the Converted; Unseen by the Unregenerate. The Things of the Kingdom Not Understood by the Worldly. These are Revealed to Those who Have the Spirit of God.*

1–5. Paul has shown, in the preceding chapter, that God chose the things and persons which the world calls foolish, and weak, and base, and of no account, in order to confute the world's wisdom and to overthrow its power. He now shows that this harmonizes with the means used at Corinth in the founding of the church. **Not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.** Not with the eloquent arts of a Grecian orator, or the speculations of a Greek philosopher; things highly esteemed at Corinth and among all the Greeks. **The testimony of God.** The Revision has, “Mystery of God,” which has the support of the best MSS., and harmonizes better with the context. The gospel is often called “a mystery” ([Eph. 3:9](#), and [1 Tim. 3:16](#)). **2. Save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.** All his preaching centered upon this great theme, “To the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block” ([1:23](#)). **3. I was with you in weakness, etc.** In this great center of Greek culture, he felt a human timidity at first in presenting the simple gospel in the face of the splendors of the Greek philosophy. **4. Not with enticing words of man's wisdom.** He did not resort to the arts and enticements of Greek oratory or philosophy. **But in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.** Filled by the Holy Spirit, he spoke in its power, and thus moved upon the hearts of his hearers. His words were also supported by the power of the Spirit shown in miracles ([Romans 15:19](#); [2 Cor. 12:12](#)). **5. That your faith should not stand.** Their faith was not produced by the triumphs of oratory or philosophy, but by the gospel preached in the power of the Spirit. Hence it was wrought through the means supplied of God.

6–9. Howbeit we speak wisdom. “We” refers to Paul and his fellow-preachers. Though the gospel abjured carnal wisdom, yet it has a wisdom of its own, a divine wisdom, which is imparted to and recognized by those who have become full-grown Christians. “The perfect” are the full-grown in Christ, instead of babes. Babes must be fed on milk, but the grown can endure strong meat. For such there is a depth of wisdom revealed in the gospel, but **not the wisdom of this world. Princes of this world.** Leading men of the Jews, Greeks and Romans. They had not learned this divine wisdom. **7. We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.** The Greeks had their mysteries, like the Eleusinian, in which secrets were imparted to the initiated. A mystery is a secret as yet not made known. The wisdom of God in the gospel was a mystery hidden until Christ came, and since then fully comprehended only by “the initiated,” the full-grown Christians. The apostolic sense of “mystery” is that which was



hidden, but is now disclosed to those who accept the gospel. Those who will not receive the gospel cannot comprehend this wisdom. See [Rom. 16:25, 26](#); [Eph. 3:6](#); [1 Tim. 3:16](#). **Even the hidden wisdom.** Long hidden, though existing in God's plans made before the "age" (see margin of Revision). The Jewish age or dispensation may be meant, or it may mean the ages of man's existence. The Greek word is "ages." This hidden wisdom proposed all through the dispensations the glory of God's chosen ones. **8. Which none of the princes ... knew.** Utterly ignorant of the divine wisdom to be revealed in Christ, they, the high priests, with Pilate and Herod, crucified the Son. **9. As it is written** ([Isa. 54:4](#)). There was no human conception, as shown by the prophet, of the glory to be revealed in the mystery of the gospel. And indeed that glory is still beyond the power of mere human conception.

10–13. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. These wonders of the love of God, not seen by eye, nor heard by ear, nor revealed to the senses, were revealed by the Spirit to the apostles (*to us*), and made known through them to full-grown Christians ("the perfect," [verse 6](#)). **The Spirit searcheth, etc.** The Holy Spirit, imparted so freely to the apostles to lead them into all truth ([John 16:13](#)), is the Spirit of God. Hence this Spirit imparts a knowledge of **the deep things of God**. The secrets of the divine wisdom are thus made known. **11. For what man knoweth, etc.** A man's spirit knows all his secrets, though these are unknown to another man. So God's Spirit knows the Divine secrets, and imparts these wherever he dwells in full measure as the Spirit of knowledge. **12. Now we have received, etc.** We apostles. The spirit received by all the apostles was not the spirit of the world, but the Holy Spirit which Christ promised them as a guide into all truth. Hence they were enabled to know what God imparted freely to them. **13. Which things we also speak.** The grand truths, "the hidden wisdom," "the mystery of God," revealed to them through the Spirit, they spoke to others. These things they spoke, **not in the words of man's wisdom**, not in the garb of philosophy, but in the words given by the Holy Spirit. **Comparing spiritual things with spiritual.** This difficult clause has received many explanations. Canon Cook explains it: "Matching spiritual things with spiritual words." Conybeare and Howson say: "Explaining spiritual things to spiritual men." This last view, which Canon Cook says does no violence to the Greek, harmonizes best with [verses 6 and 14](#). I think that [verse 14](#), the next verse, shows that this is the true meaning.

14–16. But the natural man. The natural man is the unregenerate, one who has the spirit of the world, one not born anew of water and of the Spirit. Man is a triune being—body, soul and spirit. The natural man is under the dominion of the soul, the animal life. The spirit must be stirred from its dormant condition, and born again, before one can comprehend the things of the Spirit. These are foolishness to one under the dominion of the animal life, such as the Jewish scribes and Greek "disputers," for they can be discerned only by the spirit of man. It is only when a spiritual hunger is felt, when one is born again, and when man becomes a spiritual instead of an animal being, that he can understand "the deep things

of the Spirit.” But blessed be God, the A B C’s of the gospel, which the ignorant and unlearned men *can* understand, are sufficient to convert and prepare one for a higher knowledge. **15. He that is spiritual.** He who lives the spiritual life. **Judgeth all things.** “Examineth,” in the margin of the Revision. The spiritual man, helped by the indwelling Spirit, is prepared to study the deeper truths of the Spirit. **Judged of no man.** None who are not spiritual are able to sit in judgment upon his higher life. He is on a higher level, and the animal man, from his lower level, cannot well estimate him. **16. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? etc.** No man, not even the most spiritual, knows the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him. If there was such a one, he, and he only, might instruct those who have the mind of Christ.

Two things are learned from this chapter: (1) There is a divine wisdom or philosophy. (2) This divine wisdom, or mystery, is an absurdity or perplexity to the world, but the wisdom of God to the saints.



Chapter III

Carnal Divisions

Summary — *The Proofs that the Corinthians were Yet Carnal. Not Able to Endure Strong Meat. The Work of Paul and Apollos. The Increase of God. The Church God's Building. The One Foundation. Perishable Materials Built on This. The Sin of Defiling God's Temple. The Glorious Estate of the Christians.*

1–4. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual. See [verse 6 of the preceding chapter](#); also [verse 14](#). The brethren at Corinth had not reached the state of “spiritual men.” They were **carnal**, undeveloped like **babes**. **2. I have fed you with milk.** When he was at Corinth he treated them as babes, teaching them the simple, rudimentary principles. **Milk.** Simple teaching. **Meat.** Stronger and deeper doctrines. In the school of Christ, like all others, the teaching must be adapted to the advancement of the learner. **3. Ye are yet carnal.** Hence, still not spiritual enough to receive the higher teaching, the “hidden wisdom,” the meat. The proof that they were yet carnal was the existence of divisions in the church. **Walk as men.** Exhibit the jealous and discordant spirit characteristic of men of the world. **4. When one saith, I am of Paul, etc.** The fact that they are divided by following different human leaders, instead of all following Christ, demonstrated that they were yet carnal.

5–9. Who then is Paul and Apollos? Their carnal-mindedness shows itself in choosing and following these human leaders. One said he was a Paulite, etc. Hence he asks, Who is Paul, or Apollos? Only **ministers**, servants, subordinates, agents through whom they believed on Christ. **As the Lord gave to every man.** Gave to Paul and Apollos power to lead you to faith. **6. I have planted, etc.** It was Paul's work given him to *plant* the seed of the kingdom; it was the work of Apollos to afterwards water or cultivate the Christian plants which had come forth, but God gave the growth; gave the seed its vitality and the plant its life. **7. So then neither is he that planteth, etc.** The parts of Paul and Apollos were as nothing; the power was all of God, who gave growth to the seed and plant. **8. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one.** They have kindred work, as servants, and each will be rewarded as a servant, **according to his own labor.** **9. For we are laborers together with God.** The Revision gives the true meaning: “For we are God's fellow-workers.” They, he and Apollos, were fellow-laborers belonging to God (of God, not with God). They were fellow-laborers with each other, of God. The Corinthian church was God's *field* in which they labored. The Greek word means “tilled land.” Husbandry is obscure. **Ye are God's building.** The figure is now changed. Paul and Apollos are God's builders, and the church is the building they build. The leading idea is that they are only God's employees. How can Paul have a party, then, and Apollos another, when they are only employees of God?

10–15. According to the grace given to me. Given when? When he was called to be an apostle. **I have laid the foundation.** The figure of the building is retained. Paul is a discreet master-builder. He had laid the *foundation* at Corinth, when he was preaching Christ, and working through faith in him (2:4, 5). Notice it is not *a* foundation, but *the* foundation, because God's spiritual temple (v. 16) can have only one. **Another buildeth thereon.** After Paul left Corinth, Apollos and other teachers continued to build upon the foundation that Paul had laid. **Let every man take heed how, etc.** Since there is only one foundation of the temple, viz: Jesus Christ, there should be most careful and conscientious building upon it (verse 12). **11. Other foundation can no man lay, etc.** There is only one foundation of the church (Matt. 16:16). This foundation-stone was laid by God (Isaiah 28:16). Paul's work under God was to point to this foundation, to induce them to believe, and thus to build them upon it. His preaching laid it in their hearts. To preach Christ is to preach the fundamental or foundation truth of the church. **12. If any man buildeth upon this foundation.** There is only one foundation for all builders to build upon. The church or temple will be of the character of the material built upon it. If this material be precious and imperishable, if apostolic doctrines and men moulded into the image of Christ be this material, it is well. If erroneous doctrines and unstable men, wood, hay, stubble, this will all be revealed in due time. **13. Every man's work shall be made manifest.** The kind of work that every builder does will be manifested. **The day shall declare it.** Probably the day of Christ's coming. As fire destroys wood, hay, stubble, but leaves gold, silver, precious stones, so the work of some builders, when tested, will vanish. They do not do solid work. **14. If any man's work shall abide.** Shall stand the test of trial. Such a builder will be rewarded. There shall be stars in his crown. **15. If any man's work shall be burned.** Shall perish as worthless. Such an one will forfeit his reward. **So as by fire.** He is saved, because he intended well, but is barely saved, like one who escapes from a burning house where all his property is consumed.

16, 17. If any man defile the temple of God. In verse 9 the apostle had said, "Ye are God's building." Now he returns to that figure, and denounces the judgment of God upon all who would defile his house by their carnal divisions. In that temple the Spirit dwelt, as the Shekinah had dwelt in the temple of God at Jerusalem; it was therefore a holy temple, and an awful sin to defile it. Under the old dispensation, death was the penalty of polluting the temple.

18–23. Let no man deceive himself. A caution against the philosophical tendencies of the Apolloite party. **If any man thinketh that he is wise.** If he is wise in his own estimation and that of the world, let him choose what the world calls "foolishness," in order that he may become "wise unto salvation." **19. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.** See chapter 1:20. **For it is written. Job 5:13. 20. And again, the Lord knoweth, etc. Psalm 94:11. 21. Wherefore, let no man glory in men.** In preachers like Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas. Above all, let them not form parties around human leaders. **For all things are**

yours. All, the preachers as well as all beside, are ordained to prepare you for eternal glory. **22. Whether Paul, etc.** See [verse 5](#). **Or the world.** The world is not to be the master, but the servant of God's children. **Or life.** Life is given to do God's work and to insure life eternal. **Or death.** To the saint "death is gain." **Or things present.** These, whatsoever they are, "shall work together for good to them that love God." **Or things to come.** The things to come to the Christian are the presence of Christ, and the joys of the New Jerusalem. **All are yours.** What a climax! **23. And ye are Christ's.** He had procured for us all things, but has bought us with a price. **Christ is God's.** God's Son, and belonging to the Father. All things are ours, but we are not our own! We own all else, but we do not own ourselves! Hence our duty to be consecrated to the service of Christ.



Chapter IV

The Apostles and the Church

Summary — *The Apostles Stewards of the Mysteries of God. Forming Judgments of Religious Teachers. The Apostles Made a Spectacle to the World. The Apostolic Trials. Counted by the World as Offscouring. Yet, Paul the Spiritual Father of the Corinthian Church. And His Example should be Imitated.*

1–5. Let a man so account of us. The apostles and evangelists. They are to be regarded as **ministers** (servants) **of Christ**, (3:5), not as leaders. The word rendered “ministers,” means, literally, “under-rowers.” The figure is that of a ship impelled by oars. The church is the ship; Christ commands; the rowers only obey orders. Since they have no right to give orders, no parties should be formed about them. **Stewards.** Again the figure is changed, but still the idea is that they were servants. The steward his charge of the house for his master. The church is the house; Christ is the Master; the apostolic stewards in charge, having **the mysteries of God**, the revealed knowledge, knowledge not their own but given them, must faithfully dispense it to the household. **2. Moreover it is required of stewards, etc.** The supreme quality required in a steward is fidelity to his trust. **3. It is a very small thing, etc.** The essential matter with Paul was, not that the Corinthians should judge him a faithful steward, or that he should be faithful in his own judgment, but that the Lord shall count him faithful. Of course, with factions at Corinth, some disparaged Paul. **4. For I know nothing by myself.** In the Revision, “Against myself.” In his own judgment he had been a faithful steward at Corinth, but that did not **justify** him, for he must be judged by the Lord. To the Lord, then, he must give a satisfactory account. **5. Therefore, judge nothing, etc.** Hence, let no one form premature judgments. Only when the Lord comes, in the day of judgment, will all secrets be brought to light, and the motives of hearts be manifest. Then, when just judgments are given, **shall every man shall have the praise** (due him) **of God.** Each shall be judged as he deserves. Only then can the Corinthians form an infallibly correct estimate of their religious teachers.

6–9. These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos. I have used the names of Paul and Apollos to illustrate lessons that I wished to impress upon; especially the lesson not to think of men too highly. **Be puffed up for one against another.** Exalting one preacher and making him a leader, while seeking to pull down another. **7. Who maketh thee to differ?** Who has imparted to you graces which distinguish you from others? All were imparted to you. If you have nothing that you didst not receive, **Why dost thou glory?** Some unseemly exaltation, probably over spiritual gifts, is rebuked. **8. Now ye are full, now ye are rich, etc.** Paul has just rebuked their glorying over gifts bestowed upon them. Now he uses a burst of irony. Though receiving all the grace they had, being dependent



and needy, they boasted as if they had it of themselves. The apostles had spiritual gifts, but were poor and persecuted; the Corinthians had these gifts, imparted by Paul, but were puffed up, felt, in his absence, as though they were *full*, had all things; were *rich*, well supplied; they **reigned as kings**. Held their heads high as though they were made kings. **I would ye did reign**. Here comes the keenness of the rebuke which follows the irony. If they were only exalted to be kings, as they seemed to think themselves, perhaps then those who had imparted to them all that they boasted of might become kings also. The apostles were in the suffering period, but these converts had got to the reigning period. **9. God hath set forth us the apostles last**. In contrast with them, the state of the apostles is given. The figure is drawn from the Roman amphitheatre. At “last,” near the close of the games, gladiators doomed to die were led forth and shown to the spectators, then stripped of all armor, and exposed naked to the attack of others. So the apostles were **a spectacle unto the world**, doomed to reproach, suffering and to death.



10–13. We are fools for Christ's sake. The sad worldly lot of the apostles is set forth. For Christ's sake they chose a path of sorrow that made the world call them fools. **Ye are wise in Christ**. Think you are wise in your religious speculations. **We are weak**. See 2:3. **Ye are strong**. In your own conceits. **11. Unto this present hour, etc.** All through our ministry we suffer want for the needs of life, are often in want of food and drink and clothing, are beaten (buffeted), and, like the Master, have no certain home. **12. And labor**. Support ourselves by our own hands, while preaching the gospel, returned good for evil. **13. Are made as the filth of the world**. Are accounted by the world as its very sweepings, as scum, as refuse utterly worthless and repulsive. Such passages, which are not overdrawn, show the greatness of faith, the devotion, the heroism of and the debt we owe to such men as Paul.

14–17. I write not these things to shame you. I do not contrast your pride and glorying with *our* humiliation to shame you, but as a fatherly admonition to beloved children. **15. Yet have ye not many fathers**. They might have many tutors, who sought to train them as children, but Paul was their father who had begotten them in the gospel; that is, converted them. **16. Be ye followers of me**. Hence, since he was their spiritual father, they ought all to imitate him, his lowliness and self-denial. Children should seek to be like the parent, rather than like the tutor. **17. For this cause I sent Timotheus**. Timothy, Paul's “son in the gospel” (Acts 16:1–3), had already been sent onward toward Corinth (1 Cor. 16:10), but going round by land would not arrive until after this letter, if it went across by sea. **Of my ways in Christ**. Timothy will revive their remembrance of Paul's life, conduct and teachings, so that they can the better “follow” him.

18–21. Now some are puffed up. Some of those who were factious thought, as Paul was sending Timothy, he would not come himself, and this encouraged them to continue their factious conduct. **19. I will come to you shortly**. If God permitted, he would soon follow (1 Cor. 16:7, 8), and would put to the test those puffed up. **Not the speech, ... but**



the power. He will confront these vain boasters, and see what power is behind their swelling words. **20. For the kingdom of God.** For in the kingdom of God it is not words or professions which avail, but the power of God in the heart. **21. What will ye?** When he comes, how shall he come? Will it be necessary to rebuke and exert his apostolic authority, or will the condition of the church be such that only love and gentleness will be called for?



Chapter V

Impurity in the Church

Summary — *The Incestuous Person. The Discipline Commanded. The Old Leaven to be Purged Out. Heinous Offenders Not to be Recognized Socially in the Church.*

1–5. There is fornication among you. Licentiousness was one of the besetting sins of the Gentiles at this time. Purity of life was almost unknown. So far was unchastity from being held in disrepute that temples were everywhere dedicated to Aphrodite (Venus), and in Corinth at the time when Paul wrote there stood one with a thousand priestesses, harlots, a gigantic brothel in the name of religion. It is not wonderful that time was required to cleanse the church, formed of converts from these heathen, from impurity. **As is not named among the Gentiles.** There was in the church a still worse case than the Gentiles would condone; a man had taken, probably after the death of his father, his father's wife, his own step-mother. This sort of incest was condemned by Greeks and Romans (Cicero, *Oratio pro Cluentio*). **2. And ye are puffed up.** In the face of such a scandal, such a disgrace upon the church of which he is a member, ye are still puffed up, instead of being humiliated and covered with a sense of shame. To manifest sorrow was your duty, and to take such steps that the evil doer **might be taken away from among you** by means of church discipline. The early church mourned those who fell into licentious or other grievous sins as dead (Origen), and if they repented, received then as risen from the dead. **3. For I verily, etc.** Though absent, yet with them in spirit, Paul judged the case as present, and commanded the church as a body to take action by withdrawal at once from the evil doer. **4. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The solemn act of excommunication must be in the name, that is, by the authority, of the Lord. **When ye are gathered together.** The act is to be administered in full assembly. It must be the act of the whole church. Compare [2 Cor. 2:6](#). **And my spirit.** He will be present in spirit, since the act will be carrying out his command. **With the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The act of excommunication for misdeeds, when administered according to the will of the Lord, is not merely man's decision, but will be executed by the power of the Lord. **5. To deliver such a one unto Satan.** Not only this one, but all such persons. To deliver unto Satan is to excommunicate; to extradite from the kingdom of God to the prince of this world. The expression is used in [1 Tim. 1:20](#). **For the destruction of the flesh.** Fleshly desires had caused the sin. These must be destroyed. The humiliation of excommunication, the sense of one's lost condition, was well adapted to bring a repentance. Some have held that this meant to send some painful disease miraculously. I believe that the Latin fathers and Beza are right in understanding that it refers to the mortification of the offender, cast out, shunned by the church as a dead body. In [2 Cor. 2:7](#), this person is ordered to be restored, having repented, and no mention is made of disease. **That the spirit**

may be saved. This is the object of all true discipline. If carried out, as in the early church, it was well calculated to bring to repentance. It was effective in this instance, as we learn from [2 Cor. 2:6](#).

6–8. Your glorying is not good. Boasting, in such a state of affairs, was unseemly. **A little leaven, etc.** As a little leaven leavens the whole mass of dough, so one sinner suffered to go on in impurity sends a corrupting influence through the whole church. **7. Purge out therefore the old leaven.** Let the leaven of impurity be removed, by putting out the fornicator, that the church may be pure from the impure leaven, or influence. So, too, each one must cleanse his own heart. **For even Christ our passover, etc.** At the passover, Jews were required to put all leaven from their houses ([Exod. 12:15](#)). As we have a Paschal Lamb, slain for us, the church should cleanse out the leaven of sin. **8. Let us keep the feast.** Let us keep feast, or festival. There is no article in the Greek. The reference is not to the Lord's Supper, or to Easter, as some have supposed, so much as to a constant duty. We always have a Paschal Lamb; hence it is always our duty to keep festival by casting out all leaven; either the **old leaven** of heathen vice, or of **malice and wickedness**, or any sin.

9–13. I wrote unto you in an epistle. He had written an earlier letter which has not been preserved, probably a short one, to which reference is made. So most commentators understand. **10. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world.** His direction had been misunderstood. The fornicator in the church must be shunned as an outcast, for the sake of the discipline. This was what he meant. He did not give directions concerning their conduct towards the heathen. **Then must ye needs, etc.** As the whole heathen world were addicted to the vices named, to apply the rule to it would require that the church have nought whatever to do with the unconverted. **11. Now I have written unto you, etc.** He now writes and explains his meaning. Church members must not have social intercourse with one who has been a member who is guilty of the grievous sins named. **Covetous.** A greedy person, under the influence of passions, not only greedy for gain, but for self-indulgence. The Greek word implies this. **With such a one, no, not to eat.** Either at the Lord's table, or in friendly meals, which would imply a brotherly recognition. **12. For what have I to do, etc.** It was not Paul's business, nor ours, to judge those without; hence the rule just given is not one to regulate our intercourse with them. **Do not ye judge them that are within?** The authority of the church is over those who have been united with it. It can judge them. **13. Them that are without God judgeth.** The unconverted are left in the hands of God. He will judge them according to their deeds. We are not to seek to inflict punishment on them by shunning them, but rather to go to them in the love of Christ to try to lead them to repentance. **Therefore put away, etc.** A summary order to execute discipline upon the incestuous offender, an order that we know from the second letter was obeyed.



Chapter VI

Litigation Among Brethren

Summary — *Going to Law Before Heathen. The Saints as Judges. Suffer Wrong Rather than Do Wrong. The Impure Cannot Be God's Children. What is Lawful not Always Expedient. The Christian's Body a Temple.*

1–4. Dare any of you ... go to law before the unjust? The third indictment against the Corinthian church is now presented. Some had sought judgments against their brethren in heathen courts. This Paul indignantly rebukes. The Jews themselves made it a rule never to carry cases before heathen tribunals. Much worse was it in Christians. **2. Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?** Shall sit sit with Christ, after they have been judged, while the world is judged ([Matt. 25:41](#); [Matt 19:29](#)). If so high a trust is to be given, it is a little thing that saints should judge differences between church members. These ought all to be submitted to arbitrators, or to the officers. **3. Know ye not that we shall judge angels?** Evidently the bad angels, who shall be judged when the world is judged. **4. If then ye have judgments, etc.** If the saints shall have the high prerogative of judging the world and bad angels with Christ, then it is a condescension to judge of trivial earthly matters. **Set them to judge who are least esteemed.** An ironical way of hinting that their differences were so petty as to be worthy only of the poorest witted.

5–8. I speak to your shame. The last sentence was spoken to shame them, not as a serious rule. He now speaks seriously. **Is there not a wise man among you?** A man of prudent judgment, capable of settling differences among them. **6. That before unbelievers.** It was lamentable that brethren should go to law. How much more of a scandal when they carried their cases into the heathen courts. **7. There is utterly a fault among you.** It was a fault (loss or defeat in the Greek) to go to law at all. It was better **rather to take wrong ... to be defrauded**, than to work so great an injury to the church by the ill-feeling aroused, and by the scandal in the eyes of the heathen. The rule is, then, (1) To suffer wrong rather than to go to law. (2) If an adjudication is required, to refer to the case, not to unbelieving judges, but to a “wise man” within the church. For other Scriptures bearing on the subject, see [1 Peter 2:23](#); [Matt. 5:40](#); [1 Peter 2:19](#); [Prov. 20:22](#).

9–11. Shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The glorious kingdom of which the church is the earthly type. The church is God's kingdom on earth, and its faithful members “inherit” the heavenly kingdom ([Matt. 25:34](#)). **Be not deceived.** Let no one make the mistake of thinking that any unrighteous man shall be an heir. **Effeminate.** This and the next clause refer to a shameful crime quite prevalent among the heathen, the first submitting themselves to the foul sensuality, and the second actively “abusing themselves with men,” contrary to nature. Both are Sodomites. None guilty of any one of the list of vices given can be an heir



of heaven. **11. And such were some of you.** Some of the worst classes had been converted. **Ye are washed.** The rite of baptism is probably referred to. **Ye are sanctified.** Were sanctified. These verbs are all past tense. See the Revision. To be sanctified is to be set apart to God. **Ye were justified.** That is, their sins were blotted out and they were counted righteous. Sinners as they were before, the gospel had washed, hallowed, and justified them. **By the Spirit.** The work was consummated by the gift of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:38](#)).

12–17. All things are lawful for me, ... but not expedient. Paul had taught that a Christian could use liberty in regard to things indifferent. Some seem to have held that this justified indulgence, as was taught by the Epicureans. Paul says in substance, “Be it so; but all things are not expedient,” for the Christian, Christ's freeman, must **not be brought under the power of any appetite.** Whoever is thus subjected is not a freeman, but a servant, the servant of sin. Though *all* things are in *our* power, we must not be brought under *their* power. **13. Meats for the belly, etc.** Self-indulgence was also excused, because food and the stomach were made for each other. But these are both perishable. Moreover, if “the belly was made for meats,” **the body is not for fornication.** It was not made for this, but for a nobler purpose—for the Lord. Hence, sensuality cannot be thus justified. **14. And God ... will also raise us up.** As the Lord was raised, so shall we be. Hence, we are for a nobler purpose than engaging in sensuality. **15. Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ?** This is a doctrine emphasized by Paul. Our bodies are a part of Christ's mystical body, the Lord's holy temple, designed for the indwelling of the Spirit. How sacrilegious to take a member of Christ's body and degrade it to fornication, or to any act of licentiousness! It is a duty which a Christian owes to Christ to keep his body pure. As the arm or finger has the life of the body until cut off, so we have the life of Christ until we sever ourselves from him by sinful acts. **17. He that is joined to the Lord, etc.** There is one life and one spirit until severed from Christ.

18–20. Flee fornication. The sin must be *fled*. The way to avoid it is to avoid temptation. We must conquer by running away. Thus it was that Joseph prevailed. **Every sin ... is without the body.** The temptations come from without and assail the man through the senses. This is the rule in the case of sin. It is not said of fornication that it is not stimulated without, or that it, alone of sins, assails the body, but that it is peculiarly a sin against the body. It defiles a body which is designed to be a member of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Spirit; separates it from the union with Christ, and unites it with a harlot. The grievousness of the sin is in the desecration to such an unholy purpose of a body which has become a member of Christ, a part of the temple of God. **19. What? know ye not that your body, etc.** This makes clear how terrible is the sin of defiling the body by licentiousness. It is desecrating God's temple. As the Shekinah dwelt in the temple of Israel, so the Holy Spirit in



Christ's temple, which we are. **Ye are not your own.** But members of Christ, and hence have not the right to use our bodies to our own pleasure. **20. Ye are bought with a price.** Christ paid the price, even his blood. Hence, since both body and spirit are God's, both should be used to glorify him. The fact that we are his, purchased, parts of his spiritual temple, makes the obligation imperative to consecrate the body and spirit to his service.



Chapter VII

Marriage

Summary — *Marriage the Resource Against Social Sins. Not to be Lightly Dissolved. The Mutual Obligations. The Unmarried State Freest from Trouble in Times of Persecution. But Neither Husband nor Wife to Leave Each Other. If They Should, to Remain Unmarried. Not to Abandon an Unbelieving Husband or Wife Because of their Unbelief. To Rest Content with the Secular State in which One is Converted. The Treatment of Virgin Daughters. Let Them Marry Under Certain Conditions. Under Others, Best Not to Marry in those Critical Times. The Remarriage of Widows.*

1–7. Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote. In the preceding six chapters Paul has mainly treated of irregularities in the Corinthian church, of which he had learned through the “household of Chloe,” and other private sources. Now he begins to answer various questions asked in a letter from the church. If we had that letter, it would aid much in understanding what follows by revealing more clearly the state of the church and the discussions going on within. **It is good for a man not to touch a woman.** An Old Testament phrase which means not to marry. He does not mean that marriage is wrong, but that on account of “the present distress” it was a good thing not to be bound by family ties. See [verse 26](#). “Forbidding to marry” is one of the signs of apostasy ([1 Tim. 4:3](#)). See [Heb. 13:4](#). **2. To avoid fornication.** To prevent this sin, and the temptations to it in an unmarried state, especially in a vicious community, it was best for each sex that they be married; the normal condition of the sexes. **3. Let the husband render unto the wife her due.** The Revision is correct. Marriage is a state of mutual obligations. Each must yield to the other what those obligations require. **4. The wife hath not power over her own body, etc.** Each sex here is put on exactly the same footing. The body of each belongs to the other, and cannot be yielded to other parties. The spirit of the passage not only forbids adultery, but polygamy. **5. Defraud ye not one the other.** The married pair are not live apart, except by mutual agreement, and that only for a season, while devoting themselves to a period of prayer. In the East, the women have separate apartments, and during this season the husband would not enter the wife's apartments. **6. But this I say by permission, etc.** What is just stated ([verse 5](#)) is permissible in the married state, not commanded. **7. I would that all men were as I myself.** Had absolute self-control, as I have. His directions all recognize the weakness of human nature, and the need of making no requirements too great for it. **But every man hath his proper gift.** He had the gift of self-control; others might have other gifts which he did not have.

8–11. To the unmarried and widows. If they have his self-control, it is well for them to remain unmarried, even as he. Not that the unmarried state is better, but on account of “the present distress” ([verse 26](#)), the critical times. There are times when it is best to remain

unmarried; for instance, in a time of war and invasion. The ground of his advice is not moral, but prudential. **9. If they cannot contain.** If they cannot control their desires, it is best to marry. **10. To the married I command.** Some might say, “If the unmarried state is best now, it will be better to leave our married partner.” He replies, “The Lord commands otherwise” (Mark 10:12; Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9). **11. But and if she depart.** Provided, despite the prohibition, there is such disagreement that she leaves her husband, she must remain unmarried, or be reconciled. **Let not the husband put away his wife.** The wife “departs,” because she leaves the home; the husband “puts away his wife,” by sending her off. Both are equally prohibited. The same rules apply to each sex. Among the Jews, only the husband exercised the right of divorce; among the Greeks and Romans, the wife exercised it equally with the husband.

12–17. To the rest I speak, not the Lord. On the circumstances that follow, the Lord has not directly spoken, as he did on divorce; hence, Paul speaks by inspiration. **If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, etc.** If either husband or wife is converted, and the other is not, they must not on this account forsake the unbelieving helpmeet, provided he or she is pleased to remain. **14. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified, etc.** This passage has been much debated, and little understood. The unbelieving husband or wife is not made personally holy, not do the children of believers have personal holiness transmitted to them by virtue of birth relation. Sanctification, then, means something besides personal holiness. To sanctify is to separate to a sacred use, or relation (Exod. 20:8; 28:38). In 1 Tim. 4:4, 5, food is “sanctified by the word of God and prayer” Here Paul uses the term to denote that one Christian member of a household brings a sanctifying influence to it, so that all the members are to be regarded as separated in part from the great, ungodly, unclean world. Nehemiah commanded Jews to part from heathen wives on the ground that they were ceremonially unclean. Paul insists, rather, that the believer cleanses the other, and that the unbelieving partner, or the children, are rendered ceremonially clean. **But now are they holy.** Brought into such a sacred relation that the unbelieving partners are under the power of sacred influences, and not to be counted as sources of defilement. **15. But if the unbelieving depart.** If the unbelieving husband or wife insists upon making the Christian profession a ground of separation, let them have their way. Examples of this kind occur in every age, and the rule is always applicable. **God hath called us to peace.** Hence, if strife must prevail to prevent separation, let the other go. **16. How knowest thou, O wife, etc.** Let the Christian be gentle, forbearing, unselfish, though true to Christ, and perhaps the result will be that they will be God's means to save their partner. This has occurred in thousands of instances. **17. As God hath distributed to every man.** “This I would add,” says Paul in effect, “whatever may be the lot and special circumstances of each man, single, married, or deserted on account of Christianity, let him walk in it without seeking a change.”

18–24. Was any one called being circumcised? He now applies the principle just stated, of walking “as God called every one.” The circumcised Jews were to be content that they were circumcised; the uncircumcised Gentiles were to remain so when they became Christians. **19. Circumcision is nothing, etc.** Has no bearing on final salvation. The one essential condition is “keeping the commandments of God.” Nothing can take the place of this. **20. Let each man abide, etc.** In that secular condition of life in which he was when called. **21. Art thou called being a servant?** Half the population of the Roman Empire at this time were slaves. Thousands of the early Christians were in this condition. If a servant was converted, let him not be troubled over his servile state; but if he had the means of becoming free, let him rather choose freedom. **22. For he that is called ... being a servant.** The eternal equality of the servant and freeman in Christ is shown. The “servant” is Christ's freedman, since Christ has freed him from sin; the freeman, when converted, is Christ's servant. **23. Ye are bought with a price.** Christ has bought each alike, ransomed them from the bondage of sin with his blood, and bound them to his service as his own. **Be not ye the servants of men.** As Christ's servants, do not become the followers of any other religious master. **24. Let every man, wherein he is called, etc.** Let each one remain in the domestic and social condition in which the call of God found him.

25–28. Now concerning virgins. No doubt in the letter from Corinth it was asked whether a father should place his virgin daughters in marriage. In the East to this day the marriage arrangements are made by the parents. **I have no commandment.** He had no revelation upon the subject, but could give his Christian judgment. **26. I suppose ... for the present distress.** The critical condition in which Christians were placed by the spirit of persecution which then prevailed. **Good for a man so to be.** To remain in the state he already is. **27. Art thou bound?** If married, he is to remain true to the bond; if unmarried, at present it seemed best to remain so. **28. But and if thou marry.** Still, while it seemed prudent, with impending persecution, not to marry, it was not wrong to do so. Nevertheless, those who did, should **have trouble in the flesh.** Anxiety and distress on account of their domestic ties.

29–35. The time is short. The precise application cannot be known. It was but a short time until Jerusalem should be destroyed, and the early church supposed this would be the end of the world. Life, too, is short; the time of preparation is short. It was the general feeling then that some awful convulsion was close at hand. There was. Within half a generation the whole Roman world was turned up by civil war, three emperors in succession were slain, and Jerusalem was destroyed.

As though they had none. Should look on all earthly ties as soon to be broken. All earthly arrangements must be regarded as transitory. **31. Those that use this world, etc.** We all have to use the world; but we must not *misuse* it. That is the charge here. **32. I would have**



you free from cares. That is, I would have you free from the causes which bring cares. **34. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin.** The sole thought of the unmarried person who is consecrated to Christ is to please Christ. **35. This I speak ... not that I may cast a snare.** Not to interfere with your freedom to marry. A snare thrown over the head made the victim helpless. Paul merely advises what, under the circumstances of that period, seemed most prudent.

36–38. But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin daughter. While giving a judgment in favor of the unmarried state, at that time, he gives full liberty. A man may give his daughter in marriage. **Behaveth uncomely.** Improperly in withholding her from marriage. **If she pass the flower of her age.** If she is fully matured. **If need so require.** If circumstances of any kind seem to require her marriage. **37. He that standeth steadfast . . . having no necessity.** If no need makes marriage necessary, and the purpose that she remain unmarried continues steadfast, he does well to let her remain so. To choose either course is well, but the last is the better, where circumstances permit ([verse 38](#)), on account of the “distress” ([verse 26](#)).

39, 40. The wife is bound by the law, etc. One point remains to be discussed, viz., The remarriage of widows. I suppose that the letter of inquiry asked about this. **She is at liberty.** In case of her husband's death, she is free from the marriage bond, and can marry whom she will, with one limitation—she must marry **in the Lord**; that is, a Christian. An alien marriage is prohibited. Indeed, so far was an ancient Christian from marrying an unbeliever that the question actually arose whether, when the sinner was converted, he could still live with an unconverted partner. See [verses 12–14](#). **40. But she is happier.** In his judgment, and in the conditions then prevailing, she will consult her happiness by remaining a widow. It is not only his judgment, but the Spirit seems to point the same lesson. [1 Tim. 5:14](#), might be supposed to conflict with this, but it does not, when we remember that Paul's advice here is due to prevailing circumstances. The question of marriage or remarriage is one of prudential considerations.



Chapter VIII

The Duty of the Strong Toward Weaker Brethren

Summary — *Meat Offered in Idol Temples. Not Changed Because So Offered. But Not to Be Eaten Because of Weaker Brethren. Those Having Knowledge Must Act in Love.*

1–3. As touching things offered unto idols. Corinth, like all Greek cities, was full of temples to heathen idols. At their altars victims were constantly sacrificed, the flesh of which was afterwards eaten. The question arose whether a Christian could eat of such flesh without the sin of showing deference to an idol. Perhaps the letter to Paul (7:1) had asked about this matter. **We all have knowledge.** Some pleaded their knowledge that “an idol was nothing,” not divine in any sense. Paul tells them that the question is one, not of knowledge, but of charity. **Knowledge puffeth up.** Those who professed to be knowing ones put on an air of superiority. **2. If any man thinketh that he knoweth, etc.** If he is inflated with a sense of knowledge, he has not got on the right track for true knowledge. Humility is essential. **3. If any man love God.** Not knowledge, but love “buildeth up.” Love, too, is a source of true knowledge. It is he who loves God who knows him. “The same,” grammatically, refers to God. The sentence then says, “If any man love God, the same is known by him,” *i. e.*, by that man. Love is the means of obtaining the true knowledge, the highest knowledge.

4–6. We know that an idol is nothing. Not a god, not even a living being. Only wood, stone, or metal. **5. Though there be that are called gods.** The heathen world worshiped many false gods. **6. But to us there is but one God.** To Christians, there is but one divinity, one object of worship, the true and living God. One God, the Father, instead of the “gods many;” one Lord, Christ, instead of the “lords many” of heathenism; one God, and one Mediator between man and God.

7–9. There is not in every man that knowledge. While “we,” the better informed, know better, still there were some in the church who had not entirely outgrown their former superstitions. They could not realize that an “idol was nothing.” Meat that came from idol sacrifice was to them the meat of the idol. They could not eat it without their conscience being **defiled**. **9. Take heed lest ... this liberty of yours, etc.** The meat itself made one neither better nor worse ([verse 8](#)), but if those who “had knowledge” ate it, it might prove a stumbling-block, the occasion of the fall of those who were not so well informed and were weaker.

10–13. For if any man see thee ... sit at meat in the idol's temple. In the heathen temples, great banquets often followed the sacrifice. That a weaker Christian should see a stronger one, a leader, sitting at such a banquet, would lead him to believe that his brother was honoring the idol. The example would encourage idolatry. **11.** Hence his **knowledge**, the knowledge that made him dare eat, because he knew an idol was nothing, might be the



means of destroying the weak brother by leading him to idolatry. **12. But when ye so sin.** To wound, injure, imperil the weak brethren, is a sin against Christ. It injures Christ's cause; besides, he denounces those who cause the weaker ones to stumble ([Matt. 18:6; 25:40](#)). **13. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend.** To stumble and fall. Love, in this case, would demand that the meat be given up. The principle applies to many things. Some Christians can, perhaps, go to the theater, or dance, or attend the fairs of our day, where the races are the great feature, or even drink wine or beer, without falling. Others cannot. Yet the example of the strong will lead the weak to engage in them, and hence that example will lead them to spiritual death. The Christian principle, the rule of love, is, "If eating meat, or going to the theater, or going to a ball, or attending the fair, or drinking wine or beer, causeth my brother to offend, I will not do these things while the world standeth."



Chapter IX

The Apostleship of Paul

Summary — *Answer to Various Insinuations of Judaizers. The Corinthians Had Proof of His Apostleship. He Had the Right to Have a Wife As Well as Peter. It Was His Right to Be Sustained by the Church. He Sustained Himself to Have One Ground for Self-Congratulation. Adapted Himself to All Classes to Save Them. The Christian Race.*

1, 2. Am I not an apostle? Two objects are held in view in this chapter; to answer those, the Judaizers, who disparaged his authority by contrasts between him and the other apostles, and to enforce upon the church, by his example, self denial for the benefit of others. **Am I not free?** He had spoken (8:9) of Christian liberty He was free also, and an apostle *who had seen the Lord*, and hence, could witness to his resurrection. **2. The seal of mine apostleship ye are.** The existence of the church at Corinth, founded by his labors, proved that he was *their* apostle, at least.

3–6. Have we not power to eat and to drink? To live at the charges of the churches we have founded? **5. Have we not power to lead about a sister, etc.?** Peter (Cephas) was a married man. Other apostles had wives. Had Paul no right to have a wife? The answer is that he had this liberty as well as others if he had chosen to use it. **Brethren of the Lord.** [Luke 6:15](#); [Gal. 1:19](#). **6. Or have Barnabas and I only, etc.** He and Barnabas worked with their own hands to sustain themselves while preaching. Others were sustained. Had not they the same right? He next shows that they had the right by various illustrations.

7–10. Who goeth a warfare at his own charges? Soldiers were paid while on a campaign; but he and Barnabas were Christian soldiers. The husbandman ate of the *vineyard*; but they worked in the vineyard of the Lord. The *feeder of a flock* drank of its milk, but they were feeders of the flock of God. **8. Say I these things as a man?** Human affairs teach our right to be sustained, but the law of Moses teaches the same lesson. **9. Thou shalt not muzzle the ox, etc.** See [Deut. 25:4](#). In the East still the grain is trodden out on the threshing floor by the cattle, nor do the people muzzle the cattle to this day. **Doth God take care of the oxen?** Was this enactment made solely for the benefit of the oxen? Or was not it rather to teach those who did a work had a right to live off of that work? The latter, doubtless.

11–14. If we have sown to you in spiritual things. Preached the gospel, converted them, built them up in Christ. This conserved their eternal interests. **Carnal things.** An earthly support. **12. If others be partakers of this power.** Enjoy this privilege of earthly support. But his right was greater than that of these. **Have not used this power.** He had supported himself lest he **should hinder the gospel.** The heathen might say that he was influenced by mercenary motives. As to his course see [Acts 18:3](#). **13. They which minister about holy things.** He now shows that the temple teaches the same lesson. The priests and

Levites are sustained by the temple offerings. **Partakers with the altar.** A part of the sacrifice was consumed on the altar and a part was awarded to the priests. **14. Even so hath the Lord ordained, etc.** It was the Lord's ordinance, even if Paul did not exercise the power, that those who preach the gospel should be sustained by the church. See [Matt. 10:9, 10](#).

15–18. But I have used none of these things. They had neither sustained him, nor did he now write to them to have them do so. Nay, he was fully resolved not to change his course. It were even *better for him to die* than to do so. **16. For though I preach * * * I have nothing to glory of.** He preached because he was Christ's servant. He was therefore under necessity, as a servant. Nay, "woe was upon him" if he obeyed not. In this, then, he had no right to boast. But if he refused a support from the churches when he had liberty to receive it, that might make a ground of boasting. **17. If I do this thing willingly.** If he preached voluntarily, he might then claim an earthly reward. **But if against my will.** If I do this as a servant of Christ upon whom the service is laid; then he has a *stewardship*. (See Revision.) In that case he has the obligations of a steward. It is his duty to feed the Master's servants. **18. What then is my reward?** He had no earthly wages. What then? That he should have the satisfaction of knowing that, for the sake of the gospel, he gave up his right, and preached freely. If he was accused of mercenary motives it might interpose a hindrance.

19–23. For though I be free, etc. He shows why he used this self denial. In order that he might *gain souls*, he was willing to become the servant of all, and to deny himself all things. **20. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew.** With Jews he lived as a Jew in order to reach them. He observed their distinctions of meats, kept feasts, and circumcised Timothy. He observed the law to reach those who kept law. **21. To them without law.** To such, though in the sight of God keeping His law, he came not as an enforcer of the law of Moses. He spoke to Gentiles from a Gentile standpoint, as at Athens. ([Acts 17.](#)) **22. To the weak I became as weak.** Adapted himself to their weakness as he had directed the "strong" at Corinth to do. **I am made all things, etc.** While steadfastly keeping Christ's law he adapted himself to all men in the hope of gaining them. **23. And I do all things.** All this self denial had in view a single object—the promotion of the gospel. Would that all Christians, from the same motive, would adapt themselves to all classes, in order to reach them.

24–27. They which run in a race, run all, etc. He had spoken of self denial in order to secure gospel success. He now enforces the need of sparing no effort, self denial or exertion, to win the crown. The Corinthians were familiar with the races in the stadium. Only one, the foremost, received a prize. Hence the lesson, **so run that you may obtain;** outstrip all others if possible. The Isthmian games, among the most famous of Greece, were celebrated at Corinth. **25. Every man that striveth, etc.** Everyone who proposed to strive in the games for the prize pursued a course of self control, and exercised himself very systematically. All this effort was made *for a corruptible crown*. The prize of the victor in the foot race was a crown woven of the pine leaves which grew then, and still grow, on the isthmus of Corinth.

But we an incorruptible. We run for a crown that never fades (1 Peter 5:4). **26. I, therefore, so run, not as uncertainly.** Not as one who had no definite goal before him. His eye was fixed upon the heavenly prize. **Not as one that beateth the air.** The first figure is of a runner with a definite object; the second is taken from the boxer who strikes the air instead of his competitor. So fights not Paul. He puts a skillful aim into his blows. **27. But I keep my body under.** I buffet my body (Revision). He puts the body down by his blows, by self denial for Christ. It shall not be his master, but his servant. He keeps it under lest, after having preached to others, he *should be rejected*; that is, refused the prize of the crown. What an exhortation to us is this example of the apostle! Continually vigilant lest he should be finally rejected! Even he worked out his salvation “with fear and trembling.” Surely, he should “give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.” In this worldly, self-seeking, luxurious age “we should give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.”



Chapter X

Warnings Against Idolatry

Summary —*Lights from Jewish History. Beware of a Fall. Will Not be Trials Greater than We Can Stand. Beware of the Fellowship of Idols. The Analogy of the Lord's Supper. Ask no Questions at a Feast for Conscience Sake. But Avoid Anything Pointed Out as from an Idol Sacrifice.*

1–5. In the preceding chapter Paul warned the Corinthian Christians to avoid all that might cause weaker brethren to fall, pointed to his own example, and showed that he spared no effort to win the crown for himself. He now enforces the lesson of his own example by pointing to the warnings furnished in the journey of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, the type of the Christian's journey to heaven. "It is worthy of note that he selects his examples from that part of Israelitish history which has an analogy in the baptismal commencement, and the eucharistic nourishment of the Christian life."—*Schaff*. **How that our fathers.** The ancient members of the Jewish race; the fleshly fathers of Jewish Christians, and, in a kind of spiritual sense, the fathers of Gentile Christians. See [Gal. 3:29](#), and [Eph 2:19](#). **Were all under the cloud.** With the walls of the sea on each side, and the cloud over their heads, the Israelites at the Red Sea passage were buried out of sight of the Egyptians. See [Exod. 13:21](#); [Num. 10:34](#); [14:13](#); [Psalm 105:39](#). **2. Were all baptized unto Moses.** "The two phrases, 'Were under the cloud,' and 'Passed through the sea,' seem to prefigure the double process of *submersion* and *emersion* in baptism."—*Canon Cook*. Observe that the Israelites, by this event, left Egypt, escaped from Pharaoh, and entered upon their march, with Moses as their leader, even as Christians leave the Egypt of sin behind, and start upon the Christian life, when they are "baptized into Christ." One of the church Fathers, Theodoret, says: "The sea of transition represents the laver of regeneration, Moses foreshadows Christ, Israel the baptized disciples, the pursuing Egyptians are the sins left behind, and Pharaoh is a type of the devil." **3. And did all eat the same spiritual meat.** The manna ([Exod. 16:15](#)), called "spiritual," because supernaturally supplied, and because a type of the spiritual bread of the Christian. **4. Did all drink the same spiritual drink.** The water supernaturally supplied ([Exod. 17:6](#); [Num. 20:11](#)) called "spiritual," for the same reason. **That spiritual Rock that followed them.** The waters at Rephidim and Kadesh gushed from a rock. The rock did not itself supply them, but the Power behind, the "spiritual Rock," even Christ. The rock of Rephidim did not follow them, but the "spiritual Rock" did, and supplied their necessities whenever they were in need. As the rock of Rephidim became a fountain, so Christ is the fountain of living waters to the world. **5. But with many of them God was not well pleased.** "All" were baptized, "all" were fed, "all" did drink, but notwithstanding God had done so much for them

“all” without exception, many fell in the wilderness because of their sins; a startling warning to Christians on the journey.

6–10. Now these things were our examples. Beacon lights to Christians. The Israelites were led astray by “lusting after evil things.” Let all beware of this source of destruction. **7. Neither be ye idolaters.** As many had been idolaters, and idolatry was so prevalent in Corinth, this was a great danger. **As it is written (Exod. 32:6).** The Israelites fell into idolatry at Sinai during the absence of Moses. **They sat down to eat.** At a feast in honor of the golden calf. **Rose up to play.** To dance religiously around their idol. Such is the meaning. Of course such an example was a pertinent warning to Corinthian brethren to shun the banquets in idol temples and their accompanying festivities. Three thousand Israelites fell on the occasion referred to. **8. Neither let us commit fornication, etc.** The fornication with the Midianites ([Num. 25:1–9](#)). It is stated that 24,000 lost their lives. Paul names 23,000 as the number who lost their lives by the plague. The number was no doubt between 23,000 and 24,000, and is stated in each place by a round sum, according to Jewish custom, Paul naming the smaller. Fornication was also one of the besetting sins of Corinth. **9. Neither let us tempt Christ, as, etc.** The event referred to is narrated in [Num. 21:4–6](#), which see. The application is, that we should not be discontented over hardships or long for the sinful pleasures of a former life from which we have parted. **10. Neither murmur ye.** See [Num. 14:2](#).

11–15. Now these things happened to them for ensamples. They are historical facts designed to teach great lessons, since God still deals on the same principles. **Upon whom the ends of the world are come.** The last of God's dispensations. **12. Let him that thinketh he standeth, etc.** Presumption is the greatest of all dangers. He who realizes his danger will be on his guard. See the case of Peter's fall, for an illustration. The safe way is, conscious of weakness, not to dally with temptation. **13. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common.** Perhaps the Corinthians thought their temptations were usually severe, but these were only what human nature is exposed to. **But God is faithful.** Will keep every promise, and hence will give them strength and deliverance in every temptation if they trust in him. None who devoutly follow Christ, who pray constantly for strength, and trust God, will fall. **14. Flee from idolatry.** In idolatry, the greatest temptations at Corinth were combined, lust, drinking, reveling, etc. The way to avoid all these was to *flee* it. Sin must not be dallied with, but shunned.

16–22. The cup of blessing which we bless. A name applied to the cup used in the Lord's Supper. Paul shows, from the nature of the Lord's Supper, and of the Jewish sacrificial feasts, that to eat in an idol feast is an idol communion. **Is it not the communion of the blood? etc.** The symbol of joint participation or fellowship of the blood of Christ. **The bread which we break.** Is not this symbol of joint participation of Christ's body? **17. For we being many are one bread.** One loaf. There being one loaf implies that we Christians, though many, are all one body, and joint participators of the one body of Christ. Paul had no con-

ception of a divided church. **18. Behold Israel after the flesh.** The natural Israel, in contrast with the spiritual Israel, the church. **Are not they ... partakers of the altar?** A part of the sacrifice was eaten by the offerers and their friends, and as a part was burnt on the altar, as an offering to God, they were supposed to be partakers with God in the feast. So, too, those who partook of an idol feast, would be worshipers of the idol. **19. What say I then?** He had said an idol was nothing (8:4). Does he not now imply an idol is something? **20.** He affirms nothing of the kind, but he does say **that the sacrifices which the Gentiles sacrifice are to devils.** The idol is nothing, but to the worshiper it is a reality. That reality is not God, but really a demon. The gods were mainly dead kings and heroes who had been deified. The *diamonia*, or demons, were the spirits of dead men. The worship was really demon worship. **Fellowship with devils.** Demons. If the feast of the Lord's Supper is communion with Christ, the feast of the altar sacrifice communion with God, who is worshiped, the feast of the idol is communion with the idol. Yet this idol in the mind of the worshiper is a *diamonion*, a demon. **21. Ye cannot drink, etc.** So inconsistent are the two with each other that no man can commune with Christ who partakes of the feast of the demon. **Cup of devils.** The libations offered at the idol sacrifices. A part of the cup was poured on the altar, and a part drunk by the offerers. See *Aeneid* 8:273. **Table of devils.** The table in the idol temple where a feast was spread. **22. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?** Such acts in an idol temple would be worship of the idol. Yet Jehovah says that he is "a jealous God" (Exod. 20:5).

23–26. All things are lawful for me. All meats are especially referred to. See note on chapter 6:12, and [chapter 8](#). But things that are lawful, *i. e.*, not sinful in themselves, are often not expedient. **24. Let no man seek his own.** In asserting rights, consider the interests of others. **25. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles.** In the butcher's stalls. This one might eat without question as to whether it had been part of an idol sacrifice or not. **26. For the earth is the Lord's.** All that is offered for sale is the Lord's bounty.

27–33. If any of them that believe not, etc. If invited to an unbeliever's house, go, if you wish, and eat what is set before you without question on account of conscience. **28. But if any man say unto you, etc.** If some one points out that a part is from an idol's sacrifice, then it is not to be eaten; not because the food is sinful, but because the conscience of others might be offended. **29. Conscience ... not thine own, but of the other.** When one eats what he knows to be simply wholesome food, his own conscience is not offended, but that of another man. His liberty of conscience is not abridged by another man's want of knowledge. **30. For, if I by grace be a partaker, etc.** If by God's gift I partake with thanksgiving to him, there should be no reproach. **31. Whether therefore ye eat or drink.** The rule for eating and drinking is now given. It must be done **all to the glory of God.** This implies, (1) Thanksgiving to God. (2) Not doing what would put a stumbling-block in the way of weak brethren. **32. Give none offence.** The rule just given implies this. Do nothing that would

produce a scandal, or arouse prejudice, whether they be Jews, or Gentiles, or brethren. **33.**
Even as I please all men in all things. See notes on 9:20–23.



Chapter XI

Dress and Conduct in the Church

Summary — *Men in Church to Pray with Uncovered Heads. Women to Be Veiled. Disorderly Assemblies. The Abuse of Love Feasts. The Lord's Supper Profaned. The Lesson from Christ's Appointment of the Ordinance. Must Be Eaten with Solemn Reverence.*

1, 2. Be ye followers of me, etc. This refers to [verse 33 of the 10th chapter](#). Like him, they should not seek to “please themselves,” but to so act as to save others. **2. Now I praise you.** This praise is preparatory to censure for disorderly conduct among them. **Keep the ordinances.** Those he had taught them while in Corinth.

3–8. For I would have you to know, etc. The order of rank is that Christ is the center, with the Father above and man below him; and in the family the man is first and the woman second. That is nature's order. **4. Every man praying or prophesying.** The last word means speaking by inspiration. **With his head covered.** He dishonors his head by covering what God would have exposed. Some hold that the head dishonored is Christ. I agree rather with Meyer and Schaff, that it is his own. Heathen priests of Rome covered their heads. So do modern Jews. **5. Every one that prayeth, etc.** With the customs and ideas which existed in the East in that age it would be an unseemly act, and would bring reproach. The veil was regarded as a badge of subordination, and if not worn would imply that the woman did not yield deference to her husband. Almost all women are still veiled in the presence of men in the East. **All one as if she were shaven.** For a woman's head to be shaven was usually a sign of shamelessness (See Meyer). The uncovered head in an assembly was also unbecoming. **6. For if the woman be not covered.** If she defies decorum by an uncovered head, let her go further, and be shaven. **7. A man ought not to cover his head, etc.** In this whole passage we must keep in mind the Eastern ideas of the relations of the sexes. Paul bases these rules of propriety on the account of their creation. The veil is a sign of subordination to others present. But man, **the image and glory of God**, has no created superior. The woman, **the glory of the man**, is subordinate to him, of which the veil is the symbol. **8. For the man is not of the woman.** In the creative act man was first, and woman was made from man.

9–12. Neither was the man, etc. Woman was made for man because he needed a helpmeet. **10. For this cause ought a woman to have power, etc.** She ought to have on her head the veil, the badge of submission to authority. **Because of the angels.** This clause has puzzled the critics. The idea probably is: “There should be no violation of decorum, such as a bare-headed woman in a public assembly would be, lest it offend the ministering angels which are always present, though unseen.” **11. Neither is the man without the woman, etc.** Neither sex is independent of the other; each needs the other. **In the Lord.** The Lord recog-



nizes their mutual dependence upon each other. **12. For as the woman is of the man, etc.** As she was created for man so man is born of woman. There is an equipoise. These relations are all “of God.”

13–16. Is it comely that a woman should pray, etc.? That is, in the public assembly. Private prayer, or with her own sex or household, is not meant. It was very unbecoming in view of the customs of the East, nor would it generally be esteemed decorous in our times, and with our ideas, that she should appear with no covering on her head at all. **14. Doth not even nature itself, etc.?** It is nature's arrangement that men should wear short hair, and a woman long. For a man to have long hair and a woman to be shorn are violations of nature's teachings. **16. But if a man seem to be contentious.** If, in spite of nature's lessons, a man contentiously opposes, let him know that no such custom exists in the churches. Many suppose that **custom** refers to being contentious. I think, rather, that it refers to covering the head, etc. The lesson of this whole passage is that we must not defy existing social usages in such a way as to bring reproach on the church.

17–22. Now in this ... I praise you not. That their church assemblies were not orderly. **18. When ye come together in the church.** In a meeting of the church. **There be divisions.** He had spoken in chapters 1–3 of the divisions in the congregation. He now tells them that he had heard that these divisions were manifest at their church meetings. **19. There must needs be heresies.** Heresies were false opinions which led to divisions. In the state of the human mind they were unavoidable, and would sift the church. **20. When ye come together, therefore.** When they assembled these heresies and divisions were manifest. There was a Paulite group, an Apolloite group, and a Petrine group, who sat apart from each other. **It is not to eat the Lord's supper.** Coming in such a spirit they were in no fit mind to eat the Lord's supper. **21. For every one partaketh before others his own supper.** It was customary in Corinth to eat a meal together as did Christ and his disciples the night of the Lord's supper. After this came the Lord's supper. At this meal each party in Corinth sat apart and ate when it was ready. The result was that some began before the others. One would be hungry, and **another drunken.** This last clause means that he had eaten and was satisfied. **22. What! Have you not houses to eat and drink in?** The practice is rebuked. The place to eat their feasts was at home. **Despise ye the church of God?** By a selfish feast, where some ate luxuriously, and put to shame others, perhaps the poor, who had nothing.

23–26. For I have received of the Lord. While at Corinth he had told the church the solemn history of the institution of the supper, an account that he had received directly by inspiration from the Lord. Such a sacred event was utterly inconsistent with strife, revelry or disorder. The history is repeated to show this. **24. This is my body.** Is this literal? “I am the true vine,” “These women are the two covenants” (*Gal. 4:24*), etc. are kindred expressions. The idea is: “This represents my body.” The eating of the bread is not to literally eat the Lord's flesh, but is done in **remembrance.** It is a token that reminds of his body. **25. This**

do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. The memorial design of the Lord's supper is reiterated. It is not a "sacrifice of the mass," but a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.

26. Ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come. The observance points to two great facts—the Lord's death, and to his second coming; one past, the other future. The observance is to continue "till he come."

27–30. Shall eat ... or drink ... unworthily. In a light, disorderly way, or with an unholy frame of mind. **Shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.** Profane the body and blood by profanely eating the sacred tokens of these. **28. Let a man examine himself, etc.** To see whether he can eat in loving remembrance of the death of Christ. **29. Eateth ... unworthily.** With light, worldly thoughts, as though eating common food. That this is a sin is shown in [verse 27](#). Here it is added, "**he eateth and drinketh damnation;**" that is, subjects himself to condemnation. **Not discerning the Lord's body.** Not distinguishing it, keeping in mind that these are memorials. **30. For this cause many are weak, etc.** Some have held that this means that the improper observance of the supper has made many weak and sickly Christians, and some had even died spiritually. Others hold that physical judgments had been sent, and some sickened and others died. The last view is most generally held.

31–34. If we would judge ourselves. If we would sit in judgment on our spiritual condition, and correct ourselves, we would avert God's judgments. **32. We are chastened, etc.** Judgments are used to chasten and to bring to repentance and reformation. Compare [Heb. 12:5–8](#). **33. Wherefore, when ye come together to eat, etc.** Let all wait, and let all eat and partake of the Lord's supper together. **34. If any man is hungry, let him eat at home.** This feast is not in order to satisfy the cravings of the appetite.

The account given here of the institution of the Lord's supper is one of the four in the New Testament. 1 is of an eye witness; those of [Mark](#) and [Luke](#) were received by them from witnesses who were present; that of [Paul](#) was "received from the Lord." Many regard it as the oldest written account of the event.



Chapter XII

Spiritual Gifts

Summary — *The Test of the Spirit of Christ. The Variety of Spiritual Gifts. All Given by the Same Spirit. The Human Body Has Many Members, with Different Offices. So it is of the Church, the Body of Christ. But All Parts of One Body. The Various Offices and Gifts.*

1–3. Spiritual gifts. The supernatural gifts bestowed in the early church by the Spirit. These were especially needful, before the church had the New Testament as a guide, and in the inauguration of Christianity. **2. Ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols.** Idolaters worshiping idols. These false gods had oracles, and priests professed to speak under the influence of the spirit of the god. The oracle of Delphos, not far distant from Corinth, was especially celebrated. **3. No man speaking by the spirit of God, etc.** How should they test those professing to speak by the divine Spirit? If a heathen priest professed to speak by the spirit and called Jesus accursed, he had not the Spirit of God. In times of persecution Christians were asked to say Jesus Anathema. If one speaking by the spirit pronounced Jesus the Lord, he had the Holy Spirit. This confession from the heart is always moved by the Spirit.

4–6. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. The especial gifts of the Spirit imparted to fit members for various duties, are now discussed. These are various in their manifestations, but all proceed from the same Spirit. **5. Differences of ministrations;** of ministries or offices, but all are in the service of the same Lord. **6. Diversities of workings.** The inward workings of the Spirit are not always the same, but it is God, one God, the same God, who causes them all. The object of this section is to show that one divine source accounts for spiritual gifts diverse in their manifestations.

7–11. But the manifestation of the Spirit, etc. However varied these manifestations, all are for the **profit** of the whole body. No gift of the Spirit is for the benefit of the recipient. This is now shown. **8. To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom.** The ability to reveal divine truth, such as possessed by the apostles. **To another, the word of knowledge.** The aptitude to teach unerringly what had been revealed to the apostles and prophets. **9. To another, faith.** Not that faith which comes by hearing, but that faith which carried miraculous power. See [13:2](#); [Matt. 17:20](#). **10. To another, prophecy.** The prophet was one who, under divine impulse, spoke words given by the Holy Spirit. **To another, discerning of spirits.** The power of reading hearts and determining whether men spoke by the divine spirit, or some other impulse. **To another, divers kinds of tongues.** He who spoke with tongues, spoke languages that he had never learned. See [Acts 2:6–8](#). Sometimes their utterances were not understood by the audience. Hence another gift was **the interpretation of tongues**, the ability to explain the meaning of those who spoke with tongues. There are

named [here](#) nine gifts, all supernatural, imparted by the same spirit, which distributes them according to its own will.

12–20. The body is not one member, but many. The unity of these diverse gifts, all given by the same Spirit, is illustrated by the human body, which has many members and organs with different offices, but all parts of one body. No member could claim that it was not of the body because it is not the eye, the ear, or some other organ. Each is a part, each necessary, each set where God pleased, and all taken together make up the body. **So also is Christ.** The spiritual body of Christ, the church. **13. For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body.** “For by means of one spirit we were all baptized into one body” (Meyer). Rather, moved by one spirit acting through the apostles and evangelists, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free. The idea is that, though diverse in race and condition, all have been made parts of one body by baptism, and that this had all been done under the direction of one spirit. All, too, receiving it as a gift, drank of the same spirit. Hence, if special and extraordinary spiritual gifts were imparted to the members of this body, these would be due to one spirit.

21–26. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee. Every member of the body has its place and is needed by every other member.

27–31. Now, ye are the body of Christ, etc. All were “baptized into one body” ([verse 13](#)), and hence are severally members or parts of the one body, with offices to discharge like those of the members of the human body. **28. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles.** The various offices of the members are pointed out. Some had stations to which they were assigned by the spirit. Nine spiritual gifts have already been named; nine positions in the church are now given. **Apostles.** The twelve, Paul, and such evangelists as Barnabas and others; men **sent** by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel. **Prophets.** See note on [verse 10](#). **Teachers.** Men gifted by the spirit to teach in the church. **Miracles.** Those who had the power to work miracles. **Gifts of healing.** One division of miraculous powers granted. **Helps.** Spiritual aid granted to helpers, such as deacons. **Governments.** The administrative abilities of the presbytery. To each the Spirit granted the special gifts required. **29. Are all apostles?** Only a few had this office given them, and so of each of the other gifts. **31. Covet earnestly the best gifts.** The highest spiritual gifts. **I show a more excellent way.** There is something still better than these which all may possess. This best of all things is shown in the [next chapter](#).



Chapter XIII

The Greatest of All Things

Summary —*Christian Love Better than Miraculous Gifts. The Nature of Love and Its Action. All the Miraculous Gifts Shall Pass Away, but Love Endureth Forever. All Human Knowledge Imperfect, and Transient. But Faith, Hope, and Love Eternal. Of the Three, Love is Greatest.*

“This praise of love, almost a psalm on love it might be called, is as rich in its contents drawn from deep experience as in rhetorical truth, fullness and power, grace and simplicity.”—Meyer.

1–3. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels. In [chapter 12](#) he has spoken of spiritual gifts, one of which was to speak with tongues. “A more excellent way” ([12:31](#)) is now to be shown. Hence, various spiritual gifts are taken up and shown to be useless and vain without love. If he spoke not only with the tongues of men, but even those of angels, it would be, without **love** (see Revision), an empty sound, like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. The latter was a brazen basin, which was beaten. The sounds of these instruments would not be musical. **2. Though I have the gift of prophecy.** Another and a high spiritual gift. See note on [12:10](#). **And know all mysteries.** Have supernatural wisdom so as to understand all the secrets of God. **And all knowledge.** See note on [12:8](#). **Though I have all faith.** See note on [12:9](#). The faith that imparts miraculous power, faith that could remove mountains. See [Matt. 17:20](#). It is clear that Paul knew of the utterance of Christ, since the test of the power of faith is the same. **3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor.** Though he exhibit what the world calls charity in the highest degree, unless he is filled with love, it is nothing. One might give his goods from a desire of praise. **Though I give my body to be burned.** Gives not only goods, but his body itself. If, like a Buddhist ascetic, he leaps into the flames to burn away the dross and to etherialize his spirit. These sacrifices are useless unless consecrated by love. All these things are excellencies if sanctified by the divine principle of love, but are profitless without it.

4–7. The action of love is now described. **Love suffereth long.** Endures slights and wrongs patiently and long, and returns a kindly spirit. It is “slow to anger” ([Psalm 103:8](#)). Christ, “when he was reviled, reviled not again” ([1 Peter 2:23](#)). “The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering” ([Gal. 5:22](#)). See also [Rom. 2:4](#), and [2 Cor. 6:6](#). **Love envieth not.** How miserable is that envy which is made unhappy by the good fortune of another. Cain is an example. Love excludes it. A mother does not envy her child. **Vaunteth not itself.** Does not ostentatiously boast of superiority, nor is it inflated. **5. Does not behave itself unseemly.** Discourteously and in a way to shock good manners or morals. **Seeketh not her own.** Is unselfish and disinterested. See [Rom. 12:10](#). **Is not provoked.** Does not fly into a rage, but

keeps the temper under control. **Thinketh no evil.** The idea of the Revision is that love does not keep a record of evil rendered so as to return it. **6. Rejoiceth not in iniquity.** Instead of rejoicing, is filled with sadness by wrong doing of any kind, but does **rejoice with the truth** in its triumphs. **7. Beareth all things.** Bears up in spite of all things evil, and is not overcome. This is the idea of “beareth.” Love bears up against the tide of evil, as the rock against the waves. **Believeth all things.** Is not distrustful and suspicious. **Hopeth all things.** Is hopeful instead of despondent, and hopes for the best. How hard for the loving mother to give up hope for her recreant son! **Endureth all things.** Endures patiently persecution and suffering. The cardinal quality of fortitude, hardihood, unyielding persistence is meant.

8–10. Love never faileth. The superiority of love over all besides is shown by its survival of all with which it is compared. It is eternal and imperishable. **Whether there be prophecies.** The gift of prophesying shall cease. As a matter of fact we know that it has long since done so. **Whether there be tongues.** The gift of speaking in unknown tongues *was* transitory. **Knowledge.** Even the supernatural knowledge, granted as a spiritual gift, is temporary. All these were only granted while the church was in an immature state. **9. For we know in part, and prophecy in part.** A reason why these gifts should pass away. Our knowledge is now only partial, and the prophecy only gives glimpses. These are all imperfect and fragmentary, and hence must give way to something better. **10. When that which is perfect is come,** then the partial knowledge and prophecy will be done away. The imperfect will give way to the perfect; the perishable to the enduring. “The perfect” was expected at the coming of Christ. Some think that it came when the church was fully matured, since the special gifts then ceased. If there is a reference to this, the final and complete reference is to the glorified church.

11–13. When I was a child. In these verses the change he has declared will take place is illustrated by the change from childhood to manhood. The speech, thoughts and feelings of the child give way to those of the man. So it will be when the church moves on from childhood to full development. **12. For now we see in a glass.** In a “mirror.” The mirrors of the ancients were of polished metal, and were far inferior to ours. The images were indistinct in comparison. They were seen *darkly*, indistinctly, imperfectly. Thus in this state of our knowledge of divine things imperfect and incomplete. **But then face to face.** We will not look in a glass in the coming state, but will see face to face, without a veil, or obscurity. **Now I know in part.** There were limitations upon the knowledge even of Paul; only a part was seen. **But then,** when the veil is taken away, and the full revelation has come in the presence of Christ, he **shall know** fully, know God, eternity and its secrets, even as he is known to God. Thus it is shown that all these spiritual gifts are fleeting. **13. But now abideth faith, hope, love.** These three shall survive. They are eternal. They continue to exist in the church, and shall not fail in its glorified state. As long as the redeemed saint shall have future ages before him, so long will trust in God and hope give them brightness, while love

itself is the very atmosphere of the divine life. **The greatest of these is love.** The greatest because it glorifies both faith and hope, sanctifies every faculty and Christian grace, is the very moving impulse of the gospel, and is the one quality that is divine. "God is love."



Chapter XIV

Order in Public Worship

Summary — *Of the Spiritual Gifts Prophecy Gives the First Place. Speaking With Tongues Secondary. Both Must Be Used so as to Edify. In the Church Assemblies What is Spoken in a Tongue Must be Interpreted. One Only Must Speak at Once. The Women Must Keep Silent.*

1–5. Desire earnestly spiritual gifts. Though love is to be a supreme pursuit, yet this is not intended to disparage spiritual gifts. Let them be sought, but in seeking, desire above all the gift of prophecy. **2. For he that speaketh in a tongue.** Hath the gift of tongues. The tenor of Paul's remarks shows that the Corinthians placed too high a comparative estimate on this gift. **Speaketh mysteries.** Things that are unknown and mysterious to his hearers. Men do not understand him. **3. He that prophesieth.** To prophesy means more than to foretell. It is to declare the will of God under a divine impulse. When Peter spoke on Pentecost, he did the work of a New Testament prophet. In this formative period of the church, before the New Testament was written, it was needful that there be these inspired guides in the churches. **Unto men edification.** Instruction, and strengthening. **4. He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself.** His speech in the unknown tongue tends to strengthen him, though not instructing others. He is made to feel that he is moved by God, and so is filled with awe. **5. Greater is he that prophesieth.** Greater, because he serves the church best. Unless the tongues were interpreted, they were an unmeaning sound to the church, while he who prophesied, instructed and built it up.

Note. — Concerning this gift of tongues, there is considerable confusion among commentators. Some have held that it was a sort of rhapsody under the influence of the Spirit in no earthly language. Others have held that it was a gift of the knowledge of foreign languages to the early Christians to enable them to preach the gospel to all nations. Neither view appears to be correct. 1. Undoubtedly there was a manifestation of the gift of tongues on the Day of Pentecost ([Acts, chapter 2](#)). Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Greeks, Romans, heard in their own language. 2. It was not a gift of the *knowledge* of a foreign language, for [verses 13 and 14](#) show that the speaker did not understand his own words. 3. It was a gift, not for exercise in the church, but a “sign to them that believe not” ([verse 22](#)). When they heard the gospel message in a tongue which the speaker did not understand, but in their own tongue (as on the Day of Pentecost), their wonder was excited, and many would confess that it was the work of God.

6–11. What shall I profit you, etc. The gift of tongues, exercised to the church, cannot profit unless it does one of four things named: **A revelation.** The inspired utterance of him who **prophesies. Knowledge.** The gift of **teaching** the inspired truths of the Scriptures, or those revealed by the prophets. **7. Even things without life.** Musical instruments that give

forth a sound, such as a pipe or a harp, the chief musical instruments of the Greeks, must give a distinction of sounds, if one would know what is played. **8. If the trumpet.** The various distinctions of note sounded a charge, a retreat, etc. **9. So also ye, unless ye utter by the tongue, etc.** It is only speech to the air, unless there is the distinction of intelligible words. **10. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world.** Articulate language spoken and understood by some men. **11. If I know not the meaning of the voice.** The language. **I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian.** A foreigner, not understanding his language. The Greeks and Romans called all not of their races barbarians.

12–17. Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. If you seek for spiritual gifts, seek rather those that will build up the church, such as prophesying and teaching. **13. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue.** Let him pray that he may have the gift of interpretation also. See 12:10. Let him pray that he may understand what he utters, so as to explain it. **14. If I pray in an unknown tongue.** He does not understand, and only his spirit prayeth. **15. What is it then?** How then am I to act? He answers that question. He will have both the spirit and the understanding unite in singing and praying, by using a tongue that he understands. **16. Else, when thou shalt bless the Spirit, etc.** If an unknown tongue is used, how can one who does not understand it say the **Amen** to the blessing at the proper place? Note here, (1) This shows that audible responses to the praises and thanksgivings were the custom of the church. (2) *The unlearned* means a private person, the private members of the church, those not possessed of the spiritual gifts.

18–22. I had rather speak five words, etc. All must be done to edification. Hence, all must be understood. There is a lesson here to preachers who are so learned in their utterances that the people cannot understand them. **20. Be not children in understanding.** Use manly good sense and judgment in the church. To babble in an unknown tongue is like a child. **In malice be ye children.** To vainly choose a course that would merely excite wonder, and not edify, would seem to partake of malice rather than love. **21. In the law it is written.** See [Isaiah 28:11, 12](#), for the quotation. The Jews were there told that for their sins they would be carried into the Assyrian captivity, where they would hear strange languages. This was a judgment. Wherefore, do not force the church to listen to listen to strange tongues which serve to remind of the judgment of Israel. **22. Wherefore tongues, etc.** They are a sign to unbelievers, who are moved when they hear the gospel spoken in their tongue by men who have never learned it and do not understand it.

23–25. If therefore the whole church be come together. The apostle now treats of the proper order and decorum in the church assemblies. **And all speak with tongues.** There would be a babble of confusion and no edification. To a private member, or an unbeliever, they would seem to be mad. **24. But if all prophesy.** Those speaking would then speak what would be understood, and, speaking under the divine impulse, would convict. **He is judged.** His state and character are laid bare by the speakers. **25. The secrets of his heart are made**

manifest. He is made to feel that he is face to face with God, who knows his life, and he is brought to confession. It is still often the case that the hearer thinks that the preacher knows his life, and is laying it bare, when it is his own conscience that is stirred up.

26–33. What is it then, brethren? What course should be pursued in the public assemblies of the church? **When ye come together, each one hath, etc.** When they come together, one comes purposing to sing a **psalm**; another to teach concerning some question; another, a prophet, has a **revelation** to present; another proposes to speak in a **tongue**; another, still, to **interpret** what is spoken. Now this must all be done **unto edifying**. All that will not tend to this must be left out. **27. If any man speaketh in a tongue.** He must speak two, or at the most three sentences (**by two, or at the most three**) in succession (**by course**), and another, who has the gift of interpretation (**12:10**), must **interpret**. Most commentators refer *two* or *three* to persons speaking. I follow Macknight. **28. But if there be no interpreter.** In that case the rule, “Let all things be done to edifying,” will force the speaker in tongues to keep silence **in the church**. He may speak somewhere else, or in his soul, but not in the assembly of the saints. **29. Let the prophets speak two or three.** Let two or three prophets speak at a meeting. In the Greek, “two or three” are in the nominative. In **verse 27**, in which speaking with tongues is treated, the numerals are in the accusative case with a preposition. Hence there, with Macknight, I have referred to them to the sentences spoken. If the persons speaking were meant the construction would be as in **verse 29. Let the others discern.** Let them discern whether they speak by inspiration. **30. If anything be revealed.** If the prophetic impulse comes upon a hearer, let the first desist. Let only one speak at a time. **31. For ye all may prophesy.** All who have the prophetic gift, but it must be **one by one**, not more than one speaking at a time. **32. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.** A prophet can wait his turn in silence; he is not compelled to speak at once, for his spirit is subject to him. He can be silent if he wills it. **33. For God is not the author of confusion.** Such confusion as more than one speaking at a time is not of God. God demands peace and order “in all the churches of the saints.”

34–36. Let the women keep silence in the churches. This, in view of other portions of the Scriptures, is confessedly a difficult passage. In **1 Tim. 2:11, 12**, We have the same teaching. On the other hand, Deborah was a judge and a prophetess; Huldah was a prophetess; Joel predicted that in the Christian dispensation “the sons and *daughters* should prophesy” (**Joel 2:28**), and Peter declared that this was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:4**). In addition, the daughters of Philip prophesied (**Acts 21:9**), and in **1 Cor. 11:5**, Paul gives directions concerning women prophesying. Probably these apparent discrepancies may be reconciled as follows: (1) Paul’s prohibition of speaking to the women is, *in the churches*; that is, in the church assemblies when “the whole church is come together into one place” (**verse 23**). It is an official meeting of the church. “Church” in the New Testament always means the *ecclesia*. It does not apply to such informal meetings as the social or

prayer-meetings, but to formal gatherings of the whole body. (2) It may be that even this prohibition was due to the circumstances that existed in Ephesus, where Timothy was, and in Corinth, and would not apply everywhere. If so, it applies wherever similar circumstances exist, but not elsewhere. Both were Greek churches. Among the Greeks public women were disreputable. For a woman to speak in public would cause the remark that she was shameless. Virtuous women were secluded. Hence it would be **a shame for women to speak in the church** assembly. It is noteworthy that there is no hint of such a prohibition to any churches except Grecian. Wherever it would be shameful, women ought not to speak. **36. What? Was it from you that the word of God went forth?** A rebuke. The Corinthian church must receive instruction, not give it. It did not send out the word of God, but the word of God was sent to it.

37–40. If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual. If any one thinks he is inspired, or has spiritual gifts, one proof of it is that he recognizes what I write as the Lord's commandment. This is always a test. Whoever insists that he has the spirit, and sets aside the New Testament commands is self-convicted. **38. If any man be ignorant.** If he will be ignorant and obstinate, let him remain so. **39. Wherefore.** The apostle concludes this section of church order by again commending prophecy as the chief gift, and enjoining order in the church exercises.



Chapter XV

The Resurrection from the Dead

Summary — *The Essential Facts of the Gospel. The Resurrection of Christ a Central Fact. The Witnesses of the Resurrection. Those at Corinth Who Denied the Resurrection. The Apostles Then False Witnesses. Our Faith Vain. Death in Adam, but Life in Christ. The Resurrection Body. The Victory Over Death.*

This chapter is devoted to the resurrection from the dead. Among the various false doctrines which had crept into the church at Corinth, composed of those who had so recently been heathen, and who had so much to unlearn, was one that the resurrection of the soul from sin to a new life; that this resurrection was already past in the case of those converted ([2 Tim. 2:18](#)), and that a resurrection after death was impossible. The doctrine of the resurrection was absurd, according to the Grecian ideas ([Acts 17:32](#)), and “some” were infusing this kind of skepticism into the church at Corinth. It is likely that the letter ([7:1](#)) of the church asked some questions which called out this remarkable chapter. The epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, written about the beginning of the second century, refers to these freethinkers.

1, 2. I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you. He states the fundamentals of that gospel as the basis of the argument he is about to make. That gospel was common ground, for they received it and still professed it. **2. By which, also, ye are saved.** Are in a saved state unless you have forgotten the gospel preached and departed from it; that is, unless their **faith is vain**, which he shows would be the case if there was no resurrection. Observe the tact with which he first presents facts conceded by all the disciples, and upon these builds an impregnable argument. He next states those facts.

3–11. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received ([Acts 18:8](#)). Note the three facts which Paul declares to be the gospel, or the facts on which it rests; viz: the death, the burial, and the resurrection. The facts Paul received by revelation ([Gal. 1:12](#)) as well as from men. **Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.** The [fifty-third chapter of Isaiah](#) is especially exact in the outlines of our Lord's suffering. He quotes it in [Luke 22:37](#). **4. That he was buried and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures.** Paul himself quotes [Ps. 16:10](#) as predicting the resurrection. See [Acts 13:35](#). **5. That he was seen of Cephas.** He now gives the proof of these facts. The women saw Christ before Peter Cephas, but Paul names the witnesses who would carry most weight to the Corinthians. For the appearance to Peter, see [Luke 24:34](#). **Then of the twelve.** See [Matt. 28:17](#) and [John 20:19, 25](#). **6. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.** No other account of this appearance is recorded. It is probable that it took place in Galilee where Christ repeatedly directed the disciples to gather. It is possible that [Matt. 28:16](#) refers to it. Paul had



no doubt seen some of “the five hundred brethren,” “the greater part” of whom were still alive when he wrote. **7. After that he was seen by James.** James, the Lord’s brother, not James the apostle. This James was prominent, when Paul wrote, as the chief bishop at Jerusalem ([Acts 15:13](#); [Acts 21:18](#)) and the author of the epistle of James. James, the apostle, had been killed by Herod ([Acts 12:2](#)). **Then of all the apostles.** See [Luke 24:50](#). **8. Last of all he was seen by me.** See [Acts 9:4](#). **9. For I am the least of the apostles.** As far as human worth is concerned, not fit to be called an apostle. He could never forget that he had been a persecutor. **10. But by the grace of God I am what I am.** Not by his own merit, which he considered so small, but by God’s grace he had been enabled to do a more abundant work than any other apostle. **11. Whether it be I, or they.** I and all the apostles preach the same gospel of a risen Lord and this you accepted when you believed. Their faith was built on the resurrection.

12–19. How say some . . . that there is no resurrection of the dead. These seemed to admit that Christ was raised, but denied the resurrection of others. He now shows that if Christ be raised the general resurrection must follow as a result. **13. If there be . . . then is Christ not risen.** If persons once dying cannot be raised, as these false teachers say, then Christ could not have risen. **14. Then is our preaching vain.** For in that case we have preached what is false, and you have believed it, so that **your faith is vain.** **15. We are found false witnesses of God.** In that case we have declared that God did what he never did do. **17. If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain.** In that case he is not the Savior. He is a dead man, who could not even save himself. Such a one has no power to pardon sins, and **ye are yet in your sins.** **18. Then they which are fallen asleep, etc.** All the Christians who had died had fallen into eternal sleep. There is hope, in that case, only in this life; no hope of immortality. **19. If in this life, only, we have hope in Christ.** If there is no life beyond, no hope of it, then Christians who deny themselves in this life and endure persecutions and sufferings for the sake of eternal life, are of all men the most miserable. They “lose life” and gain no eternal life. Such are the consequences of this false belief.

20–28. But now is Christ risen. This is certain. Paul had seen the risen Lord. So had many other credible witnesses. But since he is risen, the resurrection of his disciples must follow. **He is the first fruits** of those who have slept in death. On the morrow after the first Sabbath of the passover a sheaf of the first fruits of the barley harvest was “waved before the Lord” ([Lev. 23:10–16](#)) as a pledge of the harvest to come. So on the morning after the first Sabbath of the passover, Christ, the first fruits arose and appeared living, “the first fruits” of the great harvest of souls gathered into eternal life. **21. Since by man came death.** Man, the first man, sinned, and death came upon his race, because in him the race had sinned. **By man, also, came the resurrection.** By Christ, the Son of Man. **22. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive, etc.** All the race in Adam became subject to death; so in Christ all the race shall be raised from the dead to appear at the bar of eternal judgment.

The passage does not affirm the final salvation of all, but the final resurrection of all. There is a “resurrection of the just and of the unjust.” **23. But each in his own order.** In his own rank or division. The first order or division is Christ. The second division is “they that are Christ’s,” who will be raised at his coming. The time of the third division, the wicked, is not named, but hinted at in the beginning of the next verse (verse 24). “All that are in the grave shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.” [John 5:28, 29](#). This is what Paul teaches here. **24. Then cometh the end.** The end follows soon after the resurrection of the saints. **When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God.** See [verse 28](#). When Christ’s work is accomplished he places all in the Father’s hands. **25. For he must reign.** He is reigning now, and will continue to reign until he has conquered all his enemies. He is not waging a contest for a kingdom, as some contend, but will give up the kingdom when the contest is over and the final victory won. **All enemies.** All the wicked opposers, human and supernatural; also sin and death. All must be overthrown. **26. The last enemy ... is death.** See [Rev. 20:12–14](#). The order there of closing events is the resurrection, the judgment, and the casting of Death and Hell (hades—the grave) into the lake of fire. **27. For he put all things under his feet.** Quoted from [Psalm 8:6](#); a statement that Christ is Lord of all and that God has subjected all to him. **He is excepted who, etc.** God gave Christ the power, and hence he is excepted. The Father is not subject to the Son. **28. When all things have been subjected.** When the world is subdued to Christ. **Then shall the son also himself be subjected.** Then, as his work is done, he will give up the kingdom to the Father ([verse 24](#)). Then Christ will give up the seals of office.

29–34. Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead? Paul again returns to the argument for the resurrection. This passage is difficult, and has received almost as many interpretations as there have been commentators. Some have held that there was a custom of baptizing living persons for the benefit of persons who had died without baptism. Had that custom existed, Paul would have rebuked it. It did arise afterwards, as an abuse from the misinterpretation of this passage, among the followers of Cerinthus, and, in our times, of Joseph Smith. I will try to make clear its meaning: (1) All the Corinthians were baptized ([Acts 18:8](#)). (2) Their baptism was a “planting” in the likeness of the burial of Christ, and in the “likeness of his resurrection” ([Rom. 6:4, 5](#)). They were in, and raised from, a watery tomb. (3) Their baptism in the likeness of the death and resurrection of Christ was in hope of their own resurrection from the dead through Christ’s resurrection. (*Huper Nekroon*, for, or on account of the dead, with the exception of resurrection from the dead.) But if Christ has not risen, and the dead rise not, this memorial and emblematic burial has no meaning. “Why, then, are they baptized for the dead?” that is, for the sake of their own resurrection from the dead. This interpretation harmonizes better with Paul’s argument than any I have seen. **30. Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour?** What motive, if there is no hope

beyond, can we apostles have for placing ourselves in constant peril by preaching the resurrection? **31. I protest, ... I die daily.** I am in daily peril of death. **32. If, after the manner of men.** Speaking humanly. **I fought with beasts at Ephesus.** Encountered furious opposition, like the rush of wild beasts. The allusion is hardly to be taken literally. If he had been thrown to wild beasts at Ephesus, some record would have been made of it in the record in Acts of his sojourn at Ephesus. Besides, a Roman citizen was preserved from that manner of death. **What doth it profit me?** All his sufferings are to no purpose if the dead rise not. **Let us eat, drink, etc.** All Epicurean maxim, a proverbial saying. **34. Awake to righteousness.** Such an error leads to Epicurean sensuality. Shake it off, that you sin not. **Some have no knowledge of God.** Such errors can only spring from ignorance of God and his power to raise men.

35–41. But some will say. But two difficulties are raised: How are the dead raised up? What kind of a body do they have? **36. Thou fool.** The idea is, slow of understanding. Why cannot you learn the lesson nature teaches? The grain that thou sowest has to die and be dissolved before it comes forth in a new life. So the body must die and be dissolved. **37. And that which thou sowest, etc.** We sow, not the plant that comes forth, but only a bare seed. **38. But God giveth it a body, etc.** To the seed planted God gives a new body, the stalk of wheat or corn, or whatever it may be. This new body bears no outward resemblance to the seed planted. **39. All flesh is not the same.** All the different animals have bodies unlike, and suited to their conditions. **40. There are also celestial bodies and ... terrestrial.** These, too, have forms and glories, unlike, and suited to their condition. For instance: **41. The sun** has its own peculiar form and glory. So of the moon, and the stars. The thought is, that to every condition is given a form suited to that condition. Now an application is made of this thought in [verse 42](#).

42–50. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown. Planted in burial in corruption. It goes to decay. **It is raised in incorruption.** With a new body suited to the new condition of existence, which is incorruptible; cannot decay. **43. It is sown in dishonor.** The dead body is repulsive, becomes offensive, and we bury it out of sight. **It is raised in glory.** Has a glorious beauty. **Sown in weakness.** All its powers exhausted. **Raised in power.** Endowed with heavenly energy. **44. Sown a natural body.** A fleshly body with animal life. **Raised a spiritual body.** A body whose life principle is the spirit. Not a fleshly body, but a spiritual existence. We cannot comprehend the nature of this existence, but we can know that it is not a body of flesh, bones, and blood; perhaps not more material than the forms of the angels. See [verse 50](#). **45. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul. Gen. 2:7.** From him came our natural life. **The last Adam, Christ, of whom Adam was a type. A quickening spirit.** By giving life to the dead, and imparting spiritual existence. **46. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual.** The first Adam came before the second Adam. The natural body which proceeds from the first Adam is our tabernacle first; after this life comes the “spiritual body,” which the second Adam gives. **47. The first man is of the earth.** Was fashioned out of the

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earth. [Genesis 2:7](#). **The second man is the Lord who came from heaven.** **48. As is the earthy.** All have earthly bodies like that of Adam. **As is the heavenly.** When we are raised to heaven we shall have spiritual bodies like Christ's, not like the body he received from Mary, but the glorious body in which he appears to saints and angels on high. Do we ask what body we shall have? It shall be like Christ's glorious body. See [Phil. 3:21](#). Not of flesh and blood, for ([verse 50](#)) **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.** If of flesh and blood, our bodies would be corruptible, and would not be suited to the eternal kingdom.

51–58. Behold, I tell you a mystery. I disclose to you a secret of which you have had, hitherto, no knowledge. **We shall not all sleep.** There will be some on the earth who shall be alive when Christ comes. **But we shall all be changed.** The living who meet Christ, as well as the dead who are raised up. All shall be made immortal and incorruptible. **52. In a moment.** The change will be instantaneous. **At the last trump.** See [1 Thess. 4:16](#). **The trumpet shall sound.** This signal for the close of all earthly things. See [Matt. 24:31](#). **53. For this incorruptible.** For this corruptible body must give place to the incorruptible body; the mortal frame to an immortal one. One must be “put off,” the other “put on.” See [2 Cor. 5:2](#). **54. Then shall be brought to pass the saying.** See [Isaiah 25:8](#). This is the final victory, the victory over death. **55. O death, where is thy sting?** This is quoted from [Hosea 13:14](#). It is here the triumphant shout of the apostle as he sees by faith the final victory over death. **56. The sting of death is sin.** It is sin that gives death his power to sting and destroy. See [Rom. 6:23](#). **The power of sin is the law.** The law, broken, is sin, and when this law is consciously broken the conscience is wounded. When a moral law is broken, moral death follows. If there was no law of any kind, there would be no sin, no wounded consciences, no moral death. **57. Thanks be to God.** For the victory over sin and death through Christ. **58. Therefore ... be ye steadfast, unmoveable.** Firm as a rock, devoted to Christian life, for their “faith is not vain.” Their **labor is not vain in the Lord.** Jesus Christ is The Resurrection and the Life. The hope of immortality hath sure foundations.



Chapter XVI

Concluding Words

Summary — *The Collections for the Saints. The First Day of the Week. His Work at Ephesus. Timothy Commended to Them. Various Friendly Admonitions. Closing Salutations.*

1–4. Concerning the collection for the saints. The collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem is referred to more than once in Acts. It was first called for when “a great dearth” came upon the land ([Acts 11:28–30](#)). The church at Jerusalem had been impoverished by the great liberality in its first years, and by the persecutions which followed. See also [Acts 24:17](#). References to this collection are found in [Rom. 15:26](#); [2 Cor. 8:1, 2](#); [2 Cor. 9:1, 2](#). **To the churches of Galatia.** The directions to the churches of Galatia on this subject have not been preserved. Such hints as this and the reference to a lost letter to the church of Corinth ([5:9](#)), show that all that Paul wrote has not come down to us. **2. Upon the first day of the week.** This shows that the first day of the week was set apart and regarded by the church. [Acts 20:7](#), shows that the church assembled to break bread on that day. **Let every one of you lay by him in store.** The usual view is that every one was directed to set aside something on the Lord's day and keep it until Paul came. This view is sanctioned by the translations and most of the commentators. Macknight renders: “On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay somewhat by itself, putting it into the treasury.” I believe Macknight is right; for (1) there were to be no collections when Paul came. That implies that the money was to be placed in the treasury. Otherwise, it would have to be collected. (2) *Thesaurizoon*, rendered in the Common Version “in store,” is a present participle, meaning literally, “putting into the thesaurus,” or “treasury.” (3) All church history testifies that the early church took up weekly collections on the first day of the week. See Pliny's Letter to the Emperor Trajan. (4) We know, from [Acts 21:7](#), and from all early church history, that the church met on the first day of the week. It only remains to add that *par' heauto*, rendered by the translators “by him,” is rendered with equal correctness, “by itself.” Its form is that of the neuter reflexive pronoun. **As God hath prospered him.** Each week every one is to give according to his ability. **3. Whomsoever ye shall approve.** The church should select its own messengers, giving them letters as credentials. He lets the Corinthians choose the bearers of their own bounty. **4. If it be meet that I go.** He did not then know whether he would go or not. In the outcome he did go ([Acts 19:21](#); [20:3](#))

5–9. I will come unto you, etc. He outlines his plans. He probably wrote in the spring. He intends to visit the churches in Macedonia, and then, perhaps, winter at Corinth. This he did, spending three months ([Acts 20:2, 3](#)). **6. That ye may set me forward on my journey.** Give him aid, and perhaps company in going elsewhere. **7. For I will not now see you by the way.** He will not sail direct across the Ægean Sea to Corinth, and go from thence to

Macedonia. He would have to hurry away from Corinth too soon, unless he went to Macedonia first. **8. I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.** He was then writing before Pentecost, which came in the latter part of the spring. **9. For a great and effectual door is opened.** His ministry in Ephesus was very successful. See [Acts, chapter 19](#). **There are many adversaries.** Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen had probably begun their agitation.

10–12. Now if Timothy come, etc. We learn ([Acts 19:22](#)) that Timothy and Erastus had been sent to Macedonia, and Timothy ([1 Cor. 4:17](#)) was instructed to stop at Corinth on the way. Paul asks that he be kindly received. **11. Let no man despise him.** He was a young man. See [1 Tim. 4:12](#). **I expect him with the brethren.** That he came with them, as expected, is seen from [2 Cor. 1:1](#). **12. As touching our brother Apollos.** Apollos was then at Ephesus when Paul wrote. **I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren.** Possibly with Timothy and Erastus. See note on verse 10. For some reason Apollos was averse to visiting Corinth at that time.

13, 14. Watch ye. Be on the watch; a matter very needful in as gay and corrupt a city as Corinth. **14. Let all ... be done in love.** Compare [chapter 13](#). This would prevent the divisions which he had rebuked in [chapters 1–4](#).

15–20. I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas). Paul had baptized the household of Stephanas. See [1 Cor. 1:16](#). They were his first converts at Corinth. **16. That ye submit yourselves to such.** In view of the fact that they were devoted to the ministry. **17. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas.** Stephanas is named in [1 Cor. 1:16 and above in verse 15](#). The other two are not named elsewhere. These three doubtless brought to Paul the letter referred to in [7:1](#), and probably carried back the present letter. **19. The churches of Asia salute you.** Of the Roman province of Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital. Seven of the churches of “Asia” are named in the Book of Revelation. **Aquila and Priscilla salute you.** We first meet this excellent pair at Corinth ([Acts 18:2](#)); afterwards they had gone to Ephesus ([Acts 18:26](#)). **With the church in their house.** The early church had no church buildings, and would be compelled to meet often in private houses. The house of Aquila and Priscilla was such a place of meeting. See note on [Romans 16:23](#). **20. Greet ye one another with a holy kiss.** See note on [Romans 16:16](#).

21–24. The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand. Paul's letters were written by an amanuensis ([Rom. 16:22](#)), but he always added a salutation in his own hand as a proof of genuineness ([2 Thess. 3:17](#)). [2 Thess. 2:2](#), implies that spurious letters were circulated. **22. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema.** That is, accursed. **Maranatha.** This means, “Our Lord cometh.” It is likely that he means, “If any church member love not, etc.” He is not speaking of the outside world.



**The Second Epistle of Paul to the
Corinthians**

Introduction to Second Corinthians

The second Letter to the Church at Corinth is the supplement of the first. It is due to the same circumstances which called out the first, and to the effects that were produced in the church at Corinth by the receipt of the first letter. We can almost be thankful for the disorders which occasioned these two letters, not only on account of the rich fund of practical instruction which they contain, but on account of the picture which they present of a Gentile Church, composed of those who had so recently been heathen, in the first century of Christianity. They recall us to the immorality which had to be overcome, the obstacles in the way of a Christian life, and the mighty triumph which the gospel achieved over human nature itself in establishing the spiritual reign of Christ where the sensuality of heathen worship had before prevailed.

The first letter was written at Ephesus in the spring of a.d. 57; the second was written a few months later at some point in Macedonia where Paul had journeyed to visit the churches of that province before extending his tour to Corinth. We learn from the [nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Acts](#) that not long after the first letter was written, Demetrius and his fellow-craftsman aroused the terrible riot at Ephesus in which Paul so nearly lost his life ([2 Cor. 1:8–10](#)), and that immediately after, at the urgency of the brethren, he started on his long contemplated journey to visit the churches of Europe. He had expected to meet Titus at Troas with word from Corinth concerning the effect of his first letter and was greatly disappointed when he did not find him there ([2 Cor. 2:13](#)). Hence, although a fine opening for planting the gospel was presented, he pressed on to Macedonia. Here he met Titus, who was on his way to him, and was greatly rejoiced when he learned that his letter had been well received and his commands obeyed ([2 Cor. 7:5–7](#)). Still the circumstances required another letter before his coming and the second letter was written, not only to express his joy over the better state of things in the church, but in order to convey further counsels.

This Epistle naturally divides itself into three parts. In the *first* part, embracing [chapters 1–7](#), the Apostle portrays his feelings over the condition of matters in Corinth, his anxiety, and his relief after the coming of Titus; in [chapters 8, 9](#), the *second* part, he takes up the great collection of the Gentile churches for the poor at Jerusalem on which he had so deeply set his heart; in the *third* part, [chapters 10–13](#), he repels the insinuations of Judaizing teachers who were seeking, not only in Corinth but everywhere, to destroy Paul's influence so as to bring the churches under the bondage of the Jewish law. In this section he presents those wonderful details concerning what his service of Christ had cost him in earthly sufferings. The whole letter is written in the expectation of soon being at Corinth, an expectation which we know from [Acts, chapter 20](#) was realized.

Chapter I

Paul's Anxiety Over the Corinthian Church

Summary — *Salutations. Paul's Recent Danger in Asia. His Conscientious Sincerity in Preaching the Gospel at Corinth. An Answer to Those Who Criticised His Change of Plans in Coming to Corinth.*

1–7. Paul ... and Timothy our brother. See notes on [1 Cor. 1:1](#). Timothy had been sent to Corinth along with the First Letter (see [1 Cor. 4:17](#)), and had now returned to Paul. As he had so recently been on a special mission to Corinth, he joins in the salutation. **With all the saints ... in the whole of Achaia.** That is, in the whole of Greece, Achaia being the Roman name of the province. Corinth was the Roman capital. Hence it seems that other churches already existed in the province. We know of two, Athens and Cenchreæ. See [Rom. 16:1](#). **2. Grace be to you, etc.** See note on [1 Cor. 1:3](#). **4. Who comforteth us in all our tribulation.** He who had tribulation and has learned the comfort of faith in God is best fitted to comfort others. **5. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us.** Christ suffers with his saints when they suffer for him. See [Acts 9:4, 5](#). Hence, when Paul endured affliction for Christ, “the sufferings of Christ abounded” in him. But Christ comforts those who thus suffer ([John 16:2–4](#)). Christ suffers in the person of his servants, but forgets not his promise to be with them always. **6. And whether we be afflicted.** These words concerning suffering are introductory to an allusion to what he had so recently suffered at Ephesus ([verse 8](#)). His example under affliction would help them in affliction to endure, and his deliverance would fill them with hope of a like deliverance.

8–11. We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble. I believe, in opposition to many commentators, that the great trial at Ephesus, caused by Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen, is referred to. See [Acts, chapter 19](#). **Asia.** The Roman province of Asia, embracing the western part of Asia Minor. Ephesus was its capital. **We despaired even of life.** It is evident that the record in Acts does not give all the dangers that threatened Paul in Ephesus. His precipitate departure from Ephesus immediately after the riot shows that he was in danger. See [Acts 20:1](#). He was not the man to exaggerate his danger. The allusions here, and in [1 Cor. 15:31, 32](#), show that he met with extreme peril. **9. We had the sentence of death in ourselves.** The meaning seems to be that he felt that the time had come for him to die, and his reprieve from death was, as it were, a resurrection from death by the providence of God. **10. Who delivered us out of so great a death.** This points to some remarkable peril and signal deliverance. It is probable that [Acts 20:30, 31](#), hints at it. **11. Ye also helping, etc.** He recognizes the aid he had received from the prayers of the Corinthian church raised on his behalf. The prayers of **many persons** secured the **gift** of his deliverance. Hence **many** could give **thanks** for his escape.



12–14. For our rejoicing is this. Rather, as in the Revision, “our glorying.” He could boast that in his conduct everywhere, and at Corinth as well, he had acted with purity of purpose, integrity, and under the guidance of God. He appeals to his singleness of purpose, because a charge had been made against him, which he answers below ([verses 15–19](#)). **13. For we write none other things.** The charge seems to have been that he was ambiguous in what he wrote ([verse 17](#)). Hence he insists that he writes plainly, and that they read, understand, and accept what he writes. **14. As also ye have acknowledged us in part.** All but a faction acknowledged him as an apostle and rejoiced in his labors.

15–24. In this confidence. Of their acknowledgment of his apostleship and rejoicing in him. **I was minded to come unto you before.** Before going to Macedonia, sailing straight across from Ephesus to Corinth. **That you might have a second benefit.** Two visits, one as Paul went to Macedonia, and one on his return. All this is explained in [verse 16](#). **17. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness?** Some of his detractors at Corinth had urged from his change of plans that he was fickle, or that he made ambiguous promises, and was ready to break them. His original plan was probably conveyed in the letter which has not come down to us ([1 Cor. 5:9](#)). In [1 Cor. 16:5](#), he declared his change of plans. **Do I purpose according to the flesh?** In a carnal way. So that there should be a readiness to turn a **yea** into a **nay**; that is, no fixed purpose to do as promised. **18. Our word ... was not yea and nay.** That is, ambiguous and unreliable. **19. For the Son of God, etc.** The idea is that there was no vacillation and uncertainty about Paul's preaching when he was in Corinth. **In him was yea.** There was positive affirmation. **20. For all the promises of God in him are yea.** They are sure and positive. **21. Now he that stablisheth us with you in Christ.** He gives us our stability so that our gospel is yea, sure and steadfast. **And hath anointed us.** With the unction of the Holy Spirit ([1 John 2:20, 27](#)). **22. Sealed us.** The seal was anciently the mark of ownership. In [Eph. 1:13 and 4:30](#), it is said that the saints are sealed by the Holy Spirit. They are thus marked as Christ's. So here the sealing is by **the earnest of the Spirit**. **23. Moreover ... to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.** He delayed coming in order to give time for his First Epistle to have effect and bring repentance. Had he come before they repented, his coming must have been in severity. **24. Not that we have dominion over your faith.** Not that he would exercise a lordship. How different this is from the arrogant style of a Catholic bishop! Paul wishes rather to be a helper. **For by faith ye stand.** Faith in Christ. He hath dominion. Every disciple is accountable to him. Not even an apostle can come between.

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Chapter II

The Repentance of the Corinthians

Summary —*Paul's Affliction Over the Sins at Corinth. His Rebukes Caused by His Love for Them. The Excommunication of the Offender. He to be Forgiven on Repentance. Paul's Uneasiness at Troas. His Departure to Macedonia.*

1–4. I would not come again to you in heaviness. See [verse 23 of last chapter](#). He desired not to come to rebuke, but to rejoice with them. This verse seems to point to a time when he had come in “heaviness.” It is generally admitted now by commentators that he did make such a visit, probably while preaching at Ephesus, running across the sea, a voyage of two or three days, for a short visit. This visit seems to be proved by [2 Cor. 12:14, 21, and 13:1](#). See Conybeare and Howson, Vol. II, p. 27. **2. For if I make you sorry, etc.** The thought is, your sorrow, because rebuked, gladdens me on account of your repentance. **3. I wrote this same.** What he had written in [1 Cor. 16:5](#) concerning the delay of his coming. He delayed, having confidence that they would reform, so that all could rejoice together. **4. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote.** The First Epistle, which rebuked their divisions and immorality. He wrote sharply, but in great sorrow, not to **grieve** them, but to demonstrate his love by his assiduous care of them and rebuke of their sins.

5–8. If any have caused grief. The reference in this indirect way is to the incestuous person named in [1 Cor. 5:1](#). It was not Paul, only in part, that this man had injured and grieved, but the whole church. **Overcharge you all.** Lay too heavy charges on you. **6. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment.** The excommunication of the offender ([1 Cor. 5:4, 5](#)). **Inflicted by the many.** Literally, by the majority. This shows that the whole church took action, and implies that there were dissenters. The command of Paul was endorsed by the action of the church. So ought the decision of the officers of a congregation always be submitted for approval. **7. Ye ought rather to forgive him.** The Apostle sternly commands excommunication of the offender, but tenderly enjoins forgiveness of the penitent sinner. **8. I beseech you that to confirm your love toward him.** The object of the discipline was to save ([1 Cor. 5:5](#)). Since it had had the desired effect, the offender should be restored.

9–11. For to this end also did I write. One object of his writing was to test their obedience. He commanded positively in [1 Corinthians, chapter 5](#). **10. To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also.** As your excommunication of the man was my act, so also your restoration of him will be my act. **Forgave I it in the person of Christ.** As Paul acted as the servant of Christ, under his direct orders, his official acts represented in the Master. **11. Lest Satan should get an advantage of us.** Satan would gladly have kept the sinful man in the church; since he has repented, Satan would gladly have the church keep him out.

12–17. When I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel. See [Acts 16:8](#) and [20:5–12](#). In Acts two visits to Troas are named, but the one alluded to here is omitted. Troas was then a large city, situated not far from the site of old Troy, and almost within sight of Europe. There is now a small village there and extensive ruins. See notes in Acts. **A door was opened.** An opportunity for the gospel. Though he did not tarry now, a little later we find a church there ([Acts 20:5](#)). **13. I had no rest in spirit.** Because he had expected to meet Titus there and to get news concerning the state of affairs at Corinth. Hence he went on soon, hoping to meet him on the way to Macedonia. **14. Now thanks be to God.** He did meet him there, and heard news that filled him with thankfulness. **To triumph in Christ.** A Roman triumph was given because of victory; God always gave the victory, through Christ, in the end. He had feared that Corinth would be an exception. **Maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge.** The figure is that of a sacrifice. A sweet-smelling savor was diffused by the offerings. So, through them everywhere, the knowledge of God was made known, and was grateful to the saved. **15. A sweet savor of Christ.** This fragrant odor of the gospel was diffused both among the saved and the unsaved. **16. To the one we are the savor of death unto death.** In the triumphal procession, alluded to in [verse 14](#), the captives were led, and when it closed were put to death. The fragrant odors of the incense, flowers and sacrifices, were a savor to them of their approaching death. So the savor of the gospel is a savor, a sign, an intimation of death to those who reject it. **And to the other the savor of life.** This savor to the saved is a sign of life, and leads to eternal life. **Who is sufficient for these things?** He seems to exclaim in astonishment that such results should follow human preaching. **17. We are not as many which corrupt the word of God.** The Greek figure is taken from the tavern-keepers who adulterate the wine they offer for sale. There were those at Corinth, Judaizing teachers, who adulterated the gospel with ingredients of Judaism. These are the “false brethren” ([11:26](#)) with whom his whole ministry was a struggle. On the contrary, he and his fellow-preachers spoke the words of genuine sincerity and with a sense of responsibility to God.



Chapter III

The Two Covenants Compared

Summary —*Paul's Letters of Commendation. The New Covenant and the Covenant of the Letter; or the Law and the Gospel. The First Written on Tables of Stone; Is a Ministration of Death; Was Glorious, But Is Done Away. That Which Remaineth, the New Covenant, Far More Glorious. The Veil Over the Face of Moses a Type of Blindness of Israel. The Transforming Power of the Gospel.*

1–6. Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Paul had just spoken of his triumphs. Opposers, such as were in Corinth, might insist that he was boasting. **Need we ... epistles of commendation?** No doubt there is a reference made to letters which the Judaizing teachers, who had come to Corinth, carried. They might need them, but he did not. **2. Ye are our epistle.** The church itself owed its existence to him. He could point to his work, to the disciples, as his letter of commendation. He was known by his fruits. **Written in our hearts.** When he looked into his heart, he saw them enshrined there, and felt that he needed no commendation to them. **3. Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ.** A beautiful conception. Christ is the author of the letter; Paul was the penman; the message was written on the fleshly tablets of the hearts of the brethren at Corinth. The means employed by Christ to convey the message was the Spirit which filled Paul. All men who could see the transformation effected in the lives of the Corinthians could read the epistle. **Not in tables of stone.** Instead of naming parchment, he mentions tables of stone, because he is about to compare the Old Covenant, of which its chief part, the Decalogue, was written on stone ([Exod. 24:12](#)) with the New Covenant. **4. Such trust have we, etc.** That the church of Corinth is such an epistle as has just been described. **5. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves.** He would claim no credit for the work at Corinth, as though it was his own, for all his strength was of God. **6. Who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament.** God gave Paul and his fellow-ministers their “sufficiency” ([verse 5](#)), who had made them able ministers of the gospel. **New Testament.** The New Covenant, the Covenant of Christ. This is here contrasted with the Old Covenant, the Jewish. One is the Law; the other the Gospel. Compare [Hebrews, chapter 8](#). **Not of the letter, but of the Spirit.** The first, the law, was written (by letters written and engraven on stones, hence of the letter); the gospel is the dispensation of the Spirit. **The letter killeth.** The law. It condemns all who do not obey its commands, but could make no man perfect. The law places under the sentence of death. See notes on [Romans 7:9, 10](#). **The Spirit giveth life.** The gospel bestows eternal life.

7–11. But if the ministration of death. The Old Covenant, the law is so called, because it places under the sentence of death. **Written and engraven on stones.** Only the Decalogue was written on stones. It was the central and most important part of the Old Covenant. Let

it be noted that when Paul speaks of the law, or Old Testament, he includes the Decalogue, and does not mean simply the ceremonial law, as some have urged ([Exod. 34:1](#)). **Was glorious.** So glorious that even the face of Moses was made to shine as he carried down the tables of the law ([Exod. 34:29](#)) so that he had to veil his face. **Which glory was to be done away.** It was only temporary. **8. How shall not rather the ministration of the Spirit be with glory?** The gospel, the ministration of life, must have still greater glory. It has a glory now, and will have a fuller glory in the day of the Lord. **9. If the ministration of condemnation.** See [verse 7](#), the law, including the Decalogue. **The ministration of righteousness.** The gospel. The first condemns; the second justifies men with the righteousness of Christ. With such transcendent blessings, it far exceeds in glory the Old Covenant. **10. For even that which was made glorious.** The Old Covenant. As the glory of the moon and stars fades out before the glory of the sun, so its glory disappears in a comparison with the exceeding glory of the gospel. **11. For if that which is done away was glorious.** That which was glorious in the Old Covenant, or law. It includes the Decalogue ([@verse 7](#)). The whole is done away. This clear and emphatic statement is made on account of the Judaizing teachers of whom we find many traces in the two Letters to the Corinthian church. It is clearly asserted that the Old Covenant, “the ministration of death written and engraven on stones,” is done away. We are “not under the law, but under grace.” Compare [Hebrews 8:13](#). But if that which was done away is glorious, much more is that glorious which abides forever.

12–18. Seeing then we have such hope. The blessed gospel hope. With such a hope he has boldness to declare the gospel truths boldly and without reserve. **13. And not as Moses, etc.** The veil Moses put over his face ([Exod. 34:33](#)) is used by Paul as a symbol to show that all was not made plain in the law of Moses, and that there is still blindness on the part of Israel. **Could not steadfastly look to the end, etc.** The brightness with which the face of Moses shone was to be done away. The veil prevented the children of Israel from observing its fading glory. This typifies the fact that they should not see the end of the law itself which was to be abolished. **14. But their minds were blinded.** So blinded that they cannot see to this day that it has been set aside by the New Covenant, and that its types, figures and shadows find their fulfillment in Christ. **Which veil is done away in Christ.** Meyer, with many other able critics, contends that the proper translation of the latter part of the verse is: “It not being disclosed that the Old Covenant is taken away in Christ.” So also Conybeare and Howson. This is no doubt the meaning. **15. When Moses is read, etc.** The law, or Old Testament. They read it in their synagogues, but do not understand it. The trouble, too, is in their **heart**. They are blinded by their prejudices. **16. When it shall turn to the Lord.** The heart. Then the veil of blindness will fall away so that they will see clearly. **17. Now the Lord is that Spirit.** The New Covenant is of “the Spirit.” See [verses 3, 6, 8](#). But turning to the Lord is entering into this covenant, for the “Lord is that Spirit.” The Spirit is Christ's presence with us. **There is liberty.** He who comes into this covenant of the Spirit is freed

from the bondage of the law. **18. But we all.** All Christians. **With open face.** Without a veil. **Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.** Looking to Jesus and beholding in his covenant, in our hearts and minds as in a mirror, and contemplating his glory. **Are changed.** To look to Jesus has a transforming power. If we gaze upon him, we will become like him. As Moses unveiled before the Lord shone with the glory of the Lord, so we shall reflect the glory of Christ, and show forth his likeness. **From glory to glory.** Developing from one stage of glory to a higher one. **Even as by the Spirit of the Lord.** Rather, “The Lord the Spirit,” as in the Revision. [Verse 17](#) declares the Lord is the Spirit. Our glory is from the Lord the Spirit. The figure here is a very beautiful one. By gazing upon the Lord we become like him and show forth his glory.



Chapter IV

Glory Through Suffering

Summary —*Paul's Sincerity and Earnestness in the Ministry. The Eyes of Some Blinded by the God of the World. Troubles and Persecution Redound to the Glory of God. Paul's Sufferings for the Gospel's Sake. Exposed to Death in Order to Carry Life. The Present Affliction Working Glory. The Unseen Things Eternal.*

1–4. Seeing we have this ministry. The ministry of the Spirit and of Life; of the new covenant, described in the preceding chapter. **As we have received mercy.** Christ, though he was a persecutor, had mercy on him and called him to the ministry. Hence, he was under obligations to “faint not,” though meeting trouble and persecution. **2. But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty.** This glorious ministry was under no “veil” and was not hidden. Its ministers must turn away from all dishonest practices or teachings. Paul intends to rebuke, by his example, the false and deceitful teachers who sought to bring the Corinthians under the old Jewish covenant. **Nor handling the word of God deceitfully.** His enemies not only resorted to calumny, but perverted the word of the Lord by adulterating it with the elements of the law, of tradition, and with false ideas of Christ. See [Gal. 6:12, 13](#). **Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.** He presented the truth and made his appeal directly to the human conscience, that monitor which God has given to all men. **3. But if our gospel be hid.** He has shown ([3:16](#)) that there is no veil in Christ, and declared ([verse 2](#)) that he preached not things hidden by a veil. But the Judaizing opposers replied that his gospel was as much veiled to them as he said that the law was veiled to the Jews. He replies that it is only veiled to the lost, who are blinded by the god of this world. In order to understand the allusions the reader must keep in mind Paul's life-long contest with Judaism in the church. See notes on [Acts 15:1](#), and [Gal. 2:4](#). **4. The god of this world.** See [John 12:31, 40](#); [Phil. 3:19](#). Satan is called the prince of this world, and the god of this world. By his devices he blinds the eyes of men so they should not see the light of gospel. **Image of God.** He who would see God may see him in the face of Christ. [John 14:9](#).

5, 6. We preach not ourselves. We have no self-seeking sins in preaching, but only seek to preach **Christ Jesus, the Lord.** We know that Paul's preaching was perverted. He called on the disciples to follow him as he followed Christ ([1 Cor. 11:1; 4:16; 7:6](#)), and they asserted that he preached himself. Instead he made himself “the servant of all” ([1 Cor. 9:19](#)) for Christ's sake. **6. For God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness.** [Gen. 1:3](#). **Hath shined in our hearts.** By bringing to the light of the gospel. **The light of the knowledge, etc.** Knowledge is light. The glory of God is revealed in his Son, who hath shown for the divine excellency, tenderness and love.



7–9. We have this treasure in earthen vessels. The treasure of the knowledge of Christ and of the ministry of the gospel of life. Perhaps his enemies pointed to his sorrows as a proof that he was not so favored as a minister of Christ. A splendid treasure was placed in a fragile, cheap earthen vessel. Then it was manifest that the great work wrought was the **power of God, not of us**, the apostles and evangelists. **8, 9. We are troubled on every side.** In verses 8 and 9 are four pairs of contrasts which should the frailty of the instruments and the greatness of the power: (1) “pressed on every side” (Revision), but not hemmed in by the pressure; (2) in apparently overwhelming difficulties, but never reduced to despair; (3) persecuted by their enemies, but not forsaken and delivered over to them; (4) overthrown and cast to the earth, but even then rescued from the enemy, standing over them prostrate, so that they are not destroyed.

10–12. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. Always bearing sufferings and danger of death, as the Lord died, so that we may carry the life which the Lord gives to others. In constant suffering and peril of death the apostle was the messenger of life. **11. For we which live are always delivered unto death.** This verse more fully explains the meaning of [verse 10](#). The ministers of the gospel were always exposed to death, and at their cost bore the precious charge of life to men. **12. Death working in us.** The ever present image of death, threatening the gospel ministers, was the means of life to the saved.

13–15. We having the same spirit of faith. Yet in spite of all the sufferings and peril described, we preach right on. Like the psalmist ([Ps. 116:10](#)) we are moved by the power of faith; **we also believe, therefore we speak.** **14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus.** Assured that we shall all be raised and stand together before the Lord, we preach. This is our faith. If we die for Christ God will raise us. **15. For all things are for your sakes.** Our suffering, our dying daily, and the glorious hope, and the result of these things is that the thanksgiving of multitudes of the saved should redound to the glory of God.

16–18. For which cause. Moved by faith, hope, the love of souls and desire for the glory of God, **we faint not**; do not for a moment give way and relax our efforts. **Though our outward man perish.** Though our body waste away under the trials, or is threatened with death. **Yet the inward man.** His spiritual strength is constantly renewed by Christ. The “inward man” is the immaterial nature in contrast with the material body. See [Rom. 7:22](#) and [Eph. 3:16](#). **17. For our light affliction.** Great as his afflictions were, he calls them light in view of the glorious reward they will bring; continual as they were, he speaks of them as **but for a moment** in view of eternity. They were the more easily borne for they **work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.** Bearing the cross weaves an eternal crown. Sorrows endured for Christ's sake prepare for eternal joys. **18. While we look not at things which are seen, but, etc.** Our eyes are fixed on the unseen things beyond, the glory that the flesh cannot behold. Hence, we turn away from present afflictions as momentary, as belonging to the seen and the transient, and only regard them as adding to the weight of

our unseen, eternal joys. Our goal is beyond. **For the things which are seen are temporal.** All material things, and all that the world values, are perishing. All things of sense shall pass away; Cæsar's greatness, the might of Roman power, the strength of man, the glory of the magnificence of Corinth; even the visible heavens and the earth. **But the unseen things are eternal.** The things which the senses see not, but which faith reveals—God, heaven, the unseen spirit. Let the eye be turned upon the unseen, rather than the things of sense.



Chapter V

The House Not Made with Hands

Summary — *The Groaning for Deliverance. The Divine Clothing for the Soul Which Has Laid Aside Its Mortal Tenement. Absent From the Body, but Present with the Lord. Appearing Before the Judgment Seat. Dying with Christ. New Creatures. The Ministry of Reconciliation.*

1–4. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle. Paul has spoken of looking for the things that are unseen and eternal (4:18). He now describes the body as only a tent dwelling, a temporary abode, in which we are camping during a journey. If death should come and the body be dissolved, there is another dwelling for the redeemed, “the spiritual body” described in 1 Cor. 15:44, a heavenly and eternal body. To the saint, death is the exchange of the earthly tent dwelling for this eternal spiritual body. **2. For in this we groan.** While in this fragile, suffering earthly body, Paul longed for the deliverance from it and “for the house not made with hands,” the spiritual body. **Clothed upon.** The thought is that when the spirit leaves the mortal clay, it lays off an old and worn-out clothing, and is to be clothed upon, or invested in, its divine clothing. **3. If so be that, being clothed, we shall not be found naked.** This shall come to pass, provided the spirit is clothed with a spiritual body at the resurrection, and not disembodied or naked. This is an allusion to the errors so prevalent at Corinth which he had combated in 1 Cor. ch. 15. It was a Greek theory that when the spirit left the mortal body that it remained without a body, but Paul says: “If we too, clothed upon, shall not be without an immortal body.” See Meyer on this passage. Many hold that Paul's language is due to the belief that they would meet the Lord in the mortal body in that age at his speedy coming. This, I am sure, is a wrong interpretation. **4. For we that are in this tabernacle.** This tent dwelling for the journey. **Do groan, being burdened.** Groan for deliverance from it, because the burden is so heavy. **Not that we would be unclothed.** It is not that we wish to be freed from a body, but we wish a better one; to lay off the old raiment that we may be clothed upon with the heavenly raiment, the spiritual body, in order that “this mortal shall put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53).

5–9. He that wrought us for this self-same thing. Gave us this longing for immortality. God not only gave it, but **the earnest of the spirit**, a sure proof of the fulfillment of all that he has promised. **6. Therefore we are always confident.** Because of what is stated in verse 5. Paul knew, when danger threatened, that to be **in the body** was **to be absent from the Lord's** presence, and that if he was slain and thus left the body, he would go at once to the presence of the Lord. **7. For we walk by faith, not by sight.** It is by faith here that we see the Lord, though absent from him. **8. We are confident.** In the face of every peril, because we know that death, an absence from the body, would be **to be present with the Lord.** Note here the doctrine of the immaterial nature of the human spirit. It puts aside the body to be

clothed with a new garment. It is absent from the body but present with the Lord. The body is not essential to its conscious existence. It does not sleep because the body sleeps. To Paul, death meant to be present at once with Christ, leaving the body behind. He labored ([verse 9](#)) so that, whether **present** in the body or **absent** from it, he might be accepted with Christ.

10–13. For we must all appear before the judgment seat. This is a stimulus to labor so as to be accepted by Christ ([verse 9](#)). The object of this judgment is that he may reap the fruits of what he has done in the body. The language here implies that our probation ends with our earthly life. **11. Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord.** Fearing the Lord and accountable to him, he seeks to discharge his ministry by persuading men. See the Revision. **We are made manifest to God.** He sees our whole life and knows our motives as well as our deeds. **I trust also.** His life was known to God and approved. He hoped, too, that it was known to the saints at Corinth and that he had a witness in their conscience, in the effect of his preaching. **12. We commend not ourselves,** but rather gives them an opportunity of glorying over his work and life so that they can answer the false teachers who assail him. **13. If we are beside ourselves.** See [Acts 26:24](#). The same charge had probably been made at Corinth. If it were true, it was due to his zeal for God or to the power of God. If at other times he was the opposite, **sober**, it was all that he might calmly reason with them and win them. His trances, visions and revelations his enemies imputed to madness.

14–16. For the love of Christ constraineth us. It was the power that moved him in all his conduct. **That one died for all, therefore all died** (Revision). I thus judge that if Christ died for all, all in Christ have died with him to a life of sin. Baptized into his death we must be dead to sin. The [next verse](#) shows that this is the meaning. Compare [Rom. 6:3, 4, 6, 11](#) and [Gal. 5:4](#). **15. And he died for all, etc.** He died with this end in view, that those for whom he died and had life through him should not live for themselves, but for him who died for them. Thus Paul lived. His life was a consecrated life. **16. Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh.** As all have died to live new lives for Christ, they are not Jews and Gentiles; Romans, Greeks or Scythians, but all are Christians, not to be known as belonging to the old fleshly races longer. **Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh.** The Christ risen and sitting on the throne as our Lord is not in the flesh, and the Christ to whom the church adores is that risen Christ.

17–21. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Because, crucified with Christ ([Rom. 6:6](#)), buried into his death ([Rom. 6:4](#)), we have died with Christ ([verse 14](#)), and risen to walk in a new life ([Rom. 6:4](#)). The old life ended when we died and were buried. Born anew, we are new creatures who must live a new life. **All things are become new.** The affections, the motives, the thoughts, the hopes, the whole life. **18. And all things are of God.** These have all come from God through the gospel, **who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.** Before we were at variance with God, and disobedient. Through Christ we have been brought to love God, to love his will, and hence to obey him. We have been

changed, are new creatures. **The ministry of reconciliation.** The gospel, the object of which is to transform men, and to bring them to peace with God. **19. That God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.** This explains more fully the ministry of reconciliation. It was not God who was to be reconciled, but the world. In Christ it is offered peace and shown the love of God. The ministry of reconciliation is to persuade men to accept God's love and mercy, and to repent so that he can forgive their trespasses. **20. Then we are ambassadors.** We have God's message, are his authorized messengers, and speak for God, beseeching you for Christ, and in his name, to be **reconciled to God** by repentance and the obedience of faith. **21. Hath made him ... who knew no sin.** As a sinless substitute he suffered for our sins, that our sins might thus be atoned for, the law satisfied, and we be forgiven and accounted righteous. Since we die with Christ, in him we pay the penalty, and are justified.



Chapter VI

The Apostolic Ministry

Summary — *An Exhortation to Believers. The Blameless Ministry of Paul and His Fellow-Workers. Their Endurance of Trials. Their Unselfish Self-Denial. An Appeal for Greater Love. The Intimate Association With Unbelievers Forbidden. Saints the Temple of God.*

1–3. We then. Paul and Timothy especially (1:1), and other ministers associated with them. **As workers together.** Not only fellow-laborers, but workers with Christ. See [conclusion of last chapter](#). **That you receive not the grace of God in vain.** The grace (favor) of God meant is the gospel, the ministry of reconciliation. To receive it in vain would be to receive it and then fall away. Compare [1 Cor. 15:2](#). **2. For he saith.** [Isaiah 44:8](#). The prophecy is an offer of salvation to the Gentiles, to whom the Corinthians belonged. The point is that God has offered the salvation, but that **now is the accepted time**, and it is not safe to neglect it. **3. Giving no offence in any thing.** The participle “giving” refers to “we” ([verse 1](#)). Paul describes the manner of life of himself and fellow ministers. They were careful that the **ministry be not blamed**. It matters not what be the talents of a minister, if there be no confidence in his purity of life his influence will be neutralized. Every one should be anxious that his life hinder not the gospel.

4–10. In all things approving ourselves as ministers of God. Living lives that show that we are holy ministers, consecrated to God. Paul next gives some details of the apostolic life. **In much patience.** Rather, in steadfast constancy and endurance, holding out under trials. Some of these trials are now given. **Afflictions.** The first three details are general. **5. In stripes.** See [11:23, 24](#). **In imprisonments.** He was imprisoned at Philippi, Jerusalem, Cæsarea, and Rome, at least. **In tumults.** See [Acts 14:19; 16:22; 19:29; 21:30](#). **6. Verses 4 and 5** show what Paul suffered at the hands of men. He now tells his manner of life under such persecution. **In pureness.** Living a holy life. Chaste. **By knowledge.** His knowledge goes hand in hand with purity of life. **By the Holy Spirit.** Showing forth its influence and power. **7. By the word of truth.** By preaching the gospel with power. **By the power of God.** Shown in his great activity and unparalleled success ([4:7](#)). **By the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.** See [Eph. 6:11](#). On the left hand was the shield; in the right, the sword. Protected by the shield of faith, Paul used the sword of the Spirit. **8. By honor and dishonor.** A series of contrasted situations, nine in number, are now given. Sometimes “honored,” sometimes treated as an outcast; sometimes well spoken of, sometimes slandered. **As deceivers, and yet true.** Sometimes represented as artful impostors, yet true in life, word and deed. **9. As unknown, and yet well known.** Obscure in the great, indifferent world, but well known in the church and to God. **As dying.** Always exposed to death, and yet preserved, and having eternal life. **Chastened, and not killed.** See [Psalm 118:18](#). Though

many a blow fell upon him, his life was spared. **10. As sorrowful.** His suffering caused him grief, yet he rejoiced in hope. **Poor.** Without worldly wealth, but carrying the riches of Christ to men. **Possessing all things.** Compare [1 Cor. 3:21](#).

11–13. Our mouth is open to you. I speak freely to you, my Corinthian brethren. **Our heart is enlarged.** Filled with affection for you. **12. Ye are not straitened in us.** Our heart is large enough to embrace you all. It is you who are straitened; your hearts are confined so that you do not give me free admission. After the noble portraiture of what he suffered for them, he proceeds to affectionate entreaty. **13. Now for a recompense.** In return for his openness and tender affection, let there be a reciprocation of his love for them. He speaks as their spiritual father in paternal tenderness.

14–18. Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers. The figure is drawn from the prohibition of [Deut. 22:10](#) and [Lev. 19:19](#). The meaning is that Christians are not to pair off with unbelievers. All intimate associations are forbidden. The primary reference is to intermarriage and to association in heathen festivals. All close fellowship with unbelievers is included. Saints should choose Christian alliances and associations. **15. What concord hath Christ with Belial?** Belial, a heathen god like Beelzebub, is used as a synonym for Satan. See [Matt. 12:24](#). As Christ has nothing in common with Satan, how can a believer in him have a close intimacy with one who is still under the dominion of the prince of this world? **16. What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?** As God's temple has nothing in common with the idol temple, so the saints are to be separated from idolators. **For ye are the temple of the living God.** The Christian is himself the sanctuary of the Lord, as is proved by the passage quoted from [Lev. 26:12](#). God dwells in his people as the Shekinah dwelt between the cherubim. **17. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, etc.** Quoted from [Isa. 52:11](#). A call to Israel to cleanse itself from pagan pollutions. **18. And I will be a Father unto you.** Quoted from [Jer. 31:1, 9](#); [Isa. 43:6](#), and other passages. It is a free combination of the spirit of several passages. The two passages teach that it is the Divine will that his worshipers should be separate from the world; that if they are thus separate he will receive them, and will accept them as his own children. Compare [Rom. 12:2](#), and [James 1:27](#).

Note on Mixed Marriages. —“The unequal yoking” covers the question of marriage between Christians and irreligious persons. The whole spirit of the Bible is against the practice. Marriages of the “sons of God” with the “daughters of men” caused the sins which brought on the Flood ([Gen. 6:1–7](#)). Alien marriages were forbidden to Israel ([Exod. 34:16](#); [Deut. 7:3, 4](#)); this was the pit into which Samson fell ([Judges 14:3](#)); to this cause was due the fall of Solomon ([1 Kings 11:1–10](#)); Ezra made the Jews put away alien wives ([Ezra 9:10](#)), and in the discussion of the subject in [1 Corinthians, chapter 7](#), the whole implication is that

intermarriage with unbelievers was out of the question. The widow is only allowed to marry a Christian ([1 Cor. 7:39](#)).



Chapter VII

The Effect of Paul's First Letter at Corinth

Summary — *Paul's Freedom of Speech to the Corinthians. His Anxiety Until Titus Came. The Consolation of the News from Corinth. His Letter Produced Sorrow; Then Repentance. His Severe Words not Due to Ill-Will for the Offender, nor for Them, but to Lead Them to Clearing Themselves.*

1. Having therefore these promises. Those named in the [17th and 18th verses of the preceding chapter](#). This verse is properly in that connection, and should not have been separated by the chapter division. **Let us cleanse ourselves.** See [6:17](#) above. **From all filthiness of the flesh.** All sensual sins, such as those to which the Corinthians were addicted. **And of the spirit.** The spirit of a man is defiled by such sins as those named in [Gal. 5:19–21](#). **Perfecting holiness.** Every Christian in purifying himself should strive for greater holiness and constantly seek to attain to the ideal of which Christ is the example.

2–4. Receive us. Make room in your hearts for us and our admonitions. Compare [6:11–13](#). **We wronged no man.** In the severe charges of his first letter. **We corrupted no man.** Probably this is an answer to the vile insinuations of his adversaries at Corinth. **3. I say not this to condemn you.** I do not accuse you of making these charges against me. Yet he knew well that they had been made by Judaizers and others at Corinth. **I have said before.** See [6:11, 12](#). What follows is an expression of undying affection. **4. Great is my boldness of speech, etc.** This verse declares that he is overflowing with joyful feeling. The next section explains its cause.

5–7. For when we were come into Macedonia. He first came from Ephesus to Troas ([2:12](#)), and expected to meet Titus there with word from Corinth concerning the effect of his first letter. Not meeting him, he went on to Macedonia in great distress of mind. **Our flesh had no rest.** Compare with this [2:13](#). **Without were fightings.** Conflicts with enemies of Christ. **Within were fears.** Lest the church at Corinth might make shipwreck. **6. Nevertheless God ... comforted us by the coming of Titus.** Titus brought to him the joyful news of repentance and reformation at Corinth. This news turned his affliction to joy. **7. Not by his coming only.** He rejoiced to meet again a well-beloved fellow laborer, but rejoiced still more over the news which he brought. **Your earnest desire.** To cleanse themselves from fault. **Your mourning.** Over the reproof of their sins. **Your fervent mind toward me.** Affection for and zeal to please me.

8–11. I do not repent. “Regret,” as in the Revision. The Greek word rendered *repent* in this verse, is not the one rendered *repentance* in [verses 9 and 10](#). The Revision preserves the distinction throughout. His first letter made them sorry, and at one time he regretted sending it, because he feared it would not work the result he wished, but since it had, he did

not regret that he sent it. **9. Now I rejoice.** Not because they were made sorry, but that their sorrow brought repentance. Observe, (1) that regret is not repentance; (2) that sorrow is not repentance; (3) that godly sorrow ([verse 10](#)) works repentance, or, in other words, repentance results from godly sorrow, or sorrowing in a way pleasing to God. **10. Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of.** The steps are (1) godly sorrow; (2) repentance as a result of godly sorrow; (3) salvation secured by repentance; (4) this effect of repentance is never regretted. See Revision. The difference of repentance from sorrow and regret is seen when we bear in mind that it means the change of mind and heart wrought by godly sorrow for sin. The state implied by repentance always leads to a change of life. The Common Version here and elsewhere has made confusion by translating two Greek words which mean different things by the same English term. One, rendered by the Revision "regret," is found in [Matt. 27:3, 5](#); the other, properly rendered "repent," is found in [Acts 2:38](#). **The sorrow of the world.** Not godly sorrow, but remorse. The sorrow of Judas was remorse. In the case of many besides Judas, it has resulted in despair, which has led to destruction of life, or to eternal death. **11. For behold this self-same thing.** Here is proof that they "sorrowed after a godly sort." They repented and brought forth the fruits of repentance. **What earnest care.** No indifference any longer. **What clearing of yourselves.** From all responsibility for the sins of the incestuous person ([1 Cor. 5:1, 2](#); [2 Cor. 2:6-8](#)). **What indignation.** Against the deed that disgraced the church. **What revenge.** What punishment of the offense committed.

12-16. Though I wrote unto you, etc. The language that follows in this verse has caused some confusion. Paul evidently means to say that he did not write his stern charge, in [1 Corinthians, chapter 5](#), so much on account of the wrong doer, the incestuous person, nor on account of the person he had injured (his father), as to manifest his earnest care for the welfare of the church. **13. Therefore we were comforted in your comfort.** He still pours forth his joy over the happy change in the church, a joy due to his great affection for it. **14. For if I have boasted anything to him of you.** If he had done so, their prompt repentance showed that his boasting was well founded. **15. And his inward affection, etc.** He had not been received with distrust or coldness or stubborn disobedience, but in a humble and repentant Christian spirit, which had greatly increased his affection. **16. I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you.** Rather, that I am greatly encouraged concerning you.



Chapter VIII

The Grace of Giving

Summary — *The Liberality of the Macedonian Brethren. Exhortation to the Corinthians to Abound in the Same Grace. The Example of Christ. The Spiritual Blessing of Liberal Giving. Titus and Another Brother Sent to Corinth to Aid and Encourage Them.*

1–5. We make known to you the grace of God (Revision). Paul now introduces the great collection of which he spoke in [1 Cor. 16:1](#), and [Rom. 15:26](#). See also [Acts 11:29](#); [Acts 24:17](#). It had always been the custom of the Jews in foreign lands to send up to Jerusalem contributions for the temple treasury, but Paul urges the contributions for God's spiritual temple, the poor saints. The mother church was in need and the abundance of the saints elsewhere was to be her supply. The cause of the destitution of the Jerusalem Christians is easily found in the times. Famine ([Acts 11:29](#)) had stricken the land, this had been followed by the troubles and unsettled state of affairs which were leading to the Jewish war. The uneasiness of the public mind, as well as the tumults, disturbed business and labor. The result would necessarily be close times and destitution. The lesson of this great collection is that distance does not diminish the claims of suffering brethren for help. **Churches of Macedonia.** The Roman province of Macedonia embraced all Grecian countries north of the province of Achaia. The churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, founded by Paul, and probably many others, were in this province. **2. How that in a great trial of affliction.** The language seems to imply persecution. This might have been an excuse for not giving, if they had sought one. See [Acts 17:6](#) and [1 Thess. 2:14](#). But, still, their joy in the gospel and their poverty combined so that they contributed with great liberality. **3. For to their power.** It was not the greatness of their contribution, but the fact that they gave not only up to, but even beyond their ability, which made their liberality so rich. The widow who gave her mite did more than the rich men who cast in out of their abundance. **Willing of themselves.** Required no urging. **4. Praying us with much entreaty.** They insisted on doing more than the apostle felt that they ought to do. **5. And this ... not as we had hoped.** The thought is that they exceeded our hope. They consecrated themselves, and hence, held that all they had was the Lord's. When church members give **their own selves**, there will be no complaint that their money is withheld.

6–9. We desired Titus, that as he had begun. This faithful fellow laborer of Paul, when he had gone to Corinth when Paul's first epistle was sent, had begun the collection which it commanded in [1 Cor. 16:1](#). Now Paul directs that he return and complete the collection before the arrival of Paul ([Acts 20:1–3](#)). **Grace.** The grace of giving. **7. As ye abound in everything.** Instead of Macedonia setting the example to Corinth, the latter ought to have led. Their church was rich in gifts. See [1 Cor. 1:5](#). **8. I speak not by commandment.** He

levies no tax by command. The giving must be free and cheerful in order to be blessed. He encourages them by the **forwardness of others**; the example of the Macedonian brethren, and by that of Christ. **9. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.** This is the chiefest of motives to giving. Our Lord gave up all for us. He became poor that we might be rich in heavenly riches. If he gave himself for us, what shall we give for him? Compare [Phil. 2:7](#). Christ parted with riches and took poverty; with glory and took humiliation; with bliss and took suffering, all for our sakes. The passage compares Christ's pre-existent state with that he had on earth.

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10–15. Herein I give my advice. Not a “commandment” ([verse 8](#)), but advice. That is, that it is expedient to complete the work begun “a year ago,” or as we would say, “last year.” **11. Therefore, perform the doing of it.** Finish it up. As there was “a readiness to will,” let there be “a performance” by giving out of what “you have.” **12. For if there is first a willing mind.** The willing mind had been shown in the readiness “to will.” The willing mind is essential to the acceptance of the gift. If there be this pre-requisite, then God accepts the gift and measures it according to a man's means. **13. I mean not that other men be eased.** I wish all to give according to what they have, other churches as well as you. Nor do I mean to burden you that the saints at Jerusalem may be at ease. **14. But by an equality.** There is a lack at Jerusalem; let your abundance supply it. So, too, if you be in want, they must supply it if they have abundance. The church is a band of loving brethren. Where one lacks others should supply, that all may be equally provided. **15. It is written.** In [Exodus 16:18](#). When the manna fell, whatever each individual gathered, there was found to be, on measuring, “an omer to a man.” So brotherly love is to effect such a distribution that no saint will be in want, and none have what is superfluous.

16–21. But thanks be to God. Because Titus is ready to return to Corinth and help in the work. **17. For indeed he accepted the exhortation.** Readily accepted the work when Paul suggested it; nay more, **of his own accord**, he desired and chose it. **18. We have sent with him the brother.** Two brethren are sent with Titus. These are not named, and we can only conjecture who they were. As [verse 19](#) says that he “was chosen of the churches to travel with us in this grace,” and as [Acts 20:4](#) says that the Macedonian brethren, Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus did travel with him to Jerusalem, one of these is probably meant. Many have held that Luke was the person, nor is this improbable. **19. Chosen of the churches.** Paul desired, for the reasons given in [verses 20 and 21](#), that the churches should send along messengers in charge of their gifts. **20. Avoiding this.** There were evil-minded persons who might charge that the apostle had used the gifts of his own advantage unless the messengers could report just how the funds were used. Paul was careful ([21](#)) to provide what was honest, **in the sight of God**, for his conscience's sake, and **in the sight of men** for his work's sake.

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22–24. We have sent with them. With Titus and the brother named in [verse 18](#). The brother referred to here and commended so highly is nowhere named. **23. Whether any do inquire of Titus.** The commendation given of these three brethren is official. Titus had long been a fellow laborer, and had recently visited Corinth. The other two were messengers of the Macedonian churches. Not only of the churches but of the glory of Christ, the Lord's messengers to show forth his glory in a great work of mercy. **24. Therefore, shew ye to them.** Since these are representative men, delegates of the churches, and of Christ, receive them cordially. Give **proof of your love**, and show that when we have boasted of your excellencies that our boasting was not empty. An ill reputation would not only reflect upon the churches, but upon Paul himself.



Chapter IX

Liberal and Cheerful Giving

Summary — *The Reason for Sending Titus to Corinth. Giving a Sowing. An Abundant Harvest to the Cheerful and Liberal Giver. The Unspeakable Gift.*

1, 2. The ministering to the saints. Contributions to supply their needs. **It is superfluous.** They were fully instructed, and had begun the work. Yet he does write and explain why in [verse 2](#). **2. I know the forwardness of your mind.** This is why it seemed superfluous to write. **Achaia was ready a year ago.** The churches of the province of Achaia, of which Corinth was the capital. The province embraced all southern Greece, including Athens and Cenchreae. They had begun the collection “a year ago” ([8:10](#)).

3–5. Yet have I sent the brethren. See [8:17, 18, 22](#). He sent them so that they would surely be prepared when he came. **4. Lest haply if they of Macedonia.** [Acts 20:4](#) named certain brethren of Macedonia who did attend him. If these should find Corinth unprepared with the collection when Paul came, after what he had said, it would fill him with shame. **5. Therefore.** Hence, he thought it needful to send the brethren that the work might surely be conducted to completion, and the collection ready. **As a matter of bounty.** As a free gift, cheerfully bestowed; not something **extorted** from them (see Revision).

6–9. He which soweth bountifully. Giving is not a sacrifice, but rather a sowing. As the farmer gives his seed to the earth, and then reaps as he has sown, so giving is a sowing. If there is a spare sowing there will be spare reaping; if liberal sowing, liberal reaping. See the same principle expressed in [Exod. 25:2](#); [1 Chron. 29:14, 17](#); [Ps. 102:9](#); [Luke 6:38](#); [Acts 20:35](#). The lesson of this verse is, **give generously**. The [next verse](#) teaches **how to give**. **7. Every man according as he purposeth.** The giving must be **cheerful**. It is the cheerful giver whom the Lord loves. Where one gives by compulsion, or to secure popular applause, or grudgingly, he is not approved. **8. God is able to make all grace abound towards you.** To bestow upon you every blessing, temporal as well as spiritual. He is able to make up all you part with and more. The faithful steward will be trusted with more. **9. As it is written.** In [Ps. 112:9](#). It is said there of the man who feareth the Lord: He does not hold tightly but dispenses abroad by giving to the poor. **His righteousness**, or right doing in giving, **remaineth forever**. That is, he is supplied with means to keep it up.

10–14. He that ministereth seed to the sower. God, who can, and does, bless charitable giving, will do so in the case of the Corinthians. **The fruits of their righteousness** will be increased, for their means will be increased. **11. Being enriched.** This explains how the fruits of righteousnesses are increased. As they are enriched it tends to **bountifulness**, and this causeth **thanksgiving** to God. **12. For the administration of the service.** Two things result from the bountiful giving. (1) The wants of the saints are supplied. (2) Their thanks-

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giving for the relief glorifies God. **13. They glorify God.** That the Corinthians had become subject to the gospel and God's means of succoring their temporal wants. Some Judaizing Christians at Jerusalem doubted whether the Gentile churches were really churches of Christ. Such a gift would tend to open their minds and remove their prejudices, an object very dear to the heart of Paul. **14. And by their prayer for you.** Thus, filled with affection for you, and longing for you on account of the proof they had of God's grace to you, they glorify God by prayer for you.

15. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. The Corinthians were asked to give; they were cited to the example of Christ (8:9); but now Paul bursts out in thanksgiving to God for his gift, which language cannot describe—Jesus Christ and his gospel. It was that gift which broken down the old enmity and bound together Jew and Gentile in love, so that Jewish Christians would pray, thank God for, and long for Gentile Christians like those that Corinth.



Chapter X

Judaizing False Teachers Rebuked

Summary — *Paul's Personal Appeal. His Weapons Spiritual. What was Said of His Bodily Presence. What He will be When Present. Concerning Boasting. The Saint May Glorify in the Lord Only.*

1, 2. Now I Paul. Thus far in this epistle Paul has associated himself with Timothy (1:1) and his fellow-laborers. He has spoken in the plural. Now he uses the singular, and there will be seen in the [10th and 11th chapters](#) a tone of severity contrasted with the gentleness and love of those that precede. Those chapters are addressed to the church which had as a body cleared itself of fault. There was, however, a faction who opposed him, who disparaged his claims as an apostle, and he now speaks for the benefit of these. This accounts for the change of style and tone. Since the opposition was to him personally, he speaks in person. I repeat what has been before said, that this opposition came mainly from the Judaizing Christians who thought Paul had gone wrong in not requiring Gentile Christians to come under the bondage of the Jewish law. **Who in presence am base.** Lowly. His first letter had been stern (1 Cor. 5). The opposers said that he was very gentle when present, but bold when absent. **2. I beseech you.** He asks that, when he comes, he may not have to exercise that boldness which he fears he will have to use in censuring some opposers. He desires that all may so act that he can be lowly and gentle when present. **As if we walked according to the flesh.** Were led by worldly motives.

3–6. We walk in the flesh. He is in the body, but though in the flesh does not use fleshly weapons in his warfare. **4. For the weapons of our warfare.** Since these were not carnal, the might was not in human strength, but in God who gave them power to overcome the strongholds of sin. **5. Casting down imaginations.** The sophistries of philosophy. By these weapons the soul is rescued, delivered, and brought to the obedience of Christ. **6. To revenge all disobedience.** These spiritual weapons are ready to punish all disobedience at Corinth, when time had been given for all who are disposed to be obedient to show it.

7–11. Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? The Revision omits the question. Perhaps his opposers claimed some external advantages, that they were from Judea, had been disciples of Christ on earth, etc. If such an one claimed to be Christ's on this, or any ground, Paul had equal claims. **8. Though I should boast, etc.** A comparison of claims to privilege and authority would not put him to shame. **Not for your destruction.** His power and authority were given to save men; he desires not to have to use them to fulminate censures. **9, 10. That I may not seem, etc.** His enemies said that his letters were



weighty and stern, but his presence was very different. In other words, he terrified by empty threats. **11. Let such an one think this.** Let all who make such statements know that when I come I will in presence do just as I have written.

12–18. We dare not make ourselves of the number. This no doubt ironically alludes to teachers who had come to Corinth making lofty claims, to whom repeated allusions are made. These set themselves up as the standard by which all Christian teachers were to be tried. **13. We will not boast of things without our measure.** Will not, like those just alluded to, suffer our boasting to carry us beyond all bounds. **But according to the measure.** We confine ourselves simply to the line of action assigned to us by the Lord. **To reach even unto you.** The line assigned by the Lord ([Gal. 2:7–9](#)) sent Paul to the Gentiles. **14. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure.** This verse renders clearer the thought in those preceding. The Judaizers said that Paul had exceeded his commission in coming to Corinth, that he had no authority there. He asserts that not he, but they had gone beyond the measure. Others were apostles to the circumcision; he and Barnabas to the uncircumcision. When he came to Europe he was sent by the Spirit ([Acts 16:9](#)). **15. Not boasting ... of other men's labors.** It was Paul's uniform course to preach where no one before him had preached the gospel. **Having hope, etc.** The passage expresses the hope that his success at Corinth and the support of the church will enable him to carry the gospel beyond. That city, at this time, was the western limit of his work. The thought is made clear by [verse 16](#). **16. To preach the gospel ... beyond you.** Where no man has yet preached. **17. But he that glorieth, let him, etc.** Quoted from [Jer. 11:23](#). It gives the true rule of boasting. Let the Lord be our boast, for we are nothing. **18.** He whom **the Lord commendeth** is the one who hath approval; not he who commends himself; a hint to every disciple and preacher. Let our works and life speak for us, not our lips.



Chapter XI

Paul and His Antagonists

Summary — *Compelled by His Opposers to Indulge in Folly. His Jealousy for the Corinthians. Compelled to Recount His Claims. His Unparalleled Sufferings. A Boast in Infirmities.*

1–4. Bear with me a little in my folly. The disparagement of his claims by the false teachers rendered it necessary that he should speak of himself in self-defense. One so forgetful of self and consecrated to Christ as Paul could only do this with a sort of sense of shame. Hence he apologizes for doing so, though compelled. **2. For I am jealous over you.** His course was induced because of his jealousy for them, not in behalf of himself, but of Christ. He had espoused them to Christ, the Bridegroom of whom the church is the bride ([Rev. 21:2](#)). He has a fear lest this bride may be led astray. **3. But I fear.** As Eve was seduced from God by the serpent ([Gen. 3:1](#)), so he fears that the Corinthian brethren may be led from the **simplicity** (single-minded devotion) **that is in Christ.** **4. For if he that cometh.** Most critics think that the verse is ironical. [Gal. 1:6](#) shows that the Judaizers so perverted the gospel that it was really another gospel. Hence Paul is supposed to say that if these men preach another Jesus, another Spirit, and another gospel than those you received, which they do, you might well bear with them! Perhaps, however, he only means to say that these men discredit me, but have no new gospel, Spirit or Christ to offer than what you have received through me. This harmonizes better with what follows.

5, 6. I suppose I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. The Greek (see Revision in the margin) implies that these men claimed to be apostles. Paul says he is not behind these “pre-eminent apostles”—a stroke of sarcasm. **6. Though I be rude in speech.** He had not the rhetoric of a Corinthian orator, but he was not wanting in divine knowledge. See [1 Cor. 1:17](#), and [2:4](#). His revealed knowledge had been manifest among them.

7–12. Have I committed an offense, etc. He had at Corinth supported himself in part by his own labor ([Acts 18:3](#)). See note on [1 Cor. 9:13](#). Yet these false apostles seemed to have charged that he did not dare to ask for the support which was due an apostle. **8. I robbed other churches.** Other churches sustained him when he came to Corinth. This seems to have been the usual custom. Philippi aided him more than once while preaching in Thessalonica ([Phil. 4:16](#)). The churches of Macedonia aided him at Corinth. **9. When I was present with you and wanted.** When his supplies fell short, he worked at tent-making until Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia with supplies ([Acts 18:5](#)). These were the **brethren which came from Macedonia.** **10. No man shall stop me of this boasting.** As he has done, so he will do. It shall be his boast that his gospel was freely preached in Achaia. **11. Wherefore?** Why this course in Achaia? Not because he does not love them, but ([verse 12](#)) **that I may cut off occasion, etc.** One reason that he did this was to give no excuse to these



opposers to call on the church to maintain them. He would force them by his example to be **found even as we**, that is, to maintain themselves.

13–15. Such are false apostles. He now tears off the mask. These men are not real, but false apostles, deceitful workers, pretending to be Christ's apostles. **14. And no marvel.** Is it said that they appear to be Christ's ministers? Even Satan can take the shape of an angel of light. He always seeks to destroy by coming in a false guise. **15. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers, etc.** It is not strange if persons really doing Satan's work should appear as ministers of righteousness. The sorest wounds of the church are not found from without, but from agents of Satan within.

16–21. Let no man think me a fool. Even though he should boast, let no one regard him foolish (see [verse 1](#)), since he compelled to by the disparagement of his labors. Whether he be regarded as foolish or wise, let his words be received. **17. That which I speak.** What he is about to say, with an appearance of boasting, is not compromising Christ. The folly, if there be folly, is his own. **18. I will glory also.** This is the folly for which he apologizes. He will show that he is not behind those who have been claiming so much credit at Corinth. **19. For ye suffer fools gladly.** See [1 Cor. 4:10](#). It was a part of their superior wisdom to tolerate fools. This is perhaps said in derision. It is explained in the [next verse](#). **20. For ye suffer.** They must “suffer fools gladly,” for they let men **bring them into bondage** to the law ([Gal. 2:4](#)); to **devour** their property by their greed for gain; to **take** them by the cunning snares laid for them; to **exalt** themselves unduly. **Smite you on the face.** This perhaps refers to an actual case of violence. **21. I speak by way of disparagement.** The opposers had said that “his bodily presence was weak” ([10:10](#)). They had suffered what he had described in [verse 20](#), but he had never been so bold. Yet, wherein any were bold, he had the right to be bold also. He next states grounds which he might have for boasting.

22–27. Are they Hebrews? Of pure Hebrew stock? So was Paul. See [Phil. 3:5](#). **Israelites.** He was of the seed of Jacob, and the heir of the promises to Israel. **Of the seed of Abraham.** Not only of the fleshly, but of the spiritual seed of Abraham. **23. Are they ministers of Christ?** Speaking foolishly, that is, commending himself (see [verse 1](#)), he is more; not only a minister, but a pre-eminent sufferer for Christ. To show how much he exceeded them, he gives some account of his sufferings. **In labors more abundant.** The record of Acts shows how his labors abounded. **In stripes above measure.** See [verse 24, 25](#). **In prisons more frequent.** Clement, who wrote about the close of the first century, says in his Epistle to the Corinthians that Paul was imprisoned seven times. In Acts only one occurrence is named before the date of this letter, that at Philippi. It is evident from this enumeration that Acts is only a part of the history of his labors. **In deaths oft.** Often in peril of death. **24. Of the Jews fives times received I forty stripes save one.** See [Deut. 25:3](#). The Jews were not allowed to exceed this number. **25. Thrice was I beaten with rods.** This was the Roman scourging. Only one of these instances is reported in Acts, that in [Acts 16:23](#). **Once was I stoned.** See

Acts 14:19. Thrice I suffered shipwreck. No account elsewhere is given of these. The shipwreck, on the way to Italy, was of later date. **A night and a day I have been in the deep.** In an open boat, or on driftwood, after a shipwreck. **26. In perils of waters.** In crossing swollen rivers. **In perils of robbers.** In his travels he was often exposed to danger from this source. **In perils by mine own countrymen.** The Jews, who constantly persecuted him. See [verse 24](#). **By the heathen.** The Gentiles. See [verse 25](#), as an illustration. **In perils in the city.** Damascus, Jerusalem, Antioch in Pisidia, Lystra, Philippi, and Corinth will at once occur as instances. **27. In weariness and painfulness.** Often weary and in pain. The verse shows the self-denial made necessary in preaching the gospel. Often in want, hungry, naked and cold. Why should all these have been endured? Nothing but overwhelming conviction and love could have led him to this sacrifice himself.

28–31. Besides those things that are without. His physical sufferings and labors were not all. There was constant care and anxiety for the churches. **29. Who is weak?** His sympathy for the churches was so great that if they suffered, he suffered with them. **30. If I must needs glory.** If compelled to boast, this boast will be of his own infirmities and sufferings for Christ, such as he has just narrated. **31. The God and Father ... knoweth, etc.** He has given an astonishing catalogue of suffering. Yet, God knows that every word is true.

32, 33. In Damascus. This seems to be cited to show that the very beginning of his Christian career was amid peril. See [Acts 9:23–25](#). **The governor under Aretas the king.** Aretas was king of Petra, and the father-in-law of Herod Antipas. Damascus was usually, at these times, under Roman rule. Aretas engaged in war with Herod because he sent off his daughter and took Herodias for a wife. He defeated Herod, and became embroiled with the Romans. It is likely that in the contest Damascus fell into his hands for a time. The language, **Kept the city ... with a garrison,** shows that it was war times. The Jews, who were very strong in Damascus, doubtless induced the governor to try to seize Paul. **33. Through a window in a basket was I let down.** Houses in these Oriental walled cities are built against walls with windows looking out over them. It was, no doubt, from such a window that he was let down and thus escaped.

Dean Stanley says that the catalogue of sufferings given in [this chapter](#) shows that Paul's life was then without precedent in the history of the world. The only explanation of such a life, continued now for more than fourteen years, is that given by himself: "The love of Christ constraineth us."

Chapter XII

Paul's Revelations and Thorn in the Flesh

Summary — *Visions and Revelations. Caught Up into Paradise. The Thorn in the Flesh. God's Answer to Prayer. Weakness Made Strength. The Signs of an Apostle. Coming Now the Third Time to Corinth. Paul's Unselfish course at Corinth.*

1–5. It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory. It was distasteful for him to speak on himself, and he could only do it when compelled by the disparagement of adversaries. **I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.** Supernatural things revealed to the spiritual eye and divine truths revealed to the human spirit. **2. I know (not knew) a man above fourteen years ago.** He knows the man and could name him, since the man was himself. See [verse 7](#). Above fourteen years ago this man was caught up, etc. This letter was written a.d. 57. The being caught up was then in a.d. 43. This is about the time that Paul was at Antioch with Barnabas, or at Tarsus ([Acts 9:29, 30](#)). It could not have been at conversion, for that was about twenty years earlier than a.d. 57, nor could it be the trance in the temple ([Acts 22:17](#)) for that was too late. **Whether in the body or, etc.** A person could then be caught up, see and hear, without his body, in Paul's view. Hence the human spirit is not material. **The third heaven.** A Jewish expression for that heaven which was beyond (1) the air, and (2) beyond the sun and stars; the secret place of the Almighty. **3. I know such a man.** Why does he not use the first person? Because it would seem more like he was glorying in his own exaltation. **4. He was caught up into Paradise.** Paradise and "the third heaven" evidently mean the same. The term applied to a blessed abode beyond the life in [Luke 23:43](#) and [Rev. 2:7](#). **Heard unspeakable words.** Words that would be neither right nor possible to reveal in human speech. **5. Of such an one will I glory.** One so favored had ground for boasting, but of himself personally he will not glory, save in his **infirmities**. See note on 11:30. While he glories of such an one, if he glories of himself it will be in his weaknesses.

6–9. For though I would desire to glory, I should not be a fool. He could declare things truthfully that would show that his boast was not empty vanity. **7. Lest I should be exalted, etc.** This verse shows that [verse 2](#) refers to himself. **There was given me a thorn in the flesh.** Generally supposed to be some painful physical infirmity. See [Gal. 4:13, 14](#). **A messenger of Satan.** All physical evils are due to sin and hence are ascribed to Satan. This thorn was (1) in the flesh; (2) it buffeted or assailed him; (3) it was permitted to prevent undue exaltation, hence must have been humiliating. **8. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice.** Prayed thrice that the thorn might be removed. **9. My grace is sufficient for thee.** The Lord answered his prayer, not by removing the thorn, but by giving grace to bear it, and by the assurance that Paul's sense of weakness, caused by it, fitted him to receive the divine strength. **Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities.** Because his infirmities fit him

to enjoy the power that Christ bestows. What was true of Paul is true of every saint. It is when we feel our weakness that God strengthens us.

10–13. Therefore I take pleasure, etc. The unparalleled distress, sufferings and persecutions, described in 11:24–27, even give him pleasure because they bring him to a sense of his helplessness and then God makes him strong. **11. I am become a fool in glorying.** As he looks back on what he has written he finds that he has done what he condemned as a folly, commended himself; compelled to; a thing that ought not to have been necessary, for the Corinthians ought to have commended him. **Behind the chiefest apostles.** The false teachers who had claimed at Corinth to be leading apostles. **12. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought.** While preaching at Corinth he demonstrated his apostleship. **13. What is it wherein ye were inferior, etc.?** They had enjoyed every privilege of the most highly favored churches, and, perhaps, complained that he had preached without charge to them. See notes on 11:7–12. If this was a wrong, he asked forgiveness.

14, 15. The third time I am ready to come to you. Then he had been there twice before; once when he founded the church; once while preaching at Ephesus, of which visit Acts gives no account. See also 13:1, and notes on 2:1. **And I will not be burdensome to you.** As before, he will maintain himself this third time. **For the children, etc.** As parents do with children, so will he, their spiritual father, do. He does not ask them to provide for him, while he feeds them the bread of life. **15. I will gladly spend, etc.** As a loving father, he will gladly spend and be spent for them; even without the return of his love.

16–18. But be it so, I did not burden you, etc. It was charged that even if he did not burden them, there was guile about it and in some other way he would secure their substance. Hence he asks: **17. Did I make gain** by any of the messengers or helpers I sent you? Did they demand anything? He then specifies: **18. I desired Titus.** He sent Titus and another brother, but they asked no gain.

19–21. Think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? He must guard against a misapprehension. He is not defending himself before a human bar. He speaks as before God; says what will tend to edify them. His only object is to build them up. **20. For I fear, etc.** He has been led to speak because he feared, unless he spoke plainly, that when he came he would have to rebuke severely on account of sins which he enumerates. **Debates, etc.** The sins here given are those that belong to a divided state. **21. And lest ... my God will humble.** Lest he be humiliated by the prevalence of sensual sins also. The sins here named are the peculiar Gentile sins which he has rebuked so severely in both epistles.

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Chapter XIII

Concluding Words

Summary —*Severity Threatened to All Who Do Not Repent. He Will Display the Apostolic Power. Exhorted to Self-Examination; and to Reformation Before He Comes. Closing Admonitions. Benediction.*

1–4. This is the third time I am coming. See notes on 12:14. **In the mouth of two or three witnesses.** Every case of disorderly conduct will be taken cognizance of, but the trials will be strictly legal. Two or three witnesses will establish a charge. **2. I have said beforehand, etc.** The Revision makes the meaning plain. As he told them, when there the second time, so now he writes that when he comes again he will not spare offenders. **3. Since ye seek a proof, etc.** Since some denied his apostleship, he would give a proof of the might of Christ through him. **4. For though he was crucified through weakness.** Christ submitted himself unto death, voluntarily choosing the weakness of mortality. He “emptied himself” (Phil. 2:7, 8). But by the power of God he was raised from death to life. So it shall be with us. His life is reproduced in us. Those who suffer and die with him shall live with him through the Divine power.

5–9. Examine yourselves. Let there be self-examination. See whether you are in Christ. **Know ye not, etc.** Christ must dwell in them unless they are reprobate. If Christ is in them it will be seen in the power of a Christian life. **6. I trust ye shall know, etc.** Christ is in those who are not reprobates, but the power of Christ (verse 3), that he will display when he comes, will show that he is not reprobate. **7. Now I pray, etc.** If they should do evil, Paul's display of power would show that he was not a reprobate (verse 6), but he prays that their freedom from evil may leave him without that proof. The next verses show that he desires only to promote the truth.

10. Therefore I write these things, etc. He writes in order that he may not have to use sharpness when he comes, or the **power** which God has given for upbuilding, not for destruction.

11–14. Finally, brethren, farewell. This verse contains a parting admonition. **12. Salute one another, etc.** See notes on Rom. 16:16, and 1 Cor. 16:20. **14. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, etc.** This verse contains the apostolic benediction. Observe the three blessings pronounced, grace, love, communion; and the three sources invoked, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



**The Epistle of Paul to the
Galatians**



Introduction to the Epistle to the Galatians

This Epistle differs from most of those written by Paul, in that it is not addressed specially to the church in some great city, but to the churches throughout a district of the Roman Empire. Galatia will be seen on any map of the empire in the apostolic period in the interior of the great peninsula called Asia Minor, which was the theatre of so large a part of the labors of Paul. The people were of the Gallic stock, had marched from the Rhine to Greece, and thence into Asia about b.c. 280, and had conquered a home in the interior of Asia Minor, which henceforth took a new name from the people (Galli, or Gauls) who made it their seat. They learned the Greek language, but retained in part their old tongue and the traits of their race. Cæsar describes the Gauls as restless and changeable, characteristics still of the French, and this epistle shows that the Galatians were not unlike their European kinsmen.

It was on Paul's second great missionary tour, about a.d. 51, that he in company with Silas and Timothy passed through from Lycaonia in Phrygia and Galatia, and planted the seeds of the Christian faith ([Acts 16:6](#)). On his third missionary journey, about a.d. 54 or 55, he "went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" ([Acts 18:23](#)). The gospel was received with great readiness; and the apostle himself welcomed as "an angel of God" ([Gal. 4:14](#)). A part of the converts were no doubt Jews of whom, according to Josephus, there were many in Galatia, but the greater part were Gentiles.

The Epistles of Paul were mostly called out by evils in the churches which he had planted which called for correction. That to the Galatians is not an exception. At a period not long after his second visit tidings came to him that excited his alarm and indignation. That restless wing of the church which clung to Judaism as well as Christianity, which had troubled the church at Antioch ([Acts 15:1](#)), which had made necessary the council at Jerusalem ([Acts 15:5–30](#)), whose evil work at Corinth we note in both Epistles, but especially in the second, whose continual warfare made one of Paul's sorest afflictions "perils among false brethren," had sent its emissaries into Galatia and had taught that it was needful that the Gentile Christians be circumcised and submit to the law of Moses in order to be saved. In order to carry their end they also insisted that Paul was not a true apostle, or was at least inferior to the original Twelve who had seen Christ and been instructed by him in person. It is true that in the Council at Jerusalem they had been defeated, but they kept up their work, and it required a life long struggle on the part of Paul to emancipate the church from Judaism. These men seemed to follow him everywhere, and a considerable part of his epistles is devoted to correcting the errors due to their influence.

The Galatian letter is an indignant protest against and refutation of the Judaizing teachers. In the [first two chapters](#) he shows that his apostleship was not derived from the other apostles, but from Christ; that the gospel that he taught was not revealed to him by

them, but by his Lord; that he had never met them as an inferior, but on an equal footing; that it was agreed between them that Peter, James and John would devote their labors to the Circumcision, while he and Barnabas should go to the Uncircumcision, and that on one occasion it was needful for him to rebuke and correct Peter on the very question of the proper attitude towards Gentile Christians.

In the Second Part of the Letter, [chapters 3 and 4](#), he contrasts the free gospel salvation by a living faith in Christ with the slavish legalism of the false teachers who would virtually place Moses in the stead of Christ. The Third Part, the [5th and 6th chapters](#), is devoted mainly to practical duties which grow out of the gospel.

The Place where written and the Date of the Epistle can be determined only approximately. It must have been written after Paul's two visits to Galatia, the last of which was in a.d. 54 or 55. See note on [Gal. 4:13](#). It must have been written not very long after the second visit. See note on [Gal. 1:6](#). There are many points of resemblance between Epistle and that to the Romans which indicate that they were written nearly at the same time; since this epistle is the less elaborate, it was probably written first. There are also points of resemblance to Second Corinthians which indicate that they belong to the same period. All these facts point to the last year of the Third Missionary Journey, or about a.d. 57. As we learn from Acts that this period was spent in Ephesus, Macedonia and Corinth, it must have been written at one of these places.

It only remains to say concerning its Genuineness, "that the internal evidences of the authorship of Paul is so strong that no sane divine has ever denied or even doubted it" (Schaff). There is no other writer of the early church who could have written it. It bears the Pauline stamp in every line.



Chapter I

Paul's Apostleship of God, Not of Men

Summary — *Greetings. Paul's Wonder That the Galatians had Swerved from the Gospel They Had Received. Anathemas on Those Who Preach Another Gospel. The Gospel Communicated to Paul by Christ Himself. Paul's Early Life. A Persecutor. Christ Revealed. Goes Not Then to Jerusalem. After Three Years, Abode With Peter Fifteen Days. Then Preached in Cilicia.*

1–5. Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man. This verse is the text of the first two chapters. In the [Introduction](#) I have pointed out that this Epistle was written on account of the disturbance made among the churches of Galatia by false teachers. These teachers sought to prepare a way for their doctrines by discrediting Paul. If they admitted that he was an apostle at all, they claimed that he was inferior to Peter and the Twelve; that he had received his gospel from them, and hence all must look to Jerusalem for the true gospel. Hence Paul here begins by declaring that his apostleship is not from man, but directly from Christ. The other apostles did not convert, choose, or appoint him, but Christ came from heaven to commission him. **2. And all the brethren which are with me.** His fellow-laborers, such as Timothy, Titus, Silas, Luke, etc., some of whom at least were with him at this time. The word “all” implies that a number were with him. **Unto the churches of Galatia.** The inference from the language is that there were a considerable number scattered through the province. **3. Grace ... and peace.** The salutation is a benediction, a petition that the blessings of Father and Son may be bestowed upon them. **4. Who gave himself for our sins.** The name of Christ causes the utterance of a grand truth, of which the heart of Paul was always full, and which needed at this time to be impressed on the Galatian brethren. It was not Moses, but Christ who gave himself for them. **This present evil world.** The existing state of things, where sin and death reign. **5. To whom be glory.** This doxology is an indirect rebuke to those who were exalting Moses to share the glory of Christ.

6–10. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you. Paul abruptly springs into the midst of his subject. With the fickleness of their race, they had so soon swerved from “him that called” them. The analogy of Paul's language (compare [1:15](#); [1 Cor. 1:9](#); [Rom. 8:30](#)) would show that he refers to God. The call was a divine one. Paul was only the instrument that God used. **Into the grace of Christ.** The gospel privileges. Called into these, they had “removed” **unto another gospel**, one of a different kind, not worthy of the name. **7. Which is not another.** Is not a gospel at all, but only a perversion of the only gospel of Christ, due to false teachers. **8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, etc.** He supposes an impossibility in order to make his statement emphatic. These false teachers said, “Our gospel is of Peter, or of James.” Paul replies, “Even though they, or we, or even

an angel, preach another gospel, let him be accursed.” He who corrupts divine truth is an enemy of God, and is under the curse. **Accursed.** Anathema; given over to the judgments of God. See [1 Cor. 16:22](#). **9. As we said before.** This refers, it is generally supposed, to Paul's last visit to Galatia, mentioned in [Acts 18:23](#), at which time he had warned the brethren against the Judaizers. The strong language shows how great a sin it is to pervert the gospel or Bible truth. **10. For do I now persuade men, etc.** Is this his motive, or to please God? If he sought to please men, he would never have become the **servant of Christ**. By so doing he had displeased all his own nation and brought on himself the hatred of men. See [2 Cor. 11:23](#).

11, 12. The gospel which was preached by me is not after to man. It is not preached to please man, nor is it of human origin. **12. For I neither received it of man, etc.** It could not be of man, for it did not come to him from man. No preacher or apostle taught it to him, but it came by a direct revelation of Christ. The first revelation was on the way to Damascus ([Acts 26:13–18](#)). There were no doubt successive revelations ([2 Cor. 12:1](#)).

13, 14. Ye have heard of my manner of life. While he was still a Jew. In order to show that his gospel did not come from man, he cites his history, of which they knew something. **I persecuted the church of God.** See [Acts 9:21](#). He made a determined effort to destroy Christianity. Compare [Acts 22:4; 26:10, 11](#). **14. Profited in the Jews' religion.** Made progress in it. He was a Pharisee, was well educated, exceedingly zealous, and reached a high degree. **Traditions of my fathers.** Not only the law of Moses, but the traditions handed down which were taught so assiduously. See [Matt. 15:2; Mark 7:3, 13](#). Our Lord condemned these Jewish traditions.

15–17. But when it pleased God. The language that follows implies that, like Moses, John the Baptist, Isaiah ([Isa. 49:1](#)), and Jeremiah ([Jer. 1:5](#)), Paul was destined to his work from birth. **16. To reveal his Son in me.** It was one thing to call him, as was done on the way to Damascus; another to reveal Christ to him. This was needful that he should be a *witness* of the resurrection to the Gentiles. **I conferred not with flesh and blood.** He did not go to men to learn more, or for counsel. **17. Neither went I ... to them which were apostles.** He did not seek those who were apostles before him at Jerusalem to be taught. **I went into Arabia.** This is the only place where this fact is mentioned. Like Moses and Elijah, he spent a season, perhaps for reflection, communion with God, and preparation, amid the Arabian solitudes. He then **returned to Damascus**. Here he probably did his first preaching ([Acts 9:20–22](#)). Arabia lay south and east of Palestine, extending to the vicinity of Damascus.

18–24. Then after three years. Three years after conversion. This journey to Jerusalem, hurried by persecution at Damascus ([2 Cor. 11:32](#)), was probably a.d. 40. **To see Peter.** He had probably never met him before. He desired to form his acquaintance and counsel over their great work. He then remained **fifteen days**, not long enough to have been taught the gospel by Peter, if that had been his object. **19. Other of the apostles saw I none.** The other

apostles were probably absent among churches of Judea ([Acts 9:31](#)). **Save James.** Not James the brother of John, an apostle, but James, “the brother of the Lord,” named in [Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18](#). This James was not one of the Twelve, but rose to great dignity and influence in the church at Jerusalem. He is called here “the brother of the Lord,” to distinguish him from “James, the son of Zebedee,” and “James, the son of Alphaeus,” who were of the Twelve. See [Introduction to Epistle of James](#). **20. Behold, before God, I lie not.** This statement, an important one in view of the declarations of the Judaizers, Paul makes very solemnly. **21. Afterwards I came into ... Syria and Cilicia.** See [Acts 9:30](#). He was forced to leave Jerusalem by the attempt of the Hellenistic Jews to kill him. **22. And was unknown by face, etc.** The churches of Judea had heard of him, but few had seen him. **23. They had heard.** Rather, they kept hearing. That he was busy planting churches in Syria and Cilicia at this time we know from the fact that we find them in existence soon after ([Acts 15:41](#)). **24. They glorified God in me.** Glorified God for the work I was doing. The idea of glorifying *men* for the success of their work was unknown in the early church.



Chapter II

The Gospel Not Bondage to the Law

Summary —*Paul's Later Journey to Jerusalem. The Object of the Visit, Titus with Him, but Uncircumcised. Peter, James and John Apostles to the Circumcision; Paul and Barnabas to the Uncircumcision. The Right Hand of Fellowship. The Rebuke of Peter at Antioch. Justified by Faith in Christ; Not by Works of the Law.*

1. Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem. “Three years after” his conversion he went up to Jerusalem (1:18); fourteen years after, he went up again. If his conversion took place about a.d. 37, as is generally supposed, the visit now spoken of was in a.d. 51. At that time we find that Paul and Barnabas and “certain others” went up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this very question of the relation of the Gentile Christians to Judaism. See Acts 15. That this is the visit Paul means, is evident (1) because it is the right date; (2) the right persons are present, viz: Paul, Barnabas, Peter and James, and (3) the right question is the one discussed. The visit of Gal. 1:17. is mentioned in Acts 9:22 and took place in a.d. 40. Another, to carry relief at a time of famine, took place in a.d. 44 (Acts 11:30; 12:25); and the third, here referred to, took place in a.d. 50 or 51. **Took Titus with me.** Titus is not named in Acts 15:2, but only that “certain other” went with Paul and Barnabas.

2–5. And I went up by revelation. Because Christ revealed to me that I ought to go. **Communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.** For at least ten years he had been preaching among the Gentiles with great success, calling upon them to obey the gospel; not the law of Moses. He now explained to the Jerusalem Christians the gospel which he had preached, **privately to them who were of reputation**, to such men as Peter and James, so that there would be a full understanding before the public meeting described in Acts 15. **Lest, perchance, I should run.** Lest his apostolic labor should be made fruitless by the action of the Jewish Christians. **3. But neither Titus, etc.** Though Titus, a Gentile Christian and a minister, was with him, he was not compelled to be circumcised. **4. And that because of false brethren.** In the case of Timothy (Acts 16:3) Paul had circumcised him, not as a matter of obligation, or out of deference to the views of Jewish Christians, but so that he could reach unconverted Jews better, who would not listen to a Gentile. The apostles might have recommended the circumcision of Titus, Paul here intimates, not as a matter of duty, but of prudence, had it not been made an issue by the false brethren. He could not yield to such a demand without a sacrifice of principle. **Unawares brought in.** These false brethren were really Jews who had slipped into the church. **To spy out our liberty.** Really enemies in the guise of friends whose object was to take away the freedom of the gospel, and subject Christians to the bondage of the Jewish law. **5. To whom we gave**

place, no, not for an hour. We refused to yield to any of their demands. See [Acts 15:5](#). Paul sternly opposed their demands in order to preserve **the truth of the gospel** among the Gentiles. The motive of his firmness was to make the future safe. Had he yielded a jot, advantage would have been taken of it.

6–10. But of these who seemed to be somewhat. Who held high positions in the church; the apostles at Jerusalem; Peter, James and John, who are mentioned below. **Whatever they are, it maketh no matter.** However high their position, that does not alter the facts. **They who seemed to be somewhat in conference.** The leaders in the conference described in [Acts 15](#). **Added nothing to me.** They gave me no new instructions or authority. They had no change to suggest in the gospel I preached. **7. When they saw.** They perceived that I had been sent to the Gentiles, as Peter had the leading part in preaching to the Jews. **8. For he that wrought effectually in Peter.** As Christ gave Peter the wisdom, knowledge and power needful to establish the church among the Jews, so he had fully endowed Paul for a similar work among the Gentiles. **9. And when James, Cephas and John.** Cephas is the Hebrew name of Peter. See [John 1:42](#). The rest of the apostles were probably absent from Jerusalem at the time of this visit. **Who seemed to be pillars.** Chief men; supports of the church. **Perceived the grace.** See [verse 7](#). **They gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship.** An agreement was made that Paul and Barnabas should have supervision of the work among the Gentiles, and as a pledge of that agreement their hands were given. **10. Only they would that we should remember the poor.** Continue the collections in the Gentile churches for the poor at Jerusalem. We have seen Paul constantly active in this work ([1 Cor. 16:1](#)).

Note —In order to understand this epistle and parts of others, the reader must keep in mind the two great divisions of apostolic Christianity, the Jew and the Gentile. Of the Jewish, Peter, James and John were leaders; of the Gentile, Paul and Barnabas. These leaders were in full harmony, but the two sections of the church were not equally harmonious. The Jewish Christians, as a rule, still kept the Jewish law, and hoped for the conversion of the whole Jewish nation, until the destruction of Jerusalem; one extreme wing of them insisted that the Gentiles should keep the Jewish law, also. It is with this wing that Paul comes in conflict. Here in [this chapter](#), and also in [Acts 15](#), we have accounts of the conflict. After Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple in ruins, and the church removed elsewhere, the Jewish Christians gradually gave up the Jewish law, and the two divisions welded into one body in which there was neither Jew nor Gentile, but all one in Christ.

11–14. But when Peter came to Antioch. It is not certainly known when this event occurred, but probably not far from a.d. 51. Paul narrates it to show that Peter had no superiority over him, as the Judaizers claimed, and as the Romanists still assert. Peter did a wrong thing, and Paul rebuked him for it. **12. Before certain came from James.** Men sent from Jerusalem by James, who stood now at the head of that church. **He did eat with Gen-**

tiles. See [Acts 11:3](#). Peter had no scruples about eating with Gentile Christians, but many of the Jewish Christians did. Hence he did before the messengers came from James what he refused to do after they came, “separating himself” from the Gentile Christians at Antioch.

13. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him. The other Jewish Christians at Antioch. To change their course thus, because of fear of these men from Jerusalem, was to *dissemble*. Even Barnabas, Paul's long-time companion in labor, was infected. **14. But when I saw.** It was time to act decisively. Antioch was a great center. It was important that no wrong influences go forth from that center. Hence Paul administered the stern rebuke to Peter which follows. **Before them all.** The rebuke was on a public occasion. **If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles.** He had, right there in Antioch, lived with the Gentile Christians according to their customs ([verse 12](#)). **Why compellest thou the Gentiles, etc.** Now, he insisted, at least by his example, that the Gentile Christians should become Jews. He virtually refused to fellowship them.

15–21. We. You and I. Both Paul and Peter were Jews by birth, and not **Gentiles sinners**. As Jews were wont to call the Gentile heathen. **16. Knowing.** There were certain facts that both of them knew. One of them was that men were **justified** (that is, forgiven) **not by the works of the law** (of Moses), **but by the faith of Jesus Christ**; that is, by the gospel. Both had **believed on Christ** in order that they might be justified. **For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.** This passage, quoted in [Rom. 3:20](#), is found in [Psalm 143:2](#). **17. But if ... we were found sinners.** We, Paul and Peter. We came to Christ for justification, because the gospel revealed to us that we were sinners, though professing to keep the law of Moses. **Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?** Did Christ make us Jews sinners? No, but when the knowledge of the gospel comes, they find that they are and have been sinners like the Gentiles. Christ only reveals to them their sinful state. **18. If I build up again the things which I destroyed.** Go back from Christ to Moses, and teach others to do the same. **I make myself a transgressor.** For thus I teach men to trust in the works of the law which cannot justify. **19. For I through the law am dead to the law.** Compare [Rom. 7:4–6](#), and see notes there; also [Col. 2:20](#). When the knowledge of Christ came, and he saw his faulty obedience to the law, he realized that he was dead in sin, slain by the law. But having died, he was freed from the law, when he became a new creature in Christ. **20. I have been crucified with Christ.** By faith Paul was crucified at his conversion, crucified in the flesh, died to the old life with Christ. Now he lives, or rather, **Christ liveth** in him. The old life is laid aside, and the new life is a Christlike life, due to the spirit of Christ. He is now merged in Christ. **Live by faith.** Faith is the bond that binds him to Christ and enables him to live the new life. **21. I do not frustrate the grace of God.** He would do so, if he went back to the Jewish law, and trusted in it. If it gave righteousness, then the gospel was not needed, and **Christ died in vain.**

Note —The account in this chapter of Paul's visit to Jerusalem, and of his controversy with Peter, is utterly inconsistent with the Romish doctrine of the supremacy of Peter. No Pope could or would allow a bishop or cardinal to “rebuke him openly,” as Paul did Peter. So, too, the reference of the controversy in [Acts 15](#), to “the apostles and elders,” instead of to Peter, and the final judgment of James, which was received, contradict the Vatican system. Indeed, the doctrine of popedom is utterly inconsistent with the whole tenor of the Acts, and the Pauline Epistles.... This meeting at Antioch is the last between Peter and Paul of which the New Testament gives record. Early church tradition, however, reports that they met once in Rome, where they were tried and condemned on the same day, and then parted, Peter to be crucified on the hill of the Janiculum, and Paul, the Roman citizen, to be beheaded at the Three Fountains on the Ostian Way. Could we rely upon this tradition it would seem fitting that the two greatest apostles, of the Circumcision and of the Uncircumcision, should lay down their burdens together and go side by side to report their work to their common Lord.



Chapter III

Justification Belongeth to Abraham's Children by Faith

Summary — *The Spirit Imparted to Galatian Christians Through the Gospel. This, too, Before They Knew of the Works of the Law. Abraham Justified by Faith, While Yet Uncircumcised. Those of All Nations, Who Believe, Blessed With Abraham. All Condemned by the Law Since All Are Sinners. Christ, Whom It Slew, Redeemed Us from Its Curse. The Covenant With Abraham Which Included the Gentiles Made Before the Law. The Law Cannot Disannul It. It Included Christ. All Believers Having Put on Christ, the Seed of Abraham, Become Abraham's Children.*

1–5. Who hath bewitched you? That they, Gentiles, instructed in the gospel, should virtually deny Christ's death by seeking justification by the law was inexplicable. Were they bewitched? **Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth.** Paul, while among them, had so faithfully and vividly preached Christ crucified, that it might be said that he was pictured before their eyes. Yet, if they were justified by the law, Christ was crucified in vain. **2. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law?** Let them answer this. He had preached Christ to them, they had heard, believed and obeyed; not a word was said of the works of the law; yet God had acknowledged the work by imparting his Spirit. **3. Are ye so foolish?** They had begun with a spiritual religion, and received the Spirit. Did they expect to be made perfect by the fleshly ordinances of the law? **4. Have ye suffered so many things in vain?** If they turned from the cross to the law for salvation, all that they had suffered for Christ was in vain. **If it be indeed in vain.** I take this to mean, “If it be possible that you do turn to the law and make your sufferings vain.” **5. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit.** Did God bestow spiritual gifts and miraculous powers among you as the result of works of the law, or of **the hearing of faith?** Were these bestowed through the law, or the gospel?

6–9. Even as Abraham believed God, etc. The Galatians would have to reply to the questions of [verse 5](#), “By the hearing of faith?” “Yes,” says Paul, “Even as Abraham, who was accepted as righteous by faith without the law.” See [Gen. 15:6](#). This passage is quoted in [Rom. 4:3, 9, 21, 22, and in James 2:23](#). **7. Know ye therefore.** Paul now states his great argument. Abraham's faith made him righteous; he is the spiritual father of believers. Those who believe upon Christ, the promised seed of Abraham, are the spiritual children of Abraham and the heirs of the promise. **8. The Scripture, foreseeing.** Looking forward to the salvation of the heathen who believe on Christ. **Preached before the gospel unto Abraham.** Announced it in anticipation, in a great Messianic promise. **In thee shall, etc.** See [Gen. 12:3](#). Observe (1) that this promise is made to Abraham long before he was circumcised. (2) It is a promise of a blessing for the Gentile nations through him. (3) It is a promise of Christ,

and hence the gospel in promise before the law existed. **9. So then.** Then this promise embraces Gentile believers. They are blessed as believing Abraham was blessed. See [verse 6](#).

10–12. For as many as are of the works of the law. Having just shown that believers through Christ are justified, he next shows that all under the law are in condemnation. **It is written.** See [Deut. 27:26](#). Compare [Rom. 3:19, 20](#). Not only those under the law fail of justification, but the curse rests upon them, for all fail to obey all the things in the law. See [Rom. 3:23](#). **11. The just shall live by faith.** To seek righteousness by the law is also contrary to the prophets, for [Habakkuk 2:4](#) says that the just shall live by *faith*, not by the works of the law. **12. The law is not of faith.** Is not a system of faith, but proclaims life by **doing** the law, rather than by faith. The quotation is from [Lev. 18:5](#). But since none can keep it perfectly, all are under the curse ([verse 10](#)).

13, 14. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse. From the curse of the law Christ hath redeemed us by suffering for us. **Being made a curse for us.** He took our curse on himself and suffered in our stead. **For it is written.** In [Deut. 21:23](#). Compare [Matt. 20:28](#); [1 Tim. 2:6](#); [1 Cor. 6:20](#); [7:23](#); [Titus 2:14](#), etc. **14. That the blessing of Abraham.** Christ took the curse upon himself that we might be blessed with the believing Abraham ([verse 6](#)). Hence Gentiles who believe have the promise of justification, and of the Spirit. Compare [verses 2 and 5](#). There it is shown that the Spirit came by the faith, rather than by the law.

15–18. I speak after the manner of men. I will make a comparison with human affairs. **Though it be but a man's covenant, etc.** A covenant, or agreement, among men, after it is ratified, cannot be annulled or altered without the consent of both parties. **16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promise made.** The covenant with its promises was made with Abraham and his seed. There were promises spoken on several occasion. See [Gen. 12:3, 7](#); [13:16](#); [15:5](#); [17:7](#). The promises of the covenant were to the seed, as well as to Abraham, and hence did not terminate with his death. **He saith not, To seeds, as of many, but ... to thy seed.** This passage has excited much criticism. Many have thought that Paul made a grammatical mistake. Even Luther says: “My dear brother Paul, this argument won't stick.” The criticism is that *sperma*, the Greek word rendered “seed,” is a collective noun and may include all Abraham's descendants. Paul elsewhere shows that he knew just the meaning of *sperma* ([Rom. 4:18](#); [9:7](#)), but the question here is not one of grammar, but of spiritual meaning. Paul does not mean that *sperma* (seed) excludes plurality, but that it implies unity. Not the word “children” or “descendants” is used. This would embrace the children of Ishmael, of Esau, and of Keturah. But there is a seed to whom the promise is given; a seed that embraces many, but is one. That seed is Christ the head, and all in Christ. See [1 Cor. 12:12](#). The whole spiritual seed of Abraham concentrates in Christ. The promise is to Christ and all in Christ. Paul understood Greek as well as his critics, and also knew what he meant. **17. And this I say.** He returns to the argument introduced in [verse 15](#). **That the covenant.** He has just shown that this covenant was not only with Abraham, but with his spiritual

seed, and hence must continue in effect until Christ came. Hence the law, made over four centuries after the covenant was given, could not disannul it. The covenant made with Abraham is still in force. **Four hundred and thirty years.** According to Usher's Chronology, the promise was made to Abraham in b.c. 1921; the law was given at Sinai b.c. 1491; the interval is 430 years. But some have held that Paul made a mistake because in [Exod. 12:12](#) it said that Hebrews were in Egypt 430 years. The matter is easily explained. The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament is the one usually followed by Christ and his apostles. Its translators, following the Hebrew copy before them, render [Exodus 12:12](#), "The sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt, *and in the land of Canaan*, was four hundred and thirty years." Whether this is right, or our Hebrew text, does not matter. Paul gave the usually received statement. His point was simply that the law was given many ages after the covenant with Abraham. **18. If the inheritance be of the law.** Law and promise exclude each other. The legal heir receives his inheritance by law, if there be no will; one not a legal heir may receive it by the promise of a will. The inheritance was given to Abraham by promise; and ours depends on the promise.

19–23. Wherefore then serveth the law? What was its object then? **It was added** in order to restrain transgressions among men, and especially among the fleshly race of Abraham, until the promised seed, **to whom the promise was made**, even Christ, should come. It was therefore only to last until that seed came. **Ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.** Communicated through the means of angels to the mediator between Israel and God; that is, to Moses. See [Acts 7:53](#); [Heb. 2:2](#); [Deut. 33:2](#), and [Deut. 5:5](#). **20. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one.** A mediator implies two parties between whom he acts. **But God is one.** The idea is that when God makes a promise by his sovereign power no mediator is required. God acts alone. Thus it was when the promises were made to Abraham. God, too, is One, the same, always, and hence the law is not due to a change of the divine mind. **21. Is the law then against the promises?** No. The law does not give life at all. If it did, and could impart righteousness, then it might be said to be opposed to the promises of righteousness by faith. **22. But.** But none became righteous by the law. The Scriptures place all under sin that the promise should be to them only who believe through Christ. All hope is in the gospel. See [Rom. 11:32](#). **23. Kept under the law.** Before the faith was revealed we were confined under the law, as it were in prison, in a state of preparation for the faith that was to **be revealed**. The law was "added" (see [verse 19](#)) in order to do a work of preparation until the gospel was revealed.

24–29. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster. "Tutor," in the Revision. In Roman families a trusted slave, a pedagogue, had charge of children, preserved them from harm, and took them to school. The law is such a tutor; not a schoolmaster, but a guide to lead us to the school of Christ. There we are **justified by faith**. **25. After that faith is come.** When once brought to Christ we do not need the tutor any longer. We are no longer under him.

26. For ye are all the children of God. Faith has come to all of you. You are all God's children by faith in Christ. Hence you are under the schoolmaster no longer. **27. For.** He now shows how their faith acted to bring them into Christ. As Dr. Schaff says, "Faith always implies surrender." Faith leads to obedience. The believer is **baptized into Christ**, and being found in him has **put on Christ**. Being in Christ, a member of his body, a part of the Son, the believer becomes a child of God. Compare [Rom. 6:3](#); [1 Cor. 10:2](#), and [Matt. 28:19](#). "The baptized is surrounded by Christ and covered by his merits.... The figure of putting on Christ as a new dress afterwards gave rise to the custom of wearing white baptismal garments."—*Schaff, in loco*. **28. There is neither Jew nor Greek.** In Christ the old, worldly lines of separation are all blotted out. **All one.** One person, as it were, "one new man" ([Eph. 2:15](#)), of which Christ is the head. All, without regard to race, blended into one whole. **29. If ye be Christ's.** As Christ is the seed of Abraham, all in Christ become the spiritual seed of Abraham, and hence heirs of the promise to Abraham's seed.

Note. —In the study of this Letter, it is well to keep in mind that the term *faith* is used by Paul often in a sense that means more than the act of belief. When it is put in contrast with the law, it is used in the sense of *The Faith*, that is, The Gospel. It comprehends what is believed, believing, and the results of believing. The fact that the apostles so often places the definite article before the word faith, so that in the Greek he speaks of *The Faith*, leaves no doubt of his meaning. It is unfortunate that the translators have obscured the meaning by omitting the article. Thus in this chapter the Greek gives the definite article before the word (*the faith*) five times where it is omitted in the Common Version. The examples are [verse 14](#), [verse 23 \(twice\)](#), [verses 25 and 26](#).

Chapter IV

The Two Covenants

Summary — *Children, While Minors, Not Free. So the Israelites Under the Bondage of the Law Until Christ Came. Christ Frees From This Bondage. The Folly of Gentiles Seeking This Bondage. How the Galatians Had Once Welcomed the Gospel. The Two Covenants, Hagar, and Sarah, and Their Significance.*

1–3. That the heir, as long as he is a child. In the [last verse of chapter 3](#), Paul speaks of heirs. He now shows why the bondage of the Jewish law preceded the gospel. Even an heir is not free when a child. It is needful that he be controlled, even as though he were a servant. He is kept ([verse 2](#)) **under tutors and governors**. The tutors had charge of his person; the governors were stewards who managed his estate. These had control until the time appointed by his father in his will, that he should be free and have full charge. **3. Even so we.** Both Jews and Gentiles. We were minors, children, not yet delivered from bondage, since the time had not come appointed by the Father. **Under the elements of the world.** The law of Moses and whatever law might be diffused among the heathen. The law of Moses was a temporal law, having temporal promises.

4–6. When the fulness of time. The time appointed by the Father. See [verse 2](#). **Made of woman, made under the law.** Not only by taking upon himself the nature of humanity, but also subjecting himself to our legal conditions. **5. To redeem them that were under the law.** Those under bondage need redemption in order to secure freedom. Paul has shown that those under the law were in bondage. From this bondage Christ came to redeem us. How the redemption was wrought is shown in [3:13](#). **That we might receive.** This “adoption of sons” is bestowed as a gift. We cannot have it, and still be in bondage. **6. Because ye are sons.** The spirit is bestowed not to make us sons, but because we have become sons by the faith. See [John 1:12](#). **Crying, Abba, Father.** See notes on [Rom. 8:15](#). Abba is simply the Syriac for father. It is found also in [Mark 14:36](#). This spirit of adoption helps the son to realize that he is a son, and to look up to God and to address him, if a Semitic, as *Abba*; if a Greek as *Pater*; if an Anglo-Saxon, as *Father*.

7–9. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant. Because redeemed, adopted as a son, having received the spirit of adoption. **If a son, then an heir.** Compare [Rom. 8:17](#). Heirs of a heavenly inheritance. **8. Howbeit, then.** These Galatian brethren had been idolaters, and had worshiped idols which were not gods at all. At that time they **knew not God**, the true God, at all. **9. But now, after that ye have known God.** Having learned the knowledge of the true God. **Or rather, are known of God.** God, himself, had sought them through the gospel, and had offered them eternal life. They knew God because God had taken note of them and sent them the gospel. **How turn ye again.** How can they, known of God, called



from the bondage of those that are not gods ([verse 8](#)), turn back again to bondage? The bondage referred to is that of the law. They had been delivered from the bondage of idolatry, but were relapsing into another bondage. **Weak and beggarly elements.** Weak, because they have no spiritual power to strengthen us; beggarly, because they have no rich promises like the gospel; elements, because they belong to a rudimentary condition, to an undeveloped state to the childhood of the race.

10–11. Ye observe days. These are specifications of how they were “turning back” to the Jewish law. Compare [Col. 2:16](#). The days are the Jewish Sabbaths. The months are the new moons; the times are the Jewish festivals; the years are the Sabbatical years. In observing these there was legal bondage to an obsolete system. **11. In vain.** See notes on 2:2.

12–16. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am. Literally, “Become as I am.” Come to my ground. **For I am as ye are.** Rather, I become as ye are. I gave up my bondage to Judaism, the religion of my fathers, and made myself as a Gentile to Gentiles. **Ye did me no wrong.** My complaint against you is not on personal grounds. You have not wronged me. **13. Ye know how, through infirmity, etc.** The Revision is clearer. Some fact, not explained to us, but well known to the Galatians, is referred to. It is implied that some physical weakness caused him to preach in Galatia the first time. Perhaps he was passing through and was stopped by an infirmity that prevented him from traveling. **The first time.** This implies he had preached there more than once. The [Acts](#) speak of two visits to Galatia. **14. And my temptation which was in my flesh.** The Revision follows the best manuscripts: “Your temptation, which was in my flesh.” His “infirmity” is meant. It was probably some malady which hindered his work—might have disfigured him, and been a temptation to the Galatians to ridicule and despise him. Probably [2 Cor. 12:7](#) refers to the same affliction. Both these allusions show that the infirmity was one that he severely felt. But the Galatians **despised not, nor rejected** him on that account, but received him heartily, even as **an angel of God**, God’s messenger. **15. Where, then, is the blessedness?** They then congratulated themselves that Paul had come to them with the gospel. **I bear you record.** So great was then their joy and sense of obligation, that they could not do enough to show their gratitude. Why, they would even have given him their own eyes!—a proverbial expression denoting very strong devotion. **16. Am I, therefore, become your enemy, etc.** Then, you were so devoted to me; has the fact that I tell you the truth alienated you? It is probable that he refers to truth told on his second visit.

17–20. They zealously seek you. The false, Judaizing teachers are meant. They showed great zeal for them, but they were not seeking their good. **They would exclude you.** Exclude you from the great body of Gentile believers and bind you to their clique. **18. It is good to be zealously affected.** To exhibit zeal and feeling is a good thing. It was good to show this feeling when he was present with them. But now it was changed in respect of himself. It was **only when he was present.** **19. My little children.** He addresses them very tenderly as their



spiritual parent. **Of whom I travail in birth again.** He is more than a father; he travails for them as a mother. He had done so when they were converted; he did not now again until they were so matured in Christ that they would cling to the gospel. **20. I desire to be present.** When present ([verse 18](#)) they had shown warm feeling for him. He would now that they were face to face. **To change my voice.** To speak, not severely, as a letter would sound, but tenderly. **I stand in doubt.** Is perplexed by what he hears, and filled with fears.

21–31. Tell me, ye that desire, etc. What troubled him was their tendency to accept the obsolete law of Moses. He now addressed all such a question. Will they hear the law itself? **22. A bondmaid.** Hagar, whose child was Ishmael. **A freewoman.** Sarah, whose child was Isaac. **23. Was born after the flesh.** The son of the bondwoman was born in the ordinary course of nature. **Was by promise.** The son of Sarah was a child of promise, born when she was long past the age of bearing children. See [Gen. 18:10, 14; 21:1, 2; Heb. 11:11](#). **24. Which things are an allegory.** Though literally true, the facts had an allegorical interpretation. The two women and their children were types. **Are two covenants.** One, the bondwoman, represents the covenant given at Sinai, the covenant of bondage. The other, the freewoman, represents the covenant of Christ, the gospel. **25. For this Agar is Mount Sinai.** Represents Sinai. This Mount Sinai is in Arabia, the very home of Ishmael and his race. Some also add that one name of the mountain is Hagar, but this is not certain. **Answereth to.** Represents the earthly Jerusalem, under bondage, bondage to the law herself, and also her children, as Hagar and her child were under bondage. **26. But Jerusalem which is above is free.** The freewoman and her free child represent the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of Christ. **Our mother.** The mother of those in Christ. **27. For it is written. Isaiah 54:1.** In that connection the prophet speaks of the Babylonian bondage, of Abraham and Sarah, and then of the deliverance, looking onward to the glorious deliverance in Christ. [Chapter 53](#) is all concerning Christ, and [chapter 54](#) speaks of the great deliverance. **Thou barren.** Sarah, the type of the church, long childless. **The desolate.** Sarah, or rather the church, that has more children by far than the children of the old covenant. **28. Now we, brethren.** As Isaac was the child of promise, so are we, Gentile and Jewish Christians, of the promise to Abraham of a Seed in which all nations should be blessed. **29. As he then that was born after the flesh persecuted.** See [Gen. 21:9](#). Ishmael persecuted Isaac. So the Jews still persecuted God's spiritual children, the heirs of the promise. Paul "of the Jews had five times received forty stripes save one." **30. Cast out the bondwoman and her son.** The allegory will hold good still further. Abraham, when it was impossible that the two families should get along in peace, cast out the bondwoman and her son. See [Gen. 21:10](#). So, too, the Jews, the children of the old covenant, had lost the divine favor, and the children of the promise, whether Jews or Gentiles, made heirs. **31. So then, brethren.** This, then, is the conclusion. We Christians are not children of the bondwoman, and are not under the bondage of the law. Dr. Schaff contrasts the two covenants as follows: Hagar and Ishmael —Judaism . Sarah and Isaac —Christianity . The Old

Covenant The New Covenant The Law. The Gospel. Natural Birth. Spiritual Birth. Mount Sinai in Arabia. Mount Sion Above. The Earthly Jerusalem. The Heavenly Jerusalem. Bondage. Freedom. Persecuting. Persecuted. To be Cast Out and Off. Heirs of the Inheritance.



Chapter V

The Fruits of the Flesh and of the Spirit

Summary — *To Fall Under the Law is to Lose Christ. Circumcision Avails Nothing, but Faith Working by Love. Love the Fulfilling of the Law. The Warfare Between the Flesh and the Spirit. The Works of the Flesh. The Fruits of the Spirit.*

1. Stand fast therefore. Compare Eph. 6:14; 2 Thess. 2:15. This verse is connected in meaning with the last chapter, where it is shown that the gospel is freedom, but the Mosaic law is the covenant of bondage. Hence Paul bids them to cling to their freedom in Christ, and not to be brought again under the yoke by being drawn under the Jewish law. **Again.** Once they had been under bondage to a heathen yoke (4:8); to accept the Jewish yoke would be a second bondage.

2–6. Behold, I Paul. He makes emphatic what he is about to say, by repeating his name, so familiar to his own converts. **If ye be circumcised.** Their circumcision, under the circumstances, would be the sign of their submission to the law of Moses. They, Gentile Christians, could not thus become Jews and remain Christians. It would be proof of trust in Moses rather than Christ, in the law rather than in the gospel. **3. I testify again.** He shows them that if one becomes circumcised to keep the law of Moses, that he is placed under obligation to keep the whole law, since other commandments are equally binding. **4. Christ is become of no effect unto you.** If you be circumcised in order to keep the Mosaic law (verse 2). **Ye are fallen from grace.** By resorting to the law for salvation. **5. For we.** We Christians, who trust in the gospel. **Through the Spirit.** Not through carnal ordinances, but strengthened by the Spirit **we wait** For the fulfillment of the hope which righteousness by faith instead of the law insures to us. **6. For in Christ Jesus, etc.** It made no difference in the sight of God whether a Christian was a circumcised Jew or an uncircumcised Gentile. Both stood on the same footing. It did make a great difference, though, if the Gentile Christian became circumcised in order to keep the law (verse 2). It is true Paul circumcised Timothy, but it was not to keep the law. See notes on 2:3. **But faith** availeth—the faith in Christ; the faith which uses love as its medium and method of working. There is first faith in Christ; then the love of Christ.

7–10. Ye did run well. A figure from the Grecian games. Compare 2:2; 1 Cor. 9:24; Heb. 12:1. **Who did hinder?** So as to stop your running. They had ceased to run by turning from the truth. **8. This persuasion.** To obey not the truth. It was not of him that called them, God, that they should turn from it. **9. A little leaven, etc.** A proverb which condenses a sermon. Probably only one or two Judaizers had done all this evil work in Galatia. A very little thing in the beginning will sometimes work a great mischief. **10. I have confidence.**

That they will be none otherwise minded than himself. **He that troubleth you.** All these false teachers shall be brought to condemnation, whoever they may be.

11, 12. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision. Perhaps the Judaizers, in order to promote their doctrine, urged that Paul also taught circumcision in some places. They might even quote the case of Timothy (see notes on [Acts 16:3](#)). If this charge was true, why did the Jews everywhere persecute him? **Then is the offense of the cross ceased.** The great offense of the cross to the Jews was that Christ is the atonement for sin, and that the whole Jewish system of ordinances perished at the cross. Of course, if Paul taught obedience to the law, he rejected the doctrine of the cross. **12. I would they were even cut off.** These men are seeking to make the mark of bondage by cutting your flesh. I would that they would **cut themselves off** (see Revision). I take it that he means “Cut themselves off from the church so as to have nothing more to do with it.”

13–15. Ye have been called to liberty. The liberty of children of God. **Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.** Do not think that because you are free, you are free to do evil. Let not liberty becomes license. **But by love serve, etc.** But love each other so well that there will be mutual service and helpfulness. **14. For all the law is fulfilled.** The essence of the law is comprehended in a single command—that of loving your neighbor. See notes on [Rom. 13:8](#); also compare [Matt. 22:39](#), and [Lev. 19:18](#). **15. But if ye bite and devour.** Bite in sudden anger, and devour in continued hatred. **Take heed.** Mutual anger and hate must result in mutual destruction.

16–18. Walk in the Spirit. Under its guidance, as it directs. We have its directions in the words of Christ and the apostles. He who is guided by the Spirit will not obey **the lusts of the flesh.** **17. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, etc.** The desires of the flesh and the Spirit are in conflict. They war within us. One would lead in one direction, and the other in another. **So that ye cannot.** The Greek is not so strong as this. It implies that the two wills within us hinder us from doing as we would by their conflict. **18. But if ye be led by the Spirit.** If the desire of the Spirit prevails. Those “led of the Spirit are the sons of God” ([Rom. 8:14](#)), and are free from the law. The law with its carnal ordinances in Paul's view was adapted to a fleshly condition.

19–21. Now the works of the flesh ... are these. The tree is known by its fruits. We show our fruits whether we are of the flesh or Spirit. The works of the flesh are first given. Paul names (1) Three sins of sensuality; (2) two spiritual sins of false religion; (3) sins against our fellow men, of which nine are specified; (4) sins of intemperance, of which two are named. The sins of sensuality were sanctioned by the heathen religion in the worship of Venus, and sanctioned by the purest heathen moralists. Christianity had to breast the current of the whole world. It differs from heathen morality as day from night. **20. Witchcraft.** Sorcery or magic, whether a superstition or deception, was prevalent in all the ancient world. See notes on [Acts 19:19](#). **21. Drunkenness.** A common sin of all ages. **Revellings.** Any kind



of riotous or unseemly conduct; carousals. **As I have also told you in time past.** As before, when in Galatia, so now he tells them again that none who do these things can expect to be saved.

22, 23. But the fruits of the Spirit. The fruits named are not our fruits, but of the Spirit in us. If we bear these fruits we show that we have the Spirit. There are four groups: (1) Love, the Christian grace which works out the whole law. (2) Joy and peace, which are the normal state of the Christian. (3) The graces which relate to others, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity (faith), meekness. (4) The last fruit looks to oneself, temperance, or self-control. It implies not only abstinence from injurious drinks and food, but control of the temper, the tongue, the desires, the passion for money or power. **23. Against such there is no law.** Those who bear these fruits find no law interfering with them.

24–26. They that are Christ's. They cannot walk after the flesh because they have crucified their lusts. Have died with Christ, been buried, and risen, not to live their own lives, but Christ's. See [Rom. 6:2–6](#). Baptism is supposed to mark a complete separation between the old life of sin and the Christian life. **25. Walk in the Spirit.** If we are born again, and have a spiritual life, let us show it by walking in obedience to the Spirit. **26. Let us not be desirous of vain glory.** This was probably a well-known fault of the Galatians.



Chapter VI

Concluding Admonitions

Summary —*Restoring the Stumbling. Humility Commended. The Law. Reaping and Sowing. Paul's Superscription. Glorifying in the Cross. The Mark of Jesus Christ.*

1, 2. If a man be overtaken in a fault. Not gone into sin as a result of sinful premeditation, but surprised by it. Those intending well are sometimes caught unawares. **Ye which are spiritual.** Who have continued to walk in the Spirit. **Restore such an one.** Instead of judging severely and seeking to cut them off, seek lovingly to lead them back from their error. **Considering thyself.** We ourselves may be caught by temptation and sin. Let us bear in mind that we are not infallible, and judge others gently. **2. Bear ye one another's burdens.** Help each other, sustain each other; if you see one about to stumble under his burden, hold him up. **So fulfill the law of Christ.** The law of love. See [John 13:34](#).

3–6. If a man think, etc. If he thinks he is strong, needs no help, will never need sympathy, etc., he deceiveth himself. **4. But let every man prove his own work.** Instead of commenting upon the weaknesses of others, let him test his own work. If his work stands the test, there he can rejoice in it alone, not because he is superior to another. **5. For every man shall bear his own burden.** This seems at first to conflict with [verse 2](#). The meaning of [verse 2](#) is “Bear ye one another's burden of trial and suffering;” of [verse 5](#), “Every one must bear his own burden of responsibility.” The first is aiding to bear the burden of another's infirmities; the second is the burden of our account before God. The Greek had two different words for “burden” in the two verses. It is unfortunate that the Versions do not represent the difference by two words in the English. **6. Let him that is taught.** Let those who are taught by the preachers and teachers sustain those who instruct them.

7–10. Be not deceived. Men often are. They do fancy that God may be mocked. The immutable law of the spiritual kingdom shows that he is not. **Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.** A law not only of the vegetable world, but of our bodies and spirits. Habit is only an illustration of this law. The delirium tremens on the one hand, and the purity of the aged saint on the other are due to the action of this law. **8. Soweth to his flesh.** He who thus sows will reap a crop of fleshly lusts and ills. His carnal indulgence will end in moral ruin. **Soweth to the Spirit.** He shall reap spiritually, and as a final harvest the spiritual life beyond, the life everlasting. **9. Let us not be weary in well doing.** In sowing to the Spirit. Because, if we hold out faithful, and faint not, we are sure to reap in due season. **10. As we have therefore opportunity.** Doing good is well doing, *i. e.*, sowing to the Spirit. The Christian rule is to do good, but above all others to love, cherish and help the brethren.

11–14. Ye see how large a letter. Rather as in the Revision. Paul used an amanuensis in letter writing, but the superscriptions were written in his own hand to show the genuine-



ness of his epistles. See [Rom. 16:22](#), and [Col. 4:18](#). Some have supposed that his “thorn in the flesh” was a weakness of the eyes which rendered it difficult for him to write. **12. As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh.** To comply with the worldly demands. They desire to have you circumcised, because, if you are not, and they fellowship you, the Jews will persecute them. **13. For neither they themselves.** They do not keep the law in all its details, but want to bring you under it that they may boast of their Gentile proselytes. **Glory in your flesh.** Glory because circumcision has made marks in your flesh. **14. But God forbid.** Not only will he not glory in what does away with the cross ([5:11](#)), but God forbid that he should glory in anything but the cross. **By whom.** By this cross he also is crucified, so crucified that he is dead to the world. It is separated from him.

15–18. In Christ Jesus. See note on [5:6](#). Circumcision in itself is a matter of indifference. To be a new creature, neither Jew nor Gentile, but a child of God is essential. **16. This rule.** The one just named in [verse 15](#). A benediction is pronounced upon all such. **And upon the Israel of God.** Rather, *Even* upon, etc. The Greek word often means even, and does here, as the Israel of God does not differ from those who follow “this rule.” **17. From henceforth let no man trouble me.** Dispute my apostolic authority. **I bear in my body the marks, etc.** He bore on his body too many evidence of what he had suffered for Christ. As slaves were often branded by their master’s name, so he had the brand of Christ upon him in his scars. Compare [2 Cor. 11:24, 25](#). **18. Brethren.** This is his parting benediction. It rests not upon the flesh against which he had warned them, but upon the highest part of their being, the spirit.



**The Epistle of Paul to the
Ephesians**



Introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians

Critical students of the New Testament are not in agreement concerning the Epistle upon the study of which we now enter. Their difference is not concerning its right to a place in the sacred Scriptures, nor concerning its authorship, but whether it was addressed by Paul to the church at Ephesus, or to some other church.

The reasons which have suggested a doubt are briefly as follows: One of the three most ancient and trusted manuscripts, the Vatican, omits *at Ephesus* in the [first verse](#); the heretic Marcion, in the third century, ascribes it to the Laodiceans; Basil, in the fourth century, speaks of the absence of the words *at Ephesus* in the manuscript; in [chapter 1:15](#), Paul speaks as if his knowledge of the Ephesians had been gained by report rather than by personal acquaintance; and in [Col. 4:16](#), Paul speaks of an Epistle to the Laodiceans, which has been lost unless this be the Epistle of which he speaks. These facts had such weight with the authors of Conybeare and Howson's *Life of Paul* that they affirm the "one thing certain to be that the Epistle was not directed to the Ephesians."

On the other hand, in the Vatican, as well as in all other most valued manuscripts, the heading is *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*; in the Vatican the words *at Ephesus*, wanting in [verse 1](#) in the body of the manuscript, are supplied in the margin; no manuscript is in existence which supplies these words by any other name; in the second century, at a time when there could have been no doubt about the facts, it is spoken of by the Fathers as "The Epistle to the Ephesians," as though the matter was not under discussion; the remark of Paul in [1:15](#), about hearing of their faith, has an exact parallel in [Philemon 5](#), and yet Philemon was his own convert ([verse 19](#)), and is entirely natural when we remember that several years had passed since he had last seen them; the absence of *at Ephesus* in a few manuscripts of the fourth century, and in the Vatican, as well as all other difficulties, can be explained without the necessity of denying that the *Epistle was addressed to the Ephesians*. Hence the great majority of critics have agreed in following the authority of existing manuscripts and of the ancient church in the statement that the Epistle was addressed to the great congregation founded by its writer in the capital of proconsular Asia, which had enjoyed his apostolic labors for a longer period than any other of which a record has come down to us.

The city of Ephesus, a Grecian city on the Asiatic coast almost exactly east of Athens, was a great commercial metropolis in the first century, and the capital of the Roman province which was called by the name of Asia. Its greatest distinction hitherto had been, not its commercial pre-eminence, but the splendid temple of Diana, which was counted one of the Seven Wonders of the world. The city lay upon the edge of a plain, which extended to the sea, and in its artificial harbor were seen the ships from all the ports of the eastern Mediterranean. In our times, half-buried ruins are the only relics of its former greatness. The only

inhabitants I saw upon the site in 1889 were the occupants of two black tents, who were pasturing their flocks upon the alluvial plain. We can still, however, see the proofs of its former magnificence in the outlines of the great theater ([Acts 19:29](#)), and in the ruins of the temple of Diana ([Acts 19:27](#)). The modern Turkish village of Agasalouk, a wretched hamlet, is nearly two miles distant from the site of the Ephesus of the times of Paul.

The Ephesian church was virtually founded by Paul. About the close of his second missionary journey ([Acts 18:19–21](#)) he paused at Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem and preached in the Jewish synagogue. Leaving Priscilla and Aquila to follow up the impression which he had made, he went on, but returned on his third missionary journey ([Acts 19:1](#)), at which time he spent about three years ([Acts 20:31](#)), preaching the gospel with a success which threatened to effect an entire revolution in the city and province ([Acts 19:17–20](#)), and finally stirred up the avaricious fears of certain trades which profited by the old superstitions to such an extent that a commotion was aroused which caused him to leave the city. Since that date he had not seen Ephesus, though he had met the elders of the church at Miletus when on his way to Jerusalem ([Acts 20:17](#)).

It is not possible to determine the *date* of this Epistle with exactness. It was written at a time when Paul was a prisoner ([6:20](#)), and hence must have been written either at Cæsarea or at Rome. Meyer inclines to the first place, but the general consensus of opinion is that it belongs to the group of the Epistles which were sent forth from his Roman prison. Tychicus was the messenger to whom, on the same journey, were entrusted both this ([6:21](#)) and the Epistle to Colosse ([Col. 4:7](#)).

It was probably written to meet certain difficulties which were arising in the church. It was asked why the imperfections of Judaism and the errors of the Gentile religions existed so many ages before the Gospel was revealed? Was the Gospel an afterthought of God? Probably the leading thought is that, “The church of Jesus Christ, in which Jew and Gentile are made one, is a creation of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, decreed from eternity, and destined for eternity.” In [chapters 1–3](#), he shows the church was foreordained of God, that it had been redeemed, and that Jew and Gentile have been made one in Christ. In [chapters 4–6](#), the Apostle enters upon a practical application, enforcing unity, love, newness of life, walking in the strength of the Lord, and the armor of God.

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Chapter I

The Foreordination of the Church

Summary — *The Salutation. Our Election and Adoption by Grace. This the Source of Salvation. The Mystery Made Known. The Inheritance. Prayer that Wisdom and Knowledge Be Given to the Saints.*

1, 2. Paul, an apostle. It was always the custom anciently to place the name of the writer at the beginning rather than at the end as with us. **By the will of God.** Emphasis is placed in most of Paul's epistles upon the fact that he was not an apostle by the appointment of man, but by the will of God. **To the saints at Ephesus.** All Christians were called saints in the early church. See the salutations of other Epistles. **And to the faithful.** The same as the saints. There is no article in the Greek before "faithful." A literal translation is "To the saints dwelling in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus." **2. Grace.** For note on the salutation, see [Rom. 1:7](#).

3–6. Blessed be the God. The word rendered "blessed" is one from which our word *eulogize* is derived. It means, therefore, primarily, to praise. "Praised be the God," etc., gives the idea. **Who hath blessed us.** The blessed is here from the same root. The word means, as above, "to praise," or to "speak" good things of one; then to "speak" good things to, or bestow blessings, as a secondary meaning. This is the meaning here. **With all spiritual blessings.** All came from God, and he has withheld none from those in Christ. **In the heavenly.** In the kingdom of heaven. **4. According as.** "Even as," in Revision. **Chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.** This does not affirm that God chose some individuals and rejected others, but that before the world was, before there was Jew or Gentile, God chose to have a people for himself, the whole church of Christ, a covenant people confined to no one earthly race. **Holy and without blame.** God chose them that they might be holy. Holiness is the proof that a church is a chosen church. **5. Having predestinated us.** Foreordained that we, the church of Jesus Christ, should be adopted as his children. The whole line of argument is general instead of particular. God foreordained a church which should be composed of those adopted as his children. **According to the pleasure of his will.** The act of predestination was due simply to God's sovereign will. His will was the cause. **6. To the praise of the glory of his grace.** To the end that his grace in adopting us as children may redound to his praise and glory. **In the beloved.** In Christ. See [Matt. 3:17](#); [Col. 1:13](#).

7–12. In whom we have redemption through his blood. (1) We are in bondage to sin; (2) Christ redeems us; (3) the price paid is his blood. Compare [Matt. 20:28](#); [26:28](#); [Acts 20:28](#); [Gal. 3:13](#); [Heb. 9:22](#); [1 Pet. 1:19](#). Those redeemed are forgiven. **8. Which he made to abound.** The grace of God (see [verse 7](#)). It abounded **in all wisdom and prudence.** These attributes, ascribed to God, are fully shown in his grace and mercy. **9. Having made known unto us.**

To all who receive the adoption of Christ. **The mystery of his will.** The word “mystery” is used in the sense of something beyond human comprehension until revealed. This “mystery of his will” is revealed and is declared in the [next verse](#). **According to his good pleasure.** See verse 5. **10.** He now states the mystery which God had revealed. **In the dispensation of the fulness of times.** In the last dispensation which came in the fulness of time; when the times were full, or ripe. Fulness of time is often applied to the period of Christ's coming. See [Gal. 4:4](#); [Heb. 1:2](#); [Heb. 9:10](#); [1 Peter 1:20](#). **That he might gather together in one all things in Christ.** That the scattered families and tribes of men, both Jews and Gentiles, should all be gathered and united under one head, Christ. Nay, not only men, but angels, **all things in heaven and earth**, all should be united under Christ as head, so that he should be “all and in all” See [Rev. 5:13](#). Compare [Matt. 28:18](#), and many other passages which are parallel in thought. **11. In whom we were made a heritage.** See the Revision. We are in Christ made the heritage of God, or God's part. **Having been predestinated.** According to his will he predestinated us, the church, to the adoption of sons, and to be his heritage. **12. We should be to the praise of his glory.** This is the final result of our predestination and adoption. **We who first trusted in Christ.** Jewish believers like Paul who had the Christian hope **before** (see Revision) the Gentiles.

13, 14. In whom ye also trusted. The “we” of [verse 12](#) refers to Jewish believers; the “ye,” to Gentile believers, like most of the Ephesians, who also trusted, after that they **heard, etc.** They not only hoped, but **believed**. That is, they became believers, by trusting obedience; then they **were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise**. After they were converted, the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon them. It was a “promise” ([Acts 1:4](#)). The seal was attached to a letter or legal document to authenticate it to the world. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, was God's authentication to the world that the converts to Christ were accepted as his children. The presence of the new Spirit was shown by a new life exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit ([Gal. 5:22](#)). **14. Which is the earnest of our inheritance.** The “earnest” money was a small part of the purchase money given in hand to bind the bargain. Paul says that the Holy Spirit given to God's children is such earnest of the inheritance that he will bestow, a small part given now as a proof to his adopted children. **Until the redemption, etc.** Rather, “Unto.” This “earnest” given is looking unto the final and complete *redemption* from the grave of the **purchased possession**, the children of God bought with Christ's blood.

15, 16. After I heard of your faith. This verse has been thought to show that Paul was not personally acquainted with those to whom he wrote, and hence that this letter could not be addressed to the Ephesians; but he used similar language of Philemon, one of his own converts. See [Philemon 5](#). The language is natural if Paul left Ephesus in the spring of a.d. 57, and wrote this letter about the close of a.d. 62 (Conybeare and Howson), more than five years after. During this period he could only know of the faith and love of the Ephesians by what he *heard*. **16. Cease not to give thanks.** Because he heard so favorable a report.

17–19. That. This introduces the things for which he prayed God in their behalf. **The Father of glory.** The source of all spiritual glory. **Give unto you the Spirit of wisdom.** A gift of the Spirit. See notes on [1 Cor. 12:8](#). Divine wisdom works wisdom in believers. **And revelation.** The Spirit that reveals a knowledge of God and spiritual mysteries. This Spirit would enable them to better comprehend the “mystery” of God, the divine plans for human redemption in a better knowledge of him. **18. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.** “Heart,” in the Revision. The moving of the Spirit gives light. See [Gen. 1:2](#). This would follow if they were given “the Spirit of wisdom,” etc. **That ye may know.** Have a fuller comprehension. **The hope of his calling.** The hope of eternal life to which God had called them. **The riches, etc.** See [Col. 1:27](#). The heavenly inheritance given in the saints, rich beyond our conception. See [Acts 20:32; 26:18](#). **19. The exceeding greatness of his power.** He prays that they may have greater knowledge of three things: (1) Of eternal life (the hope); (2) of the glorious inheritance, and (3) of God's mighty power towards believers. This mighty power works to raise them from sin, as it worked to raise Christ from the dead. However the power works, it is the same power that raised Jesus.

20–23. Which he wrought in Christ. God's power wrought in Christ in the tomb so that he came forth living. **At his own right hand.** The Scriptures represent Christ at God's right hand. See [Mark 16:19; Heb. 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Col. 3:1](#). His seat there indicates his glory, and also that the work of redemption has been wrought. **21. Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.** Above all the angelic hierarchy. See [Rom. 8:38; 1 Peter 3:22; also Eph. 3:10](#). The same terms are applied to evil spirits in [6:12](#). Christ is above all angels, good or evil. **Above every name.** Every person, office and dignity, whether in this present state, or in that to come. **22. And hath put all things under his feet.** All power was given into his hands when he was raised from the dead ([Matt. 28:18](#)). He is the rightful ruler of all. **And gave him to be the head, etc.** He was, when raised from the dead ([verse 20](#)), exalted to be the ruler of all things and made the Head of the church; not merely its ruler, but the Head of the Body, which derives its life from the Head. Compare [1 Cor. 10:17; 12:27](#). Note that this exaltation is after the cross and the resurrection, definitely showing that Christ's church was not organized until after our Lord's suffering. **23. Which is his body.** His spiritual body, living by union with the Head, pervaded by the life of Christ. **The fulness of him.** The church is a manifestation of the fulness of Christ, the body filled by his life, who **filleth all in all**. Filleth all things with his majesty and power. The object of the last four verses is to describe Christ's glories. These are: (1) His resurrection; (2) His Exaltation to God's Right Hand; (3) His Supreme Dominion; (4) His Headship to the Church, his Body, filled with His Fulness. These glories all follow his stooping unto the death of the cross. He



abased himself that he might be exalted. “For the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”



Chapter II

The Church Redeemed in Christ

Summary — *Our Spiritual Condition in a State of Nature. God's Saving Mercy. Salvation by Grace Through Faith. No Longer Aliens and Strangers. Peace Between Jew and Gentile Through Christ. All Built into the Lord's Holy Temple.*

1–3. And you hath he quickened. In the [closing part of chapter 1](#) Paul has described the mighty working of the Divine power in raising Christ from the dead, and his exaltation to the right hand of God. He now turns from this mighty exhibition of power to another not less striking—the resurrection of those who were spiritually dead to a new and holy life. **Dead in trespasses and sins.** Spiritual death is meant. By their trespasses and sins they were separated from God. To be without God is to be in death. Trespasses are thought to refer to breaking known laws; sins, to the corrupt state which leads to a constantly sinful life. **2. According to the course of this world.** You lived in trespasses and sins, in accordance with the spirit of the world. **The prince of the power of the air.** Called elsewhere the prince of this world, Satan. Why he is called “prince of the power of the air” is not certain; various explanations are given. Probably his subtle influences and whisperings pervade the air, and come upon us as unconsciously as the vital fluid we breathe. The Jews held that the atmosphere was the abode of evil angels. **The spirit that now worketh.** This spirit, that of the world, of the power of the air, is the one which inspires those who live in disobedience. **3. Among whom also we all had our conversation.** In [verses 1 and 2](#) the second person is used, meaning the Ephesians; here the person is changed to the first. Meyer thinks that “ye” refers to Gentile Christians; “we” to Paul and his Jewish brethren. The Gentile Christians had been dead in trespasses and sins; nor had the Jewish Christians differed in this respect. **Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.** Not only fleshly desires, but the impulses of a sinful mind, such as malice, envy, pride, etc. **And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.** This declares that “we,” now Jewish Christians, were once, when in a state of nature, under condemnation, just as the “others,” the rest of the world, or the Gentiles. Some have held that this passage teaches innate, hereditary depravity. I am sure that this was not in the apostle's mind. (1) Two classes are spoken of, “you” and “we,” Gentiles and Jews. (2) Both were equally sinful, the first “dead in trespasses and in sins,” and the second “by nature the children of wrath, even as the others.” (3) The passage then simply affirms that Jews and Gentiles alike, before conversion, were dead in trespasses and sins, and under the divine condemnation. However, “by nature” is supposed to teach that the depravity is innate, and that all *are born* under the wrath of God. Such an interpretation would put the passage in conflict with Paul's teaching elsewhere, and with that of Christ. For instance, [Matt. 18:3 and 19:14](#) are inconsistent with the view that little children are born “under the

wrath of God.” Indeed, it is taught in this passage that both classes have been brought into this state of condemnation by walking in sin, not by their birth. But does not *by nature* imply that they are *born* “children of wrath?” The word rendered “by nature,” is found in [Rom. 2:14](#); [1 Cor. 11:14](#); [Gal. 2:15](#); [Gal. 4:8](#). In only one of these passages can it refer to natural birth at all, and there it refers to race ([Gal. 2:15](#)). In not one passage does it describe what is innate. It does describe custom, practice, and unconverted state. No one would say that the Gentiles, who “do by nature the things of the law,” do so because it is innate. It means that they do so without the revelation. In a similar sense it is used here, and means that “we,” as well as others, before we were converted by the gospel, were dwelling in sin like others, and were like them, “the children of wrath.” The state of nature is the unconverted state.

4–7. Having shown that both Jews and Gentiles were spiritually dead, Paul now declares the spiritual resurrection of the saints. This lifting up from death to a new life is due to God, rich in mercy, and on account of the great love wherewith he loved us. The [next verse](#) affirms the fact. **5. Hath quickened us together with Christ.** As he quickened Christ and raised him, so when we were dead in sins he gave us spiritual life by the gospel and lifted us to a new life. “We were planted in the likeness of his death and resurrection” ([Rom. 6:5](#)). **By grace ye are saved.** Not by works of the law, as he has shown so fully in the Galatian letter. **6. And hath raised us up together.** Buried into the death of Christ, we are risen with Christ ([Col. 2:12](#)). We are risen as new creatures to walk with the Risen Christ, with our minds on heavenly things ([Col. 3:1](#)). **To sit in heavenly places.** In our present state, to have our minds above ([Col. 3:2](#)). **7. That in the ages to come.** In all coming time. **The exceeding riches of his grace.** In saving, purifying and blessing his children.

8–10. **For by grace are ye saved through faith.** Lest they might forget the doctrine that he ever preached, he reminds them that works of the law never saved them; that they were saved by God’s grace shown in the gospel; that this salvation was obtained through the faith. The definite article is found before faith in the Greek, showing that *the* faith, or the gospel, is meant. **It is the gift of God.** The salvation is not due to ourselves, but is God’s gift. The grammatical construction of the Greek does not allow us to make “faith” the subject of the last clause. It is not “faith,” but salvation through the faith, which is the gift of God. So says John Wesley in his Notes: “This refers to the previous clause, *That you are saved*, etc.” **9. Not of works.** The salvation is not due to works of law, or to our own merit; hence there is no ground for boasting. **10. For we are his workmanship.** It is God who saved us; as new creatures, he had made us through the gospel. We are not saved by works, but are his workmanship, **created unto good works**, designed henceforth to abound in them. **Which God hath before ordained.** It is his ordination that all who believe the gospel and are saved should practice good works. God has graciously quickened us, saved us, made us new creatures, and prepared us unto good works.

11–13. Wherefore remember. Remembrance of all that God had done would awake gratitude. **The Uncircumcision.** Gentiles were so called by the Jews, who were the Circumcision. **In the flesh.** There was a circumcision not in the flesh, not made with hands, but of the Spirit, and in the heart ([Rom. 2:28, 29](#)). **12. Without Christ.** The past state of the Gentile Christians is described when they had no knowledge of Christ. **Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.** Not being of the race of Abraham, who were in covenant relation with God. **Strangers from the covenants.** The various covenants made with the patriarchs which contained the promise of Christ, of which they were ignorant, and hence not partakers of the hope.

Having no hope. No hope in the promise or in Christ. **Without God.** Walking without the knowledge of the true God. **13. But now in Christ Jesus.** Once so far off, separated from God, they have been brought nigh, and the means that brought them is **the blood of Christ.**

14–18. For he is our peace. It is the Crucified Christ that brought you nigh, for he, he only, is our peace. The creator of peace between Jew and Gentile; between alienated man and God. **Who hath made both one.** Jew and Gentile one. The old distinctions are destroyed. All are on the same footing before God. **Hath broken down, etc.** Having broken down, or ended, the law of Moses which built up a wall between the Jews and Gentiles. **15. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity.** While he was in the flesh the law condemned him and nailed him to the cross. In so doing it destroyed itself. The old covenant ended at the cross, when the new covenant was dedicated by the blood of Christ. Hence, the law, the wall between Jew and Gentile, “the enmity,” was taken away. **To make in himself of twain one.** Thus, the difference between Jew and Gentile being destroyed, both are made in the church one new race, “a royal priesthood, a chosen nation, a peculiar people,” at **peace** among themselves. **16. That he might reconcile both to God.** First, the cross makes peace between Jew and Gentile; and second, the blood of the cross cleanses both before God, and makes peace between them and God. **Having slain the enmity.** Not only of Jew for Gentile, but of the sinner for God. When the sinner once fixes his mind on the bleeding Savior, the “goodness of God leads him to repentance.” **17. Preached peace ... afar off ... were nigh.** The Gentiles were “afar off;” the Jews, “nigh.” To both Christ preached with each other and with God. **18. We both have access by one Spirit.** The Spirit of adoption enables both to cry, “Abba, Father.” Both pray to one Father; hence, all are brethren.

19–22. Therefore ye are no more strangers. Gentiles have been brought nigh, and are **fellow-citizens** of the kingdom of God with the saints. **20. Built upon the foundation.** They have been built into the temple of the Lord. The word of God, declared by apostles and prophets, is the foundation of their faith, **Christ being the chief corner-stone.** The corner-stone was a stone of double size at the corner, which became a part of both walls and joined them together. So he had joined the Jews and Gentiles in the building. He is the foundation-stone on which the building rests, and the stone of union. Compare [Isaiah 28:16](#);

[Matt. 21:42](#); [Acts 4:11](#); [1 Peter 2:7](#). **21. In whom.** In Christ himself. **All the building fitly framed together.** The several parts, or buildings, are united in him, so as to form one holy temple. That is, all races, Jews and Gentiles, are compacted in one church. **22. In whom ye also.** The Ephesian Christians. **For a habitation of God.** The Shekinah descended and dwelt in the tabernacle between the cherubim; but God, by means of the Spirit, dwells in the spiritual temple, in the hearts of believers. This temple is composed of living stones ([1 Peter 2:5](#)), has a holy priesthood, and spiritual sacrifices.



Chapter III

Paul's Office as Apostle to the Gentiles

Summary — *The Hidden Mystery Revealed to the Apostle. The Gentiles to Be Fellow-Heirs. Paul's Mission to the Gentiles. The Prayer in Behalf of Gentile Christians. That They May Know the Surpassing Love of Christ.*

1. For this cause. This refers to the glorious work of the cross in “making peace and bringing the Gentiles nigh,” described in chapter 2. **I, Paul.** The verb of which “I, Paul,” is the subject, is not given until [verse 14](#) is reached. The intervening verses are parenthetical. At [verse 14](#) Paul repeats the first clause of [verse 1](#), and then gives the verb. **The prisoner of Jesus Christ.** A prisoner at Rome when this was written, on account of the gospel of Jesus Christ. **For you Gentiles.** It was the hatred of the Jews towards him, on account of his apostleship to the Gentiles, which caused his seizure. See [Acts 21:33, and 28:17, 20](#).

2–8. If ye have heard. This is not designed to express doubt, but to remind them that they had heard of the **dispensation**, or office, that had been given him in reference to the Gentiles. See [Acts 22:21](#). **3. How that by revelation he made known unto me.** See [Gal. 1:12](#). **The mystery.** This mystery was revealed by God to him. A mystery is a truth, or fact, or purpose, which is hidden until it is revealed. This mystery is declared in [verse 6](#). **As I wrote afore in few words.** In [1:9, and 2:11–13](#). **4. Whereby, when ye read.** When they read what he wrote above (afore), and what he writes now, they can perceive his knowledge of this mystery. **5. Which.** The mystery. It was in past ages hidden from men, but now revealed by the Spirit to **apostles and prophets**. Not the old Hebrew prophets, but the prophets in the church. Some of the Hebrew prophets might have had a glimpse of Gentile salvation, but they did not understand their own language as well as we do in the light of the gospel. **6. That.** The mystery long hidden, but at last revealed, is now given. **The Gentiles should be fellow-heirs.** The wall of partition broken down, Jews and Gentiles equally received, heirs alike of the gospel, *fellow-members* of the church, *fellow-partakers* of the gospel promises. Compare [Acts 10:34; 11:18; 13:46–48](#). **7. Whereof I was made a minister.** A minister to make known this mystery; God's gracious purpose to the Gentiles. **According to the gift of the grace of God.** The apostolic office with all the accompanying signs of apostleship. **8. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints.** A mighty trust granted to one so unworthy as he deems himself. He was ever humbled by remembering that he had been a persecutor. See [1 Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:6](#). Compare [1 Tim. 1:13](#) This grace, so glorious and so full of blessedness to the world, was the apostleship to the Gentiles. See [Gal. 2:7, 8](#).

9–13. And to make all men see. Jews as well as Gentiles. **What is the dispensation of the mystery.** The office or stewardship of this mystery. It was demonstrated in his apostleship to the Gentiles. **Hath been hid.** It was from the beginning God's purpose to save the Gentiles

by the gospel, but it had been kept hidden. **10. To the intent.** The mystery had been hidden during all the ages, but was now revealed in order that the **manifold wisdom of God** might be made known. It was made known, (1) To the Gentiles by preaching the gospel. (2) To Jews. This is implied in the “all” of [verse 9](#). (3) “To principalities and powers in heavenly places;” that is, to angelic beings. See [1 Peter 1:12](#). **By the church.** As the fruit of God's wisdom revealed in the gospel, and especially by the union of Jews and Gentiles in one body. **11. According to the eternal purpose.** The purpose which God had in all the ages proposed to fulfill through Jesus Christ. **12. In whom.** In Jesus Christ, all, both Jew and Gentile alike, can come boldly to God. Without the revelation of Christ we could hardly know of God of love, who loved to have us come to him. **13. Wherefore.** Seeing that I have revealed this glorious mystery to you. **I desire that ye faint not.** Do not become discouraged. **At my tribulations for you.** At his sufferings, a prisoner on account of the Gentiles. **Which are your glory.** The plural (see Revision) shows that “which” refers to tribulations. These tribulations all came in his work as the apostle of the Gentiles. Hence, they all suffered in a work which made them heirs of eternal glory.

14, 15. For this cause I. See [verse 1](#). He now resumes the thought of that verse. **Bow my knees.** In the attitude of prayer. **Unto the Father.** The Fountain of all mercies. The words, “Of our Lord Jesus Christ,” are not found in the best manuscripts and are omitted in the Revision. **15. Of whom.** The Father is referred to. **The whole family in heaven and earth.** In the Revision, “Every family.” The idea is that the Father is the Father of all the families of his children, whether Jews or Gentiles on earth, or in heaven. He is “Our Father in heaven” to the believer of every race, in this world or the world to come. All, as far as creation is concerned, derive their being from him, like children from a parent, and all the good are his spiritual children.

16–19. That he would grant you. Paul now states the things for which he so earnestly prays in behalf of those to whom he writes. **According to the riches of his glory.** In a degree which would correspond. **To be strengthened.** That their spirits might be strengthened by God's spirit and endowed with the might of spiritual gifts. **17. That Christ may dwell.** This is the second petition. That they may so lay hold of Christ by faith that he will be to them a present Savior, in their hearts. **That ye, being rooted and grounded in love.** The third petition relates to the love of Christ. **18. May be able to comprehend.** Unless they were “rooted and grounded in love” and the “love of God shed abroad” in their hearts, it would be impossible for them to comprehend the exceeding riches of the love of Christ. This is the climax of prayer, the point to which the other petitions tend. Indeed, from the beginning of the Epistle, he has been declaring what love Christ has shown for the Gentile world. **19. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.** This is one of Paul's paradoxes, like [1 Tim. 5:6](#). They could know something of the love of Christ, but we can never fully com-

prehended the infinite. **Filled with all the fulness of God.** Filled with God's grace to the full.

20, 21. Now unto him. He has offered a prayer, and closes it with a doxology. **According to the power that worketh in us.** They knew something of the mighty working of the Spirit, and therefore of the Divine power. But God was able to do for them beyond all that they could conceive. **21. Unto him be glory in the church.** Let the church in all ages manifest his glory by its light. **Throughout all ages.** Literally, "Unto all the generations of the age of ages." The idea is, through the endless succession of ages, or through all time.



Chapter IV

The Unity of the Church

Summary — *The Exhortation to Unity. The Seven Bonds of Unity. The Various Gifts Given to the Church. The Offices for Its Edification. The Church Compacted in Christ. The Gentiles Called from Their Former Lives. A New and Holy Life Commanded.*

1–3. I, therefore. Practical duties are now urged which grow out of their glorious privileges in Christ. **The prisoner of the Lord.** See [3:1](#), and note. Compare [Philemon 1:9](#). He was a prisoner because he was a servant of the Lord. **Walk worthy of the calling.** They had been called to a glorious calling, as he had shown in [chapter 3](#). The Christian has been called to the highest calling with which man has ever been honored. **2. With all lowliness and meekness.** Walk in humility and gentleness of spirit. These are characteristics of walking worthily. Other are **long-suffering and forbearance.** To take offense easily, and to seek to “pay back” any fancied injuries, are the opposite of these qualities. **In love.** If the heart is filled with love, the other qualities will be shown forth. Read [1 Corinthians, chapter 13](#). **3. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit.** Forbearance and long suffering are essential to unity and peace. **The unity of the Spirit.** The unity of those who have the same Spirit, not merely an outward unity. **In the bond of peace.** An outward unity, which does not secure peace, cannot be the unity of the Spirit.

4–6. There is one body. The Unity commanded has a basis in seven unities which existed in the church, and should exist in all ages. There was then only one *body*, the church, the body of Christ; not a Gentile body and a Jewish body. Modern denominations were unknown. Compare [Rom. 12:5](#); [1 Cor. 12:12, 13](#); [Eph. 2:16](#). **And one Spirit.** The same Spirit bestowed upon Jew and Gentile, and upon all saints. **Called in one hope.** Wherever called and from whatever state, all were filled with one hope, that of immortality. **5. One Lord.** Christ, the Head of the church ([1 Cor. 1:13](#); [Eph. 1:10](#)). All saints have one Master. **One faith.** One Lord who is the object of faith, and whom both Jews and Gentiles lay hold upon by faith in him. **One baptism.** All have been baptized into the “one Lord” upon the profession of the “one faith” by one rite. It would be utterly inconsistent with the Apostle's argument, if there could be anything divisive about baptism, as three different ways of administering itself. He is showing that there is unity in each one of seven essential features of Christianity, and hence all should seek to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” **6. One God.** Not gods many, but one God for all; “The Father of all, above all, through all, in all.” Meyer, upon this passage, says that the elements of church unity are: (1) *The church itself constituted as a unity*: One Body, one Spirit, one Blessed Hope. (2) *The means by which this united church is built up*: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. (3) Over all one Supreme Ruler, the God and Father of all. Bishop Pearson, on the creed, notes “Points of Unity of the Church.”



He enumerates, (1) Unity of the Head; (2) Unity of the Spirit dwelling in it; (3) Unity of hope; (4) Unity of faith; (5) Unity of ordinance for admission; (6) Unity of the one Father; (7) Unity or organization, one Body.

7–10. But unto every one of us. While all named above is common, the Lord has given grace to each one **according to the measure of the gift of Christ**. That is, there are special offices, and special gifts, that Christ deals to each. **8. Wherefore he saith.** The citation is from [Psalm 68:18](#). It is cited to show that Christ gives. **When he ascended on high.** Paul applies this to Christ's ascension to heaven. **Led captivity captive.** The captives, led captive by Christ, are sin, the curse of the law, and death. **Gave gifts unto men.** As a conqueror, returning in triumph, was wont to distribute gifts, so Christ signalized his ascension by gifts. **9. Now that he ascended.** Paul, in applying this to Christ, shows that it implies that he must have descended from heaven, before his ascension to heaven. This must necessarily follow, if the one ascending is divine, and has a home in heaven, as [the psalm](#) indicates. **10. Above all heavens.** The one who descended is now exalted to the right hand of God. God's throne is represented above the heavens, as God is above all. Compare [Heb. 4:14; 7:26](#). **That he might fill all things.** And hence reach every place with his grace and glory.

11–13. And he gave. It has just been shown that Christ “gave gifts to men” ([verse 7, 8](#)). Of these gifts were various offices. The object of all these offices was to promote “the unity of the faith” ([verse 13](#)). Christ has appointed the offices, and gives the men in the church who are fitted for these offices. In the matter of those offices that continue, it is the duty of the church to recognize and call out the men who meet the conditions Christ has given. **Some to be apostles.** The apostles were all chosen by Christ. All had to be witnesses of his resurrection ([Acts 1:22](#)). They, therefore, could have no successors, but their own office continues. They still remain teachers and in authority by their writings and example. **And some, prophets.** An inspired office, essential in the church for its teaching until the New Testament was completed. **And some, evangelists.** Such as Philip ([Acts 8:4–12; 21:8](#)), Timothy, Titus, etc. This office is to preach the gospel, and will be necessary as long as the church continues on earth. As this office did not require extraordinary gifts, it is permanent. **Pastors and teachers.** These were not distinct offices. Bishops, or elders, and especially those “who labored in word and doctrine,” came under this head. A pastor should always be an elder, but it is not certain that a teacher was always an elder. These offices were all given for the purposes indicated in the [next verse](#). **12. For the perfecting of the saints.** Helping them to higher and holier lives. **For the work of the ministry.** For carrying on the various works assigned to the ministry. **For the edifying of the body of Christ.** All was intended to minister to the upbuilding of the church, within and without. **13. Till we all come.** These offices are given in order that all may come to a goal that is named just below. They must be continued in some form until that goal is reached. **Unto the unity of the faith.** This is one of the great objects to be attained through these offices. In [verse 2](#), Paul, as an apostle

and a prophet, exhorts to the same end. As an apostle and prophets, he so exhorts still. Every evangelist and pastor who is under God's spirit should labor to the same end. Not only "unity of the faith," but unity **of the knowledge of the Son of God** is aimed at. Full unity of the faith will be found when all alike know Christ. **Unto a full-grown man** (Revision). The second end to be attained is a noble manhood, fully developed, after the modes of life furnished in Christ Jesus. This must be the aim of all teaching, and of all living. If we cannot attain fully to it in the flesh, we certainly can aim at it and grow more and more into Christ's likeness.

14–16. That we henceforth be no more children. This should be the aim; to reach a stature such that we are no more froward children. Children are feeble, inexperienced, and easily deceived. **Tossed.** Tossed about like a wave by every wind of doctrine. It is "doctrines," in great part, which have broken up unity. **By the sleight of men.** Their tricks. **And cunning craftiness.** Craft and cunning, employed by teachers of false doctrine in order to deceive. There can be little doubt that Paul refers to the false teachers against whom he warned the Ephesian elders in [Acts 20:30](#). **15. Speaking the truth in love.** Truth is never to give way to false doctrine, but it must be spoken in love. Some cling to the truth tenaciously, but forget to speak it in love. **May grow.** This continues the characteristics of those "who are no longer children." They should **grow up into him in all things.** In all their growth there should be a growth of Christ's traits, a growth into his likeness. In all their growth there should be a growth of Christ's traits, a growth into his likeness. **16. From whom.** The Head of the body, the church. He is the source of all life, power and growth in the body. **Fitly framed together.** The body of Christ, composed of many individuals, is *one*, like a building composed of many parts framed together. **Through that which every joint supplieth.** As in the body every joint and part does its work towards compacting the body into a harmonious whole, and towards its growth, so in the body of Christ every member deriving life from the Head is to work in his place, and harmoniously, for the increase of the body.

17–19. This I say, therefore. Now, after the statement of the great principles named in [verses 3–16](#), Paul returns to the exhortation of [verses 1–3](#). **Walk not as other Gentiles.** Having come out from the heathen and abandoned all their sins. **The vanity of their mind.** Vanity of mind means what is a waste of life. **18. Having the understanding darkened.** He shows how the Gentiles walk in vanity. They are in darkness, unenlightened by the gospel. **Alienated.** Without the spiritual life that comes from knowing God. **Because of blindness of heart.** The idea is a willful blindness. **19. Who being past feeling.** Having trampled conscience under foot until it is calloused. Having silenced its admonitions, they give themselves over to licentiousness and evil. This description is not overdrawn. Purity of life was not even considered a virtue among the Gentiles of that period.

20–24. But ye have not so learned Christ. You are Gentiles by birth, like those just described, but you have learned otherwise from Christ. **21. If so be that ye have heard him.**

This does not express a doubt that they had heard and been taught by Christ. The idea is: If ye have heard, etc., as I know you have, you have been taught the truth in Jesus, that (verse 22) **ye put off concerning the former manner of life the old man** and his deeds. “The old man” is the old sinful life, in contrast with “the new man,” or new life in Christ. **23. And be renewed.** That is, be made new by having a new mind, or spirit. See [Rom. 12:2](#). **24. And that ye put on the new man.** He who has a new mind within him is a new man. He who is born anew, “of water and of the Spirit” ([John 3:5](#)), is newly **created in righteousness**. This is still part of what they were taught (verse 21). The new creation described took place at conversion.

25–28. Wherefore. Since you were so taught, putting away falsehood, speak the truth. **We are members of one another.** All members of one Christian household; hence every member has a right to the truth. **26. Be ye angry, and sin not.** Quoted from [Psalm 4:4](#), Septuagint Version. Do not sin through anger is the thought. If circumstances arouse your indignation, do not be led astray. **Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.** Let there be no long continuance of your wrathful mind. **27. Neither give place to the devil.** By cherishing anger. A person under the dominion of anger is in a fit state to be tempted to evil deeds. **28. Let him that stole.** All sorts of sinners had been converted among the Gentiles, even thieves. In this exhortation, “To put off the old man and his deeds” (verse 22), this class is embraced also by name. **Let him labor.** Honest labor is the best antidote to a dishonest life. Every man is to labor in order that he may not only supply his needs, but have that which he can give.

29–32. Let no corrupt communication. What is rotten. Anything that will demoralize others. Obscene, licentious, or immoral language is forbidden. All that the Christian speaks should be **that which is good to the use of edifying**, building the hearers up in Christ. **30. Grieve not the Holy Spirit.** Such sins as those described above grieve the Holy Spirit, nor will he continue to dwell those addicted to them. **Sealed unto the day of redemption.** The sealing of the Holy Spirit is an earnest, a proof, an assurance of the final redemption. See [1:13](#). If we grieve him away, the seal will be gone. **31, 32.** These verses enforce sundry duties essential to keeping “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” plain, every-day duties of life. Those of [verse 31](#) are negative; those of [verse 32](#) are positive.



Chapter V

Duties Which Become the Children of God

Summary — *Walking in Love. Flee All Impurity. Let Speech Be Pure. Covetousness a Species of Idolatry. No Fellowship with the Wicked in Their Deeds. Enjoyment to be Sought in the Spirit Rather than in Wine. The Mutual Duties of Wives and Husbands. The Mystery of the Marriage Union and of Christ with the Church.*

1, 2. Be ye therefore. “Therefore” refers to God's kindness, spoken of in [4:32](#). **Followers of God.** Literally, imitators, “forgiving one another as God ... hath forgiven you” ([4:32](#)). **As dear children.** As beloved children seek to do like their father. **2. And walk in love.** Thus imitate God, and Christ who gave himself for us. **An offering and a sacrifice.** In the Jewish temple there were offerings which were not sacrifices. Christ gave himself as an offering and was sacrificed. **A sweet-smelling savour.** See [Gen. 8:21](#); [Lev. 1:9](#); [2 Cor. 2:15](#). An expression denoting an offering grateful to God.

3–5. But. Sundry sins are now forbidden which were utterly opposed to the duties just commended. **Fornication.** This was hardly accounted a sin among the Gentiles. **Uncleanness.** Every kind of impurity. **Or covetousness.** This sin is emphasized. The Greek term means “Greediness for more.” It implies an insatiable desire for wealth and for the things which gratify appetite. It is therefore a greed which leads to many sins. **Let it not be once named.** Such sins must be banished not only in deed, but in word. **4. Neither filthiness.** All kinds of indecency. **Foolish talking.** Buffoonery. **Jesting.** Wit of doubtful morality, words and suggestions of doubtful and double meaning. **Are not convenient.** Are not becoming. It is more becoming to Christians to engage in thanksgiving. **5. No fornicator.** No person of licentious life, words or thoughts. **Nor covetous man, who is an idolater.** See note on verse 3. The covetous man gives his heart to the object of his greed rather than to God, and hence is virtually an idolater. **Hath any inheritance.** None of these are heirs of the kingdom and hence have no promise of heaven.

6, 7. Let no man deceive you with vain words. With artful pleas that sinful things are not sinful. **For.** Because of just such sins as they excuse, God's wrath will be visited upon all who live in (**the children of**) disobedience. **7. Partakers.** Have no share with them in their sins.

8–10. Ye were once darkness. Not only lived in darkness, but gave off no light and darkened others. **Now are ye light.** Shining with the light that comes from Christ. **9. For the fruit of the Spirit.** To walk as children of light is to bear the fruit of the Spirit. This is shown by goodness and righteousness. See [Gal. 5:22](#). **10. Proving.** Showing by walking in the light what is acceptable to God.

11–13. And have no fellowship. See [verse 7](#). Works of darkness are those which please the powers of darkness. The Christian must have nothing whatever to do with these. We must not countenance any sinful device, but rather reprove it. This would prevent the patronage of many things which the world countenances. **12. For the things which are done by them in secret.** In the works of darkness are many secret sins, some too shameful even to be named. **13. But all things that are reprovod.** These works of darkness are to be reprovod by Christians ([verse 11](#)) that their true character may be brought to light. If the light is thrown upon them they will be seen. **Everything that is made manifest is light.** Whatever is brought to light is light. Even if wicked, when it is brought to light it enlightens men by revealing its real nature. **14. Wherefore he saith.** Who says, or where, is uncertain. There is a similar thought in [Isaiah 60:1,2](#) and [Isaiah 26:19](#). He probably means that God, in substance, says. **Awake, thou that sleepest.** The sleeper represents one not converted. **Arise from the dead.** From death in sin ([2:1](#)). Conversion is often described as a spiritual resurrection ([Rom. 6:4–6](#); [Col. 2:12](#)). **And Christ.** Christ gives light to all who come to him. The Greek quotation is in verse, and has been translated, Sleeper, awake; rise from the dead, And Christ on thee his light shall shed.

15–17. Walk circumspectly. The Revision makes the meaning clear. **16. Redeeming the time.** Using every opportunity; buying them by giving up present enjoyment. **17. Be ye not unwise.** That is, so foolish as to not understand the will of the Lord.

18–21. Be not drunk with wine. Wine was at that time the usual intoxicating drink. The passage forbids intoxication, which was a common vice of the time. **Excess.** “Riot,” in the Revision. How true! Enjoyment is not to be sought, as the world seeks it, in wine, but rather **be filled with the Spirit.** Then your songs will not be bacchanalian. **19. Speaking to yourselves in psalms.** Under the influence of the Spirit when together you will sing *psalms*, such as those of the psalmist. **And hymns.** Songs of praise. **Spiritual songs.** Songs which express spiritual emotions. We find Christian hymns in the church at a very early period. **Singing and making melody.** While the lips sing, the heart must join in the melody by an uplifting to God. Too much singing in the churches is only of the lips. **20. Giving thanks always.** This is often done in songs. **In the name.** All our worship is in the name of Christ. **21. Subjecting yourselves.** Filled with the Spirit, we “speak in psalms,” etc. ([verse 19](#)), “give thanks,” ([verse 20](#)), and submit ourselves to each other **in the fear of God.** This last duty belongs to the relations of life. One of these relations is of *husbands and wives* ([verses 22–32](#)); another of *children and parents* ([6:1–4](#)); another still of *servants and masters* ([6:5–9](#)).

22–24. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands. Mutual duties are named. The husband should “love his wife as Christ loved the church,” and the wife should submit to this loving husband “as unto the Lord.” The husband is the “head” of the family, but must be willing to give himself for it. **23. The husband is the head of the wife.** Every organization

must have a head. The head of the family can only rule the wife in the most devoted love ([verses 25 and 33](#)). **24. As the church, etc.** The relation of the wife to the husband is like that of the church in Christ, a close, tender relation, in which there is no bondage, but freedom, because the service is that of the heart.

25–27. Husbands, love your wives. We have here not only the duty, but the measure of the duty. **As Christ loved the church.** Loved so well as to be willing to give all things, even life, for her welfare. The union of husband and wife were here described is ideally perfect. The tenderest love on one side, and loving obedience on the other. **26. That he might sanctify it.** The great love of Christ for the church, his bride, is shown as an example to Christian husbands. Christ gave himself for the church. His object was to *sanctify it*, make it holy. In order to do this it was needful to **cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.** All commentators of repute in all bodies refer this to baptism. All in the church pass through the waters of baptism. But the washing of the water would be of no avail without the *word*. The power is in the word of the Lord which offers the gospel and commands baptism. **27. That he might present it to himself a glorious church.** A church cleansed from sin; a bride without a blemish.

28–30. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. The church is the Bride of the Lamb, but it is also Christ's body. As he loved his body, so every husband ought to love her who by the mystery of the marriage tie has become “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh” ([Gen. 2:23](#)). **29. No man ever yet hated his own flesh.** Or his own body. Yet, wife and husband are “one flesh” ([verse 31](#)). **30. We are members of his body.** We are all members of Christ's body, the church. But the church is his Bride. Hence the language of [Gen. 2:23](#), where Adam declares that his wife “is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh,” applies to our relation to Christ.

31–33. For this cause. This verse is quoted from [Gen. 2:24](#). It speaks not only a fact of the marriage state, but also implies that Christ left the Father for the sake of his mystical Bride. **32. This is a great mystery.** The wonders of this marriage tie, but especially that the marriage of the first Adam should prefigure the relation between the second Adam and the church. **33. Nevertheless.** Without regard to the mystery, **let every one, etc.** The rest of the verse states the mutual duties already so tenderly explained.

Chapter VI

The Christian Warfare

Summary —*Mutual Duties of Children and Parents. Of Servants and Masters. The Warfare of the Saints. The Armor of God. The Sword of the Spirit. Constant Prayer Commended. Benediction.*

1–3. Children, obey your parents. The duty of obedience to parents is older than Christianity; as old as the parental relations. **In the Lord.** Unless they require of you things forbidden by the Lord. Our duty to Christ is superior, and if parents require us to disobey him, we must still be loyal to him. This passage has been thought to imply that all children of Christians are baptized in infancy into the church, but the children addressed are surely not babes, but old enough to hear and obey the apostolic command, and hence old enough to have heard and obeyed Christ. **2. Honor thy father and mother.** Both of them, both alike. **Which is the first.** The first of the ten commandments which has a promise attached. **3. That it may be well with thee.** Quoted from [Exodus 20:12](#). This is the promise. A temporal blessing was conditioned upon the promise to Israel, and to honor parents still brings blessing.

4. And ye fathers. Parents have duties as well as children. Two are named. **Provoke not, etc.** Passionate and unreasonable rebukes, intemperate language, or cruel usage, would provoke resentment on the part of children. **In the nurture and admonition of the Lord.** The Revision reads: “Nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.” Training and restraining as well as admonition are implied. The Lord holds all parties responsible for a Christian training of their children.

5–8. Servants. The term does not refer so much to hired servants, as slaves, of whom there were many millions in the Roman Empire at that time. These were of all races, prisoners taken in war, or their children. Christianity did not violently destroy this relation, but regulated, mitigated and undermined it by introducing a new element into human life which would destroy it. **Masters according to the flesh.** Earthly masters whose dominion will go no farther than this world. **With fear and trembling.** Not for fear of punishment, but for fear that the service is not done right. **As unto Christ.** Christ will see and reward your fidelity to duty, even if an earthly master does not. **6. Not with eye-service.** Service that seems faithful when under the eye of the master, but relaxes when he does not see. Such is the usual service of slaves, unless they have a high sense of duty. **7. With good will.** With a well disposed mind towards the master. **As to the Lord.** It pleases the Lord, whatever may be the relations of life, for us to do our service well. We may engage in very lowly duties to the glory of the Lord. **8. Knowing that whatsoever, etc.** If a man renders good service anywhere, whether he be bond or free, the Lord will see that he is rewarded.

9. And ye masters. The Roman law allowed masters to treat their slaves as brute beasts, to abuse and even to murder them. But Christianity at once put Christian masters under restraint. **Do the same things unto them.** Act on the same principles towards them, that the Lord requires of them towards you. There must be mutual good will and mutual service. **Forbearing threatening.** The habit of cruel masters. **Knowing that your Master.** That you have a Master who sees you, to whom your slave is just as dear as you are, and who will hold you to account if you wrong him.

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10. Be strong in the Lord. He comes to his final admonition. They are engaged in a fearful warfare (verse 12). They need to be equipped for it. Let them *be strong* by using the armor, weapons and means which are named in the next section.

11–13. Put on the whole armor of God. The ancient soldier was not equipped for war until he had put on his armor. Paul was at that time a prisoner, probably living near the praetorian camp in Rome, as he was by the Roman customs under the charge of the praetorian prefect. It is possible that the figure was suggested by the sights he so often witnessed. **Against the wiles of the devil.** The great enemy. The armor was designed not only to protect, but there were weapons also with which to assail him. **12. For we wrestle.** Fights then were a hand to hand grapple. **Not against flesh and blood.** While flesh and blood may seem to assail us, the real enemies are evil spiritual powers. **Principalities and powers.** These terms designate different rank of evil spirits. These were fallen angels. In 1:21, The same terms are applied to the different ranks of holy angels. **Against the rulers of the darkness of this world.** Satan is described as the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). He uses for his dominion not only evil spirits, but wicked men, and his sway is darkness rather than light. **Spiritual wickedness.** See the Revision. It is likely that the meaning is the same as in 2:2. The high places, the air, is a dwelling-place and medium of these evil influences. **13. Wherefore, take unto you.** Seeing you have such enemies, arm! Put on the whole armor of God. **In the evil day.** The day of peril and assault. **To stand.** To stand the assault, and to stand victorious, when it is beaten back.

14–16. Stand therefore ... girt. He next gives the armor that must be worn. The Roman soldier wore a girdle, breast-plate, shoes with iron nails, a helmet to protect his head, and carried a great shield on his left arm which was thrown in front of his body. His weapon was the sword. It was with the sword, not the spear as other nations, that the Romans conquered the world. And these represent parts of the Christian's spiritual armor. **About with truth.** The girdle kept the armor in place and supported the sword. So truth holds the Christian armor and supports the sword of the Spirit. **Breast-plate of righteousness.** The breast-plate was over the lungs and heart. If Christ's righteousness is over our hearts they can hardly suffer harm. **15. And your feet shod.** Not with shoes, but **with the preparation** to carry the gospel of peace, to be a messenger of good tidings (Isaiah 52:7). **16. Above all, taking the shield of faith.** The Roman oblong shield, four and a half feet long, covered the

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whole body, and was a protection of itself. So faith, the faith that fully trusts in God and never doubts, is the best of all defenses. It will quench, stop, put out all the doubts, whisperings and evil suggestions of the wicked. **Fiery darts.** These were missiles hurled by the hand, and very dangerous unless stopped by the shield.

17. Take the helmet of salvation. The Roman soldier wore on his head a metallic cap to protect it from blows, called a helmet. [Isaiah 59:17](#) says: “He put a helmet of salvation on his head.” See also [1 Thess. 5:8](#). Salvation, the consciousness that we have a Savior “able to save unto the uttermost,” gives the Christian soldier courage for the conflict. **And the sword of the Spirit.** The armor before described is to protect; the sword to assail. It is the Christian soldier who is to wield the sword of the Spirit. That is, the Spirit conquers through him. The word is **the word of God**. Thus Peter conquered on Pentecost, and Paul in his labors. Thus always and everywhere. The Christian soldier filled with the Spirit must “preach the word.” See [Heb. 4:12](#).

18–20. Praying always. No one can wield the sword of the Spirit rightly without constant prayer. **In the Spirit.** As spiritual men. **For all saints.** Our supplications are not to be for ourselves only, but for all the people of God. **19. And for me.** He especially felt the need of the supplication of his own spiritual children. He was in bonds and enduring fiery trials. Yet he does not desire prayers in behalf of his life or comfort, but for the gospel's sake, that though a prisoner he may still **open his mouth boldly. Mystery of the gospel.** See notes on 1:9 and 3:9. **20. For which.** The gospel. **An ambassador in bonds.** As an ambassador is sent to a foreign court to declare the will of the king, so Paul, though in chains, was Christ's ambassador sent to Rome to declare the will of his King.

21, 22. Tychicus. He is named in [Acts 20:4](#). See also [Col. 4:7](#); [Titus 3:12](#); [2 Tim. 4:12](#). He probably carried this letter, and could tell the brethren at Ephesus and Asia Minor about Paul's present condition. He was “a faithful minister,” and could not only satisfy their longing to know of Paul's state, but could **comfort** them.

23, 24. As was his custom he closes with a benediction. Compare those of the [preceding Epistles](#).

Note. —Some have urged that the absence of individual salutations is a proof that this letter could not have been addressed to the Ephesians where he was so well acquainted. The same argument might apply to the Corinthian, Galatian and Philippian letters also, and indeed his letters to all the churches which he had founded. It rather implies that his acquaintances were so numerous that he could hardly have space to single out individuals, and sent his personal salutations by the messengers. Besides, there are reasons for the opinion that the Ephesian letter was intended also for other churches of “Asia.”



**The Epistle of Paul to the
Philippians**



Introduction to the Epistle to the Philippians

The Letter to the Saints at Philippi differs in some respects from any of the preceding letters of the Apostle Paul. It contains less logic and more of the heart. It is distinguished by the absence of didactical reasoning, and by the presence of a tender friendship and fatherly affection which is more apparent than in other Pauline letters to the churches. The letter to the Romans in the profoundest logic; those to the Corinthians were designed to rebuke certain prevalent sins and necessarily contain more or less censure; that to the Galatians rebukes a dangerous heresy which threatened the welfare of the Galatian churches; that to the Ephesians is a sublime unfolding of the mystery of God in reference to the Gentiles, but this letter is the outpouring of the love of the founder of the Philippian Church towards one of the most affectionate, faithful and self-forgetful of all congregations which he had planted. It has been remarked that there is no breath of censure for the Philippian saints, except in so far as it is implied in the tender exhortation to Euodias and Syntyche found in [chap. 4:2](#). The history of the origin of the church and the memory of the loving remembrances of the Philippians help to explain the affectionate tenderness of the letter.

The account of the founding of the church at Philippi, which occurred in a.d. 50 or 51, is given in the [sixteenth chapter of Acts](#). Led by a vision at Troas the apostle, on his second great missionary journey, crossed into Europe, landing at Neapolis, and proceeding from thence at once to Philippi, which was “the chief city of that part of Macedonia.” This city had already some claims to a place in history. It received its name from Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, who added to his dominions the little Thracian town which existed there before, rebuilt and fortified it, and gave it its new name in the year b.c. 358. In b.c. 42, about ninety-two years before Paul visited it, it was the field of the decisive battle between Brutus and Cassius, the leaders of the Republicans, and the Triumvirate of Imperialists, one of whom was subsequently Augustus Cæsar. But the place has a higher interest to the Christian world from the fact that here was planted the first congregation of Christians that ever existed on the soil of Europe.

It was not only the scene of gospel triumphs but of suffering for the cross of Christ. Here it was that Paul and Silas were beaten, cast into the stocks in the inner prison, by the grace of God converted and baptized their jailer and his household before the dawn, and were honorably released by the magistrates in the morning, as Roman citizens, unjustly beaten and imprisoned. When Paul continued his journey westward, the recently founded Philippian church followed him with support, contributing more than once to his necessities ([4:15, 16](#)), and when the tidings came that he was a prisoner in Rome their old affection showed itself still again by sending one of their members, Epaphroditus, with the offerings of the church as a provision for his wants ([2:25; 4:10–18](#)). It seems to have been the return

of Epaphroditus from this ministration of their love, to which we are indebted for this letter.

It was written from the city of Rome, during the first imprisonment of Paul, and probably towards its close, perhaps in the year a.d. 63. The mention of his bonds (1:12), of the Prætorian camp (see Revision in 1:13) of Cæsar's household (4:22), as well as other allusions (1:25; 2:24) all show that Paul was in the Roman capital at the time of writing. I will not take space to discuss the reasons which seem to point to near the close of his first imprisonment as its date.

Concerning the genuineness of this epistle, there has never been any reasonable doubt. It has always been accepted by the church, is Pauline in doctrine, and in diction, abounds probably to a greater extent than other epistles in personal details, and is in full agreement with all the historical facts which can be gathered from the history of the times, and from the allusions in Acts and the other epistles. It bears every mark of having been written by Paul from the scene of his imprisonment to the beloved church which he had planted and for which he had suffered. It is not only contained in the Canon of Scripture dated a.d. 170, but is mentioned definitely by Polycarp, born in a.d. 69, in his own Epistle to the Philippians, and is quoted from in an Epistle of Ignatius of about a.d. 107.



Chapter I

Greetings from a Roman Prison

Summary —*Greetings to the Church and Its Officers. Reasons for Thanksgiving. The Progress of the Gospel in Rome. Different Motives for Preaching the Gospel. The Apostle's Desire to Depart and Be with Christ. Exhortations to Unity and Fortitude.*

1, 2. Paul and Timotheus, the servants, etc. The beloved Timothy was attending and aiding Paul at Rome. The name of Timothy appears at the head of [several Epistles](#). In this letter to be a beloved church, so devoted to him, Paul does not refer to his apostleship in his greeting, as in [preceding Epistles](#), as one speaking with authority, but exhorts them as a fellow-servant of Christ. **To all the saints in Christ Jesus.** Every one in Christ, *i. e.*, every Christian was and is a saint. **With the bishops and deacons.** We find two classes of officers in this church organized by an apostle. There was a plurality of each class. All commentators agree that “the bishops” and “the elders” of the primitive church are the same, only different names of the same office. Paul calls the “elders” of Ephesus “bishops.” See [Acts 20:17](#) (Revision). Also in [Titus 1:5, 7](#), he calls an “elder” a “bishop.” For the duties of this office, see notes on [1 Tim. 3:2](#), and [Titus 1:5](#). The word “Overseer,” which is a literal translation of the Greek word suggests the nature of the office. The duties of the deacons are supposed to be explained by the work of the “Seven Deacons” ordained in the church at Jerusalem. See [Acts, chapter 6](#). See notes on [1 Tim. 3:8](#). **2. Grace.** The usual apostolic benediction, such as we have found in preceding Epistles, is conferred.

3–7. I thank my God. Almost all the Epistles open with thanksgiving. How glorious a faith that which led him always, even in the darkest hour, to see the hand of God present in blessing! Yet in the remembrance of the Philippians there was much to cheer his heart. **4. In every prayer.** The repeated assurances shows us that Paul was wont daily to carry the interests of the churches he planted to God. In the case of this faithful church he did it with joy. **5. For your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel** [Revision]. He is thankful and full of joy that from the first they had constantly sympathized with him and aided in extending the gospel. It was a really missionary church. **Until now.** See [2:25, and 4:10, 18](#), for illustrations. **6. Being confident.** So faithful have they been that he is confident that they will be faithful to the end. **He which began a good work.** God, who sent Paul to them with the gospel, began the good work. He will sustain them by his grace. **Day of Jesus Christ.** The day they are called to his presence. **7. Because I have you in my heart.** Their faithfulness had engraven them on his heart. He shows how that faithfulness had been demonstrated. They were **all partakers of his grace**, the grace of suffering for the gospel and of defending it. **In my bonds.** He was a prisoner bound. As a prisoner he preached and defended the gospel. The Philippians sympathized with him, prayed for him, and sustained him by their

offerings, thus becoming *partakers*. They not only did this, but defended and suffered for the gospel. See [verses 28–30](#).

8–11. Long after you. Love you and long for your presence. **In the bowels of Jesus Christ.** See Revision. With a tender love like that of Christ. **9. This I pray.** Not that their love for him should abound more, but with the increase of their love there might be fuller knowledge and wiser judgment. **10. That ye may approve.** This increase in knowledge and judgment would lead them to approve what is really excellent. How often men approve what does not bless them! How often the judgment errs! **Without offense.** Without leadings others to stumble. **11. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness.** This must follow from being “sincere,” etc. Those who are earnest and sincere occupy themselves with works of righteousness, such as are due to faith in **Jesus Christ** and his help, and which are **unto the glory and praise of God**. In no way can we glorify God more than by living holy, helpful lives.

12–14. I would ye should understand. No doubt the Philippians grieved greatly that he was a prisoner, but he assures them that all things have turned to the furtherance of the gospel. He has been given an opportunity to reach those whom otherwise he never could have had access to. **13. So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace.** *Prætorium* in the Greek, rendered by the Revision, “Prætorian guard.” The prætorian camp was the great military camp of a body of soldiers stationed permanently at Rome, called the prætorian guards. Paul, as a military prisoner, was under charge of its commander, the præfect. The necessity of reporting regularly would make him well known, and would give him many opportunities to preach Christ there and elsewhere. Compare [Acts 28:16](#). **14. Many of the brethren.** Taking courage from his boldness, though in bonds, the brethren were engaged in preaching the gospel with greater zeal than ever before. See [4:22](#), for some of the results of this preaching.

15–18. Some, indeed, preach Christ even of envy. The motives of all preachers are not pure. Some still preach Christ, full of envy for other preachers, and some from a love of strife. Those envious of Paul were probably Judaizing Christians. See [next verse](#). **16. The one preach Christ from contention.** Not from sincere love of the gospel, but from a factious spirit. While preaching, they sought to undermine Paul’s influence, **supposing to add affliction to his bonds**. For an illustration of this class, read the [first and second chapters of Galatians](#). **17. The other of love.** These are the true and earnest preachers. They knew that Paul was not sent to Rome because he was an evil doer, but because he was **set for the defense of the gospel**. God had sent him there to preach it. **18. What then?** So anxious is he to have Christ preached, that, whatever may be the motives of men, whether their zeal is only a **pretence or in truth**, still if only Christ is preached, he will rejoice. This is not a sanction of a false gospel (see [Gal. 1:8](#)), nor of the men themselves, but rejoicing, if by any means the knowledge of Christ is spread. How different this glorious unselfishness, and greatness of

spirit, from the narrowness of those who higgled over “plans” and forbid “those who walk not with them!”

19–21. For I know that this, etc. All this envy and opposition will tend to promote his salvation. He will be delivered by God who will hear their **prayers**, and who will strengthen and direct him by the **Spirit of Jesus Christ**. **20. That in nothing shall I be ashamed.** Whatever may come, whether his bonds lead to death or life, his trust is that the Spirit will give him such boldness that Christ shall be magnified. There is no anxiety about himself, only that he may glorify Christ. **21. For to me to live is Christ.** Should he be suffered to live, his life would be for extending the kingdom of Christ, but personally, to die would be gain; a release from sufferings and an entrance upon eternal joys.

22–26. But if I live in the flesh. In the body; *i. e.*, on earth. In this state the fruit of his labor is Christ. See [verse 21](#). **Yet what I shall choose.** He can hardly tell whether he would choose the gain of death, or to continue to live in order that he may work for Christ. **23. Having a desire to depart.** His feelings would lead him to choose to depart from the flesh (see [verse 24](#)), **and to be with Christ.** Note that with Paul to depart from the *flesh*, the body, is followed by going immediately to Christ. **24. Nevertheless.** Though it is better to depart and dwell with Christ, the brethren **need him in the flesh**. That is the reason why he is in the strait ([verse 23](#)). **25. And having this confidence.** Rather, “Being fully persuaded of this.” Sure that he is needed on earth by the churches, he has no doubt that he will be delivered from his present danger and **abide and continue**, live to further their faith. **26. That your rejoicing.** Nay, he is assured that the Philippians will rejoice over a visit from him. There is every reason to believe that his confidence was justified; that he was released and did again visit Philippi.

27–30. Only let your conversation. Your manner of life. Whether absent, or present, he wishes to know that they are perfectly united. **28. And in nothing terrified by your adversaries.** Probably there had been another outbreak of heathen violence at Philippi such as Paul and Silas endured ([Acts 16:19–24](#)). **Which is to them.** Your courage. When they see that they cannot terrify or overcome you, it will be a token to them of the ruin which will befall them, but an assurance to you of your salvation, through the help of God. **29. For to you it is given.** Two things were granted: (1) The privilege of believing in Christ. (2) That of suffering for Christ. Such was the lot of all ancient Christians. See [Heb. 12:3, 4, and 1 Peter 4:16](#). **30. Having the same conflict which ye saw in me.** You saw when I was at Philippi what I had to endure ([Acts 16:19](#)); you hear that I am now a prisoner threatened with death. You must expect similar conflicts and meet them with fortitude.



Chapter II

Exhortation to a Holy Life

Summary —*Like-mindedness Commended. Lowliness Enjoined. The Lowliness and the Exaltation of Christ. Working Out Their Own Salvation. Becoming Lights in the World. The Relations of Paul and Timothy. Epaphroditus and His Sickness.*

1–4. If there be therefore any consolation, etc. The apostle does not doubt that there is consolation, comfort, spiritual fellowship, etc., in Christ, but bases an exhortation on what the Philippians knew to be the case. **Bowels and mercies.** “Tender mercies and compassion,” as in the Revision. **2. Fulfil ye my joy.** Make my joy full. They had already given him much joy (4:1–10), but he desired one thing more; viz., that they be **like-minded**, in full agreement, perfect harmony. **Having the same love.** Loving one another with pure hearts fervently. **Being of one accord.** Of one heart and soul. No outward strife. **3. Nothing through strife or vain glory.** No party spirit or striving for human praise. **Let each esteem, etc.** Instead of exalting himself, each is to exalt others in his esteem. He that is willing to serve is greatest. **4. Look not every man on his own things.** Do not look out for your own interests alone, but for the interests of others rather than your own.

5–8. Let this mind be in you. He points to Christ as the example of humility and consecration to the good of others. **6. Who, being in the form of God.** He refers to the state of our Savior before he took human form. His form was divine. “He had a glory with the father before the world was.” See [John 1:1](#); [2 Cor. 4:4](#); [Heb. 1:3](#), etc. **Thought it not robbery to be equal with God.** The Revision says, “Counted it not a prize.” The meaning is not entirely clear, but probably is that “Having a form of glory like God, he did not count it a prize which must be clung to tenaciously, especially when he appeared upon the earth, that he should be equal with God, that is, appear in a divine form, but was willing to lay aside his glory and make himself a servant.” **7. Emptied himself.** Of the divine form and glory, and took the **form of a servant**, of our own race, a race whose duty it is to serve God. The divine glory was exchanged for human lowliness. **8. He humbled himself.** Note the infinite condescension: (1) The form of God and sharing the divine glory. (2) He divests himself of this. (3) Nor does he then take the divine form, or even the form of an angel, but of lowly, sinful man. (4) But this is not all. He not only takes the form of man, but the mortality of the flesh, and dies. (5) Nay, more; he dies the most shameful and painful of all deaths, even the death of the cross.

9–11. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him. His wonderful humility had been shown, but it is the law of the universe that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Therefore God lifted him up from the grave to the heavens, gave all power into his hands ([Matt. 28:18](#)), **and gave him a name above every name.** The idea is an authority, a position,

above that of all intelligences. This exaltation made the humble name, *Jesus*, a name above every name. **10. That at the name of Jesus.** That name, by the exaltation, has become the name of the King of kings. It is supreme. Hence, **every knee** in all the universe bows to its majesty. **Under the earth.** In the under-world, hades, the abode of the dead. **11. And that every tongue should confess.** All the universe is called to confess him as Lord, and thus glorify God. All will yet confess him, either in joy or shame.

12, 13. Wherefore, my beloved. From the contemplation of Christ's glory, the apostle turns to the lessons needed by the Philippian church. **Work out your own salvation.** While Christ is our Savior, and the author of our salvation, we must accept him and work together with him. Hence the Holy Spirit says, "Save yourselves" (*Acts 2:40*), and "work out your own salvation." Unless we do our part Christ cannot save us. **With fear and trembling.** With constant anxiety not to fail. **13. For it is God which worketh in you.** God works in the converted person by his word and Spirit. His Spirit is a helper. It does not destroy our free will, for we may resist it (*1 Thess. 5:19*). **Both to will and to work.** God shows his will by his word and spirit and work in us. We ought to heed it. We can work in harmony with the divine will, or we may reject to our damnation. **His good pleasure.** As seemeth best to him.

14–18. Do all things without murmurings. Without complaining. Some persons pass their lives complaining. **15. The sons of God.** Those of so high estate ought to be harmless, blameless, and **in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation**, a wicked world, they should **shine as lights** by their pure and holy lives. **16. Holding forth the word of life.** Always preaching Christ in word, in life, and in deed. That was their work. Unless they did this they were a failure. **That I may rejoice.** Unless they had done so he would be made to feel, in the day of Christ, the day of accounts, that his labor at Philippi was in vain. **17. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice, etc.** He is willing to die as a sacrifice for Christ, martyred because he has preached the gospel to the Gentiles, if it will be an encouragement to their faith. He will even rejoice in death if it will help the cause of Christ. The imagery used was familiar to those who had so often seen victims sacrificed as offerings in the heathen temples. **18. Rejoice with me.** Like me, rejoice in the prospect of death, if thereby Christ may be glorified.

19–24. I trust in the Lord Jesus. Through the help of the Lord. **To send Timothy.** His companion at Rome at this time, his beloved convert and fellow-laborer. See notes on 1:1. **That I may be of good comfort.** When he returns from visiting you and shows me your state. **20. For I have no man like-minded.** No one else is here with me who will so well represent my feelings and views when he visits you. **21. For all seek their own.** Others, who were at hand, were more mindful of their own interests than of Christ's cause. We infer from this that of his faithful fellow-preachers none were in Rome save Timothy. **22. Ye know the proof of him.** You have seen him and know him. Timothy had more than once

visited Philippi before this (2 Cor. 2:9; 13:3). **As a son with a father.** Timothy was his convert, and showed him a tender reverence. **23. So soon as I shall see, etc.** As soon as there is some decision in his case, showing whether he will be released, or what may be his fate, he will send Timothy. **24. But I trust.** Yet he expects by the Lord's help to be released, and to visit them himself. See note on 1:25, 26.

25–30. Epaphroditus. He will now send back Epaphroditus, the **messenger** they had sent to Paul with their offerings, one who had been so welcome, a “brother, and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier.” **26. For he longed after you all.** Was very desirous to see you. **Full of heaviness.** Heart-sickness. **He had been sick.** We thus learn that their messenger had a serious sickness while in Rome. Of course the news of this caused great anxiety at home. **27. God had mercy on him.** He was “nigh to death,” but God in his mercy spared him. **Sorrow upon sorrow.** His death would have been a great sorrow to Paul, who had already many sorrows. **28. I sent him therefore the more diligently.** Because his brethren at home were so anxious about him. Their joy in seeing him will be a joy to Paul also, so that he will **be the less sorrowful** over his absence. **29. Receive him.** Give him a glad welcome. Hold such as he in high **reputation.** **30. Because.** Because it was his work for Christ, his refusal to spare himself, his supreme anxiety to supply by his own service the absence of the church, which brought on his sickness.

Chapter III

Attaining to the Power of the Resurrection

Summary — *A Warning Against Judaizing Teachers. Paul's Grounds for Boasting in the Flesh. All Counted As Loss Compared with Christ. The Great Aim to Attain to the Glorious Resurrection. Pressing Towards the Prize of the High Calling. Enemies of the Cross. At the Resurrection Our Present Bodies Changed to the Likeness of the Glorified Body of Christ.*

1. Rejoice in the Lord. See [2:5](#), and [4:4, 10](#). There might be a little ground for rejoicing in earthly prospects, but they could rejoice in Christ and the blessed hope of the gospel. **To write the same things.** To repeat exhortations made before, either in person, or sent by messengers to them.

2, 3. Beware of dogs. Those snarling and snapping like dogs. The Judaizing teachers, who so troubled the early churches, are meant. See [Galatians, chapter 1](#). **Evil workers.** So called because by their false teaching about the necessity of circumcision they wrought evil. **Of the concision.** Applied to those who called themselves the circumcision. It means simply a “cutting,” the class who were mutilated. It is contemptuous. **3. We are the circumcision.** See notes on [Rom. 2:29](#) and [4:12](#). The true circumcision is not in the flesh, but of the heart in the Spirit.

4–6. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. The confidence of the Jews was in the flesh of Abraham. They said, “We have Abraham to our father” ([Matt. 3:9](#)). But if any man had grounds for relying on the flesh, it was Paul. **5. Circumcised the eighth day.** As enjoined by the law ([Luke 1:59](#)). **Of the stock of Israel.** Descended from Israel (Jacob), who had the birthright of Isaac and Abraham. **Of the tribe of Benjamin.** A tribe descended from the beloved Rachel; a tribe that remained faithful when the Ten Tribes of Israel seceded, the tribe on whose soil Jerusalem and the temple stood. **A Hebrew of the Hebrews.** Hebrew by race, by religion, by education, and by custom. **A Pharisee.** A member of the strictest sect in Israel, “after the strictest manner of the sect.” **6. Concerning zeal.** His zeal for Judaism was demonstrated by the fact that he was a persecutor of the church. What were his feelings concerning this part of his career in shown in [1 Tim. 1:13–16](#). **Blameless.** Keeping the letter of the law so as to be blameless in the eyes of my fellow-Jews.

7–11. What things were gain to me. These things which were counted as a gain he now counts as nothing; nay, as loss, instead of gain for Christ. Instead of saving him, a trust in them would have been eternal ruin. **8. I count all things but loss.** In comparison with the inestimable value of the knowledge of Christ, all worldly things are to be regarded as a loss. **For whom I have suffered the loss of all things.** In accepting Christ he gave up all the world holds dear. But he did not long for them; nay, he counted them as a he would count filth, to be avoided, if only he **may win Christ.** The one word Christ in itself embraces every real

blessing. **9. And be found in him.** In him “there is no condemnation” (Rom. 8:1). **Not having mine own righteousness.** Those in Christ trust not in a legal righteousness, obtained by keeping the law, but in the righteousness which the gospel provides to those who accept Christ through faith. That righteousness is the forgiveness of sins, **which is of God by faith.** Note that, although the definite article is omitted in our Versions before faith, the Greek supplies it. “The faith” is equivalent to “the gospel.” It is faith in Christ acted upon, causing an acceptance and steadfast obedience to Christ, which secures the righteousness (forgiveness) of which Paul speaks. **10. That I may know him.** By enjoying his presence in the soul; an experimental knowledge. **And the power of his resurrection.** The resurrection demonstrated him to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). The mighty power that worked in his resurrection works in the saints (1) in their resurrection from spiritual death to a new life (Col. 2:13; Eph. 1:19–23). It is therefore a present power. (2) It works also when they are lifted from the dead to eternal life. Consciousness of the victory over sin is the earnest of the ultimate triumph over death. **And the fellowship of his sufferings.** Christ’s life is the plan of that of the saint. Like him, we take the cross, are crucified with him (Rom. 6:6), are baptized into his death (Rom. 6:3), are planted in the likeness of his death, and are risen with him (Col. 3:1). In all these we look to the suffering Savior, and are **conformed to his death.** Not only do we take the *form* of his sufferings, but we sympathize with him. If the obedience is from the heart, there is a partaking of his sufferings. **11. If by any means I might attain to the resurrection from the dead.** This great consummation of a glorious resurrection to a heavenly life is worth attaining by every sacrifice, and by every possible means.

12–14. Not as though I had already attained. Had already obtained the great prize. It still requires effort. The prize is at the end of the race. **Or am already made perfect.** He never claimed to have received such a state; nor does he intimate any where that such a state is ever reached on earth. **But follow after.** Press on, as one who must push forward. **If so be that I may apprehend.** The idea is, I press on in the hope that I shall lay hold upon the prize. **That.** He will seek to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of him at conversion, viz., his eternal salvation. **13. I count not myself yet, etc.** The prize is yet before. Constant effort is still required. **This one thing I do.** His whole life is given to one purpose. **Forgetting the things which are behind.** Especially the things which he once counted gain (verse 7), and even all the hardships and sufferings of the apostolic lot. **And reaching forth.** The image is of one so eager for what is before him that hands and body are stretched to lay hold of it. **14. I press on toward the goal.** His eye is upon the goal and he presses through every difficulty to reach it. **Unto the prize.** This is the prize offered to those in the high calling of the saints in Christ. A crown was bestowed in an earthly race when the goal was reached. This prize is “the resurrection from the dead” (verse 11) and an eternal crown.

15, 16. As many as be perfect. It cannot mean perfect in the absolute sense, for in [verse 12](#) he declares that he is not perfect, and surely the Philippians were not in advance of the apostle who admonishes them. Meyer says the Greek word here (*teleioi*) means mature, well developed, not children in Christ. Let such as are so far advanced **be thus minded**. Show the spirit indicated in [verses 7–14](#). **If ... ye be otherwise minded**. If you have not the mind to count all else as refuse in contrast with Christ, etc., **God shall reveal it to you**; will bring you to this state of mind. Of course this clause shows that he does not address those whom he believes to be “perfect.” **16. Only, whereunto we have already attained**. The meaning is, Those who have not reached the status I have described, let them make the right use of all the light, ability and knowledge they have obtained.

17–21. Be followers of me. Compare [1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1](#). **Mark them which walk so**. Not only follow my example, but note those who do not follow it. **18. For many walk**. There is a class who walk far otherwise, who cause him great sorrow. **Of whom I have told you often**. Probably, when he was preaching at Philippi, or visiting there ([2 Cor. 2:13](#)). This class had come into the church, but had not left off their pagan vices. **Now tell you weeping**. Because of the evil such offenders do. **Enemies**. Such persons are the worst enemies of Christ. One church member who arouses a scandal can wound the cause of Christ more than a dozen scoffers. **19. Whose end is destruction**. Their final fate must be eternal ruin ([2 Peter 2:3](#)). **Whose God is their belly**. They obey their sensual appetites. **Whose glory, etc**. They glory in shameful things. **Mind earthly things**. Instead of setting their affections on the things that are above ([Col. 3:1](#)). **20. For our conversation is in heaven**. Our citizenship. See Revision. We are citizens of heaven itself, our country, from which we are now absent, and which we are seeking. Hence we ought to mind heavenly things. There our Lord dwells, and from thence he will come. **21. Who shall change our vile body**. Our lowly body shall undergo a change to fit it for heaven. It will take the form of his glorified body, such as was seen at the Transfiguration. Compare [1 Cor. 15:43–52; 2 Cor. 5:1–4; 1 John 3:2](#). **According to the working**. This change shall be effected in harmony with that mighty power which shall subdue all things to his sway.



Chapter IV

Precepts for Christian Life

Summary — *Personal Admonitions. Going to the Lord for Help. Setting the Mind on Noble Things. The Supply of His Wants Sent by the Philippians. Parting Salutations.*

1. Therefore. Because you are citizens of a heavenly country (3:20). **My brethren, etc.** The words that follow are words of the most tender affection. **My joy and crown.** A joy to him now on account of their faith and affection; a crown of honor to him in the day of accounts, as his converts. **So stand fast.** Be steadfast in the way I have pointed out.

2, 3. I beseech Euodias and beseech Syntyche. Two good women of Philippi, who had apparently been estranged. Women were prominent in the founding of the Philippian church; Lydia was the first convert, and her house was a home of the missionaries. Observe the repetition of the word “beseech.” It gives it special emphasis. **3. I intreat thee, true yoke-fellow.** Some very dear brother who had been a fellow-laborer of Paul. The term is applied to the relation of husbands and wives, and to that of very intimate friends. The one addressed must have been a companion of toils and sufferings. Some have thought that Silas, associated with him in suffering at Philippi (see Acts, chapter 16), is meant, and that he was at Philippi when this letter was sent, but this is not certain. **Help those women.** As Euodias and Syntyche have just been named, they are those meant. They had zealously aided his labors at Philippi. **With Clement also.** The Clement named is thought to be the same who was later a bishop at Rome, and the author of certain extant Epistles to the Corinthians. The name, however, was so common that this is uncertain. **In the book of life.** Compare Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12. Those are held to have their names in the book of life who are enrolled as the children of God.

4–7. Rejoice in the Lord alway. Compare 3:1. That a prisoner, soon to be tried for his life, should not only rejoice but bid others to rejoice, shows the power of the gospel to comfort one who has made Christ all in all. **5. Let your moderation.** Your forbearance. **The Lord is at hand.** A special watchword of the early church in time of trouble. It meant practically “Deliverance is near.” **6. Be careful for nothing.** See Revision. The meaning is, “Have no distressing anxiety about anything. “Care-ful” used to mean “full of care.” Compare Matt. 6:25. **But in everything, etc.** Instead of anxiety, just lay the case before God, and trust him to do all things well. Three elements enter into the appeal to God: **Prayer**, the outpouring of the soul; **supplication**, stating our wants; **thanksgiving**; we must always come to God, not in a complaining spirit, but with thankfulness for present mercies. **7. And the peace of God.** The peace that comes by putting all in the hands of the one who is able and willing to

deliver. Whenever we fully trust the Lord there comes a peace that is past the understanding of those who have never experienced it. **Shall keep your hearts.** That peace will be a guard which will keep the heart and thoughts holy and pure.

8, 9. Finally, brethren. As he concludes his letter, he sums up Christian duties into a single paragraph. **Whatever things are true.** Truth in word, in action, and in thought, must be cherished. Christ is The Truth. His followers must be truth itself. **Honest.** The Greek is “reverend.” Whatever is worthy of reverence. **Just.** Strict justice in all dealings; an upright life. **Pure.** Chaste lives and clean hearts and thoughts. **Lovely.** Such deeds as spring from love and inspire love in others. **Of good report.** A life of which no evil thing can be truthfully said. **If there be any virtue.** Lest he may have omitted some excellency he adds, “If there be aught else which is virtuous or praiseworthy, let these all be the things to which you give your minds.” **9. The things which, etc.** He turns from precept to example, the best of all teachers, and enjoins that they observe not only what he had taught, but what they had seen in his life. **The God of peace shall be with you.** For he is with all who so live.

10–14. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. Because of the proof of affection furnished in the relief they sent to him by the hands of Epaphroditus. **Care of me hath flourished again.** They had before been careful to supply his needs. See [verse 16, and 2 Cor. 11:9](#). **Ye lacked opportunity.** They had always been ready to care for him, but lacked means of communicating with him. In those times there were no systems of exchange, and all money had to be sent by messengers. **11. Not that I speak of want.** Lest they should think that he rejoiced because he had been in want, he adds that he had learned to be content, whatever was his state. He had Christ, and to him Christ was all in all. **12. I know both how to be abased, etc.** He had experienced all things; want as well as plenty, hunger and food in abundance; every variety of condition. **13. I can do all things.** He can rise superior to every condition through the strength that Christ gives. **14. Ye have done well.** Though Christ gave him strength to bear want, it was a good thing, a kind deed, that they supported him in his affliction. **Communicate.** Had fellowship with; shared.

15–20. In the beginning of the gospel. When you first received the gospel ([Acts, chapter 16](#)). **When I departed from Macedonia.** Keep in mind that Philippi “was a chief city of Macedonia.” **No church communicated with me.** Had fellowship. Those who sustained him were partners of his labors. See [Acts 17:14](#). **16. Even in Thessalonica.** After leaving Philippi Paul next labored at Thessalonica. See [@Acts, chapter 17](#). While here the newly-founded church of the Philippians sent to him contributions at least twice. They also aided him later while he was in Corinth ([2 Cor. 11:9](#)). **17. Not that I seek for the gift.** This is not his motive for praising him, but he seeks **fruit that increaseth to their account.** Their gifts will return to them in God’s blessings. **18. An odor of a sweet smell.** The incense offered in the temple worship was very fragrant. Their offerings were like incense, like a sacrifice with which God was well pleased. **19. My God shall supply all your need.** Since you do

not forget the needs of his servants, he will not forget yours. **20. Now unto God and our Father.** A rapturous outburst. All the glory is God's. He is the Giver. God put their good purposes into their hearts.

21–23. Salute every saint. Where he knew so many he could not single out individuals for special greetings, but salutes all. **The brethren which are with me.** Such brethren as Timothy and other fellow-laborers, who were now in Rome. **22. Chiefly.** Especially. The class next named send special greetings. **Of Cæsar's household.** Amid the vast number who dwelt in the palace as immediate attendants of the emperor, amounting to hundreds and perhaps thousands, there were some who had become Christians. What was their condition in life is a matter of conjecture. Philippi was a *colony* ([Acts 16:12](#)), a sort of outlying suburb of Rome, populated with Roman citizens. Hence it is possible that these would have friends in the Philippian church, who would know well who were meant, and to them they send special greetings.

**The Epistle of Paul to the
Colossians**

Introduction to the Epistle to the Colossians

At least three Epistles, and probably four, were prepared about the same time by the Apostle Paul at his place of imprisonment in Rome, and sent by the same messengers to the Roman Province of Asia. One was the Epistle to the Ephesians; a second, the present letter; a third, the Epistle to Philemon, who was a resident of Colosse; and the fourth is alluded to in this Epistle (4:16) as the Epistle to the Laodiceans, but has been thought by some to be identical with the Ephesian letter. Three cities are named in this Epistle which lay contiguous to each other in the bounds of the ancient Kingdom of Phrygia, but in the last half of the first century were embraced within the proconsular Province of Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital, which had Christian congregations, and two of these were honored with Epistles (4:13). The ruins of these cities have been identified, and the close association of Colosse and Laodicea is witnessed by the fact that they were only a few miles apart on opposite sides of the valley of the Lycus, a short distance above where it enters into the larger river Meander.

Colosse was a city of considerable size more than four hundred years before the date of this letter, when visited by Xenophon as the Ten Thousand marched up into Central Asia, and is mentioned by Herodotus still earlier. At this time, however, it was overshadowed in importance by Laodicea, and at the present the ruins are less imposing than those of either Laodicea or Hierapolis.

We learn in the Sixteenth Chapter of Acts that Paul, on his second missionary journey, passed from Cilicia through the pass in the great Taurus chain of mountains, which has always been the highway from the coast to the interior; paused a little while in Lydia; took Timothy in his train of attendants, and then passed through Phrygia and Galatia. And, a second time, after his European tour, he returned and “went over all the country of Phrygia and Galatia, strengthening the disciples” (Acts 18:23). Yet it is probable that he did not personally plant the gospel in Colosse, and possibly did not even pass through the valley of the Lycus. The words of Chapter 2:1, are understood to mean that he had never met with the church in person, and indeed there is a marked difference between the tone of this letter and the familiar personal appeals of letters addressed to churches that he had certainly planted, like those of Philippi and Galatia.

Besides, Epaphras seems to be named (1:7) as the founder, or at least the evangelist, of the church. Yet, since Epaphras must have been one of his own converts, and was working under his general supervision, Paul held himself responsible for its condition, and looked after its welfare, as after all the churches planted within the sphere of his labors.

It is easy to discover from certain portions of the letter why it was written. Phrygia was a sort of border land between religions. The light, joyous polytheism of the Greeks here met the deep, solemn mysticism of the East. In addition, large colonies of Jews had been transplanted from Babylon to this region by one of the Macedonian monarchs of Syria, and

brought with them a Judaism which had been greatly modified by the doctrines of Zoroaster. The Epistle gives us ample ground for concluding that there was danger of these mongrel philosophies corrupting the simplicity of the gospel of Christ, and that Paul's object was to fortify the church against doctrine which would result in evil. In the notes of the passages which refer to these doctrines, this will be discussed more at length.

While there is a marked difference between this Epistle and that to the Ephesians, there is in some portions a striking similarity. Indeed there is not only a parallelism in the thoughts, but often in the language. The most natural way to account for this is to bear in mind that the two letters were written at the same time; were written to the same part of the world to congregations surrounded by conditions which were in many respects similar, and whose spiritual needs would be much alike. Under such circumstances it would be strange if two letters from the same writer did not bear a strong resemblance. It would be interesting to call attention to these parallel or similar passages, but the limited space the plan of this work allows will not permit. One who is curious to follow this comparison will find it given in full in Paley's *Horae Paulinae*.

Concerning the genuineness of this Epistle, it has always had a place in the New Testament Canon, and has never been questioned except by Baur, and some other critics of the Tübingen school who have thought that it gave too high an exaltation to Christ. This might be answered by replying that it exalts Christ no more than Philippians and other Epistles which are conceded to be of Pauline origin. Their theories have been overthrown not only by historical arguments, but by the internal evidence of the Epistle itself. Indeed, as Meyer remarks, "the forging of such an Epistle as this would be far more wonderful than its genuineness."

It was written at Rome, during Paul's imprisonment, probably in a.d. 62, the same date as Ephesians and Philemon, and was sent to the church by the hands of Tychicus (4:7) and Onesimus (4:9).



Chapter I

Summary —*Greeting. Thanksgiving for the Faith of the Colossian Church. Prayer for Their Progress. Becoming Meet for the Inheritance of the Saints. In the Kingdom of the Son. The Glories of the Son. The Work of Christ on Reconciling Men to Himself. Joy in Sufferings. The Mystery Among the Gentiles.*

1, 2. Paul, an apostle ... by the will of God. Not by human appointment, but by divine. **Timotheus our brother.** The other Epistles written at this time that Timothy was then in Rome. He is named six times in the address of Paul's letters to the churches: here and [2 Corinthians](#), [Philippians](#), [Colossians](#), [1 Thessalonians](#), [2 Thessalonians](#) and [Philemon](#).. **2. To the saints.** A designation in apostolic ages of all Christians. Two characteristics are named; they were believing brethren also. **At Colosse.** For an account of Colosse, see [Introduction](#) to this Epistle.

3–8. We. Both Paul and Timothy. **Give thanks.** When offerings prayers in behalf of the Colossians, as he was wont to do for all the churches under his care, he had grounds for thanks. **4. Since we heard of your faith ... and love.** He probably heard through Epaphras, a member at Colosse ([verse 7 and 4:12](#)), who was at that time with him in Rome. **5. For the hope.** He gives thanks for their hope of heaven. **Laid up.** This suggests that they have a treasure laid up in heaven which they hope to use. Their treasure is above. **Whereof ye heard before.** They heard of this hope when the gospel was preached to them. **6. Which is come to you.** The gospel had come to them, being now spread abroad **in all the world.** That is not to be taken literally, but affirms the wide diffusion of the gospel. **Bringeth forth fruit.** It always bears fruit in holy lives wherever received. **7. As ye also learned of Epaphras.** “Also” in Common Version is not found in the best MSS. They had learned of the gospel, its truth, its hope, and fruit from Epaphras, who probably planted the church under Paul's direction. Where he was converted we are not informed, but possibly at Ephesus, the capital of the province, during Paul's stay of three years there. Some have held that he is the same as the Epaphroditus of [Phil. 2:25; 4:18](#), but this is not probable. He is highly commended here and in [4:12](#), and in the latter place is identified with the Colossian church. **8. Who also declared to us.** He was at the date of the letter attending the apostle at Rome.

9–12. For this cause. What he had heard, named in the preceding paragraph. **Since the day we heard.** He had heard something which had aroused his solicitude. **That ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will.** This would be their best security against false teaching, and an assurance of a faithful life. **Wisdom and spiritual understanding.** The wisdom and understanding conferred by walking as led by the Spirit. See [Eph. 1:3, 8, and 1 Cor. 12:8](#). **10. That ye might walk, etc.** Thus they would be equipped so as to please the Lord in all things in their walk. **Being fruitful.** Some things are named which please the Lord. The first is to abound in good works. The second is to **increase in the knowledge of God.** **11.**

Strengthened. Made mighty by the divine power. **Unto all patience.** Nothing requires more grace than patience and long-suffering under wrong, or even fancied wrong. It is especially hard to endure wrong **with joyfulness.** **12. Giving thanks.** In the midst of the trials which call for patience and long-sufferings, still joyful and thankful to the Father that he **hath made us meet to be partakers.** Fit to have a share. Once, then, they were unfit. **The inheritance of the saints.** God's infinite love had called them to be children, heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ. The heavenly inheritance is meant. To have a share with the saints in light is to be heirs of heavenly felicity. **Light.** Light is a symbol of purity and blessedness. It is in contrast with darkness below.

13, 14. Who hath delivered us. The language implies that we were captive. We were under **the power of darkness.** Compare [Luke 22:53](#). Satan is the power of darkness. Those in sin are held under his power. **Hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.** God, through the gospel, had rescued them, and has translated them into Christ's kingdom. This was effected when they were converted. Some teach that Christ's kingdom is yet future, but this passage shows that it already had an existence. The church was its visible form. It was inaugurated on Pentecost. **14. In whom we have redemption.** We are redeemed from sin. We were in bondage, but have been purchased. Satan holds us under bondage until our sins are blotted out. The price paid is his blood. Compare [Eph. 1:7](#).

15–17. Who is the image of the invisible God. He came in order to reveal the Father in his own person. See [John 14:10](#), and [Heb. 1:3](#). The love of God is revealed in Christ. He was the visible representative of the invisible God. **The first-born of every creature.** The thought is that he existed before creation began; born of God instead of being created by the divine fiat; born before any creature was called into existence. The passage does not say that he was the first *created*, but the first-born. He was before creation. See [John 1:1, 2](#). **16. By him were all things created.** Hence he must have existed before any creation. Compare [John 1:3](#), and [Heb. 1:2](#). As God manifested himself by means of the Son in the gospel, so in creation he manifested himself through the Son. The visible universe is a manifestation of God through the Son. The Word is the power that gives all things existence that exist. **Thrones, dominions, principalities.** The angelic hierarchy; different ranks of angels, according to the teachings of some of the Jewish doctors. A heresy had already been proposed that divided these into ranks, assigned them an undue prominence, and held that Christ was only an angel. Paul does not pause to say whether these divisions are correct, but declares that Christ is above them all, created them, and that they were created for him. One of these heresies he wished to counteract was the doctrine of angel worship. **17. And he is before all things.** He was before them all in time, and through him they came into existence.

18–20. In [verses 15–17](#), Paul portrays Christ as the center and source of the creation. In this section he shows that he is the Head of the *new* creation. **He is the head of the body, the church.** In the church he is pre-eminent. It is his spiritual body, and he is the supreme

head. Compare [1 Cor. 11:3](#); [Eph. 1:10, 22](#). **The beginning.** The new creation began from him and in him. He is first of all in time. **The first-born from the dead.** He first conquered death, and not for himself alone, but the great company of those found in him who have been born from the dead. **19. In him should all fulness dwell.** All power and blessing. Completeness in all things. If limitations were placed upon his power to create, to save and to bless, all fulness would not dwell in him. **20. Having made peace.** See notes on [Eph. 2:14, 17](#). Christ came to make peace between Jew and Gentile, man and man, man and God. The means employed was the blood shed on the cross. Through it the law, the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, was removed, and both alike have access to God. **By him to reconcile all things unto himself.** “It pleased the Father” ([verse 19](#)) . . . “by him (Christ) to reconcile all things to himself” (the Father). All who accept Christ, are reconciled to him, and found in him, are reconciled thus to God. **Whether things in earth.** Human beings. **Things in heaven.** Chrysostom explains: Christ not only reconciles man on the earth, but raises him, who had been an enemy to God, to heaven and gives him a place there at peace with God, so that in the heavens the fruits of reconciliation are seen forever.

21–29. You, that were some time alienated. In a state of estrangement before conversion. **Enemies in your mind.** Hostile on account of wicked works. A wicked life will fill a man with hostile thoughts to God. **Yet now hath he reconciled.** Christ has changed them by the gospel so that they are enemies no longer. God needs no change. The change must be wrought in man. **22. In the body of his flesh.** It is through the sufferings of Christ that they are enabled to come to God. Without Christ and the cross there could be no gospel. Through his blood their sins are cleansed, so that they are holy in the sight of God. **23. If ye continue in the faith.** Their continued acceptance depends on their clinging to Christ who redeemed them. **Grounded and settled.** Having an immovable foundation, so that they could not be moved from the **hope of the gospel** by any wind of doctrine. **Which was preached, etc.** See note on verse 6 above. **24. Who now rejoice.** Rather, I now rejoice. **My sufferings for your sake.** He was a prisoner and a sufferer because he preached the gospel to the Gentiles. **And fill up, etc.** Christ endured afflictions for us. We must have a fellowship of his sufferings ([1 Peter 4:13](#)). Paul also suffers that he might share the afflictions of Christ. Not only did he suffer with Christ, but Christ suffers with his afflicted people. See [Acts 9:4](#). Hence, afflictions suffered for Christ may be called his afflictions. All the suffering required for the sake of the church is **behind of the afflictions of Christ**. **25. According to the dispensation.** God made him a minister of the church. That ministry was a “stewardship” (dispensation) committed to him. He refers to the great responsibility of the apostolic office. He as a “steward of the grace of God” ([Eph. 3:2](#)). **To fulfil the word of God.** Not only to do what the word required, but to preach the word everywhere. **26. Even the mystery.** The mystery of the gospel, of salvation through Christ, hidden from past ages, but now revealed to the saints. A mystery, as Paul uses the term, is a thing hidden in the past, but now made

known. **27. To whom God would make known.** To the saints he would reveal the glory of the mystery. The glory of the mystery is **Christ in you.** Christ dwelling in the saved and filling their hearts with the hope of glory. **28. Whom we preach.** Christ. **Every man.** Note that this is repeated three times in the verse. The apostle impresses the fact that the gospel is not for a few favored ones, but for every one. **In all wisdom.** In every form of wisdom. **Perfect.** We should all aim at perfection; the apostle aims to bring all to this ideal. The high ideal is before, for which we all should aim. However, he whose sins are all blotted out will be counted perfect in the great day. **29. According to the working.** Christ within us is a life and a power. If we conquer the flesh and give ourselves entirely up to him he will work **mightily.**



Chapter II

Warnings Against False Theories

Summary —*Paul's Conflict for the Churches. Present with Them in Spirit. Exhortation to be Rooted and Grounded in Christ. Warning Against Vain Philosophy. The True Circumcision. The Baptismal Burial. The Handwriting of Ordinances Removed. Keeping Sabbath Days. Angel Worship Forbidden.*

1–3. What great conflict. Anxiety. **For you.** The brethren at Colosse. **At Laodicea.** A sister church only a few miles away. See [Introduction](#). Laodicea was one of the Seven Churches of Revelation. See [Rev. 3:14](#). **Have not seen my face.** This seems to imply that he had never visited either of these churches in person. The reasons of his anxiety are revealed in this chapter. They were assailed by false teachings. **2. That their hearts.** He was deeply anxious that they might **be comforted, ... knit together in love**, and enjoy the **full assurance of understanding**, a clear insight that would lead them to know **the mystery of God**. This knowledge would make them proof against the arts of false teachers. For “mystery,” see notes on 1:26, 27. **3. In whom.** In Christ all the treasures, etc., are hidden, and mysteries until revealed. The gospel reveals them and those in Christ know them.

4–8. Lest any man should beguile you. Had they full knowledge ([verse 2](#)) this would not be possible. **5. For though absent**, yet he was present in spirit. He was either present in spirit by having them in mind, being fully informed of their state by Epaphras, which I think is more in harmony with the whole tenor of the New Testament, or he was enabled by divine power to look upon them and behold them. The latter is the view of most commentators. If this view is correct, why does he say ([1:7](#)) that he learned their state from Epaphras? **6. Walk ye in him.** Continue to live in, obey and believe upon Christ as he was first preached to you. **7. Rooted.** Your life growing out of Christ as a tree out of the soil. **As ye have been taught.** The point of the exhortation is to cling to the gospel as it has been taught them. **8. Spoil you through philosophy.** Make spoil of you and carry you off as booty through some philosophical speculation, or empty deceit. **After the tradition of men.** By appealing, not to the Scriptures, but to human traditions. These traditions probably referred mainly to the matters spoken of in [verse 18](#) below. **Rudiments of the world.** Paul uses this expression elsewhere of Jewish ordinances ([Gal. 4:3](#)). [Verse 16](#) below shows what it refers to.

9–12. For in him dwelleth all the fulness, etc. You must not be drawn from Christ. He is all in all. In him is the divine fullness (all divine power). In him as revealed was God in bodily form. Compare [John 1:14](#). **10. Ye are complete in him.** You need nothing more. He supplies every want. **Head of all principality and power.** He is over and ruler of those ranks of angels that some are trying to lead you to worship. **11. In whom ye are circumcised.** Are



there those who say that you ought to be circumcised? In him is the true circumcision, not done by hands, not the cutting off of a little flesh, but the putting off of the entire body of the sins of the flesh. **12. Buried with him in baptism.** See notes on [Rom. 6:4](#). Paul teaches that we must re-enact the tragedy of the cross: The agony of the garden, the complete submission to the divine will, confession of Christ, crucifixion ([Gal. 2:20](#); [Rom. 6:5](#)), death ([Rom. 6:3](#)), burial ([Rom. 6:4](#); [Col. 2:12](#)), rising with Christ ([Rom. 6:5](#); [Col. 2:12](#); [3:1](#)); nay, we must ascend and reign with him ([Eph. 2:4–6](#)). Let it be noted that “the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh” ([verse 11](#)) is associated with baptism ([verse 13](#)). **Wherein ye were also raised with him** (Revision). We are raised from the burial as he was raised from the grave, and we rise to a new life **through faith, etc.**

13–15. Being dead in your sins. He that is dead in sins is without spiritual or eternal life. To be dead *to* sin is to be delivered from its power. **The uncircumcision of your flesh.** “The body of the sins of the flesh” not having been put off. See [verse 11](#). **Hath he quickened.** By the power of the gospel. We are buried with Christ, quickened with him, rise with him. **Having forgiven.** The gospel comes with the offer of forgiveness. See [Acts 2:38](#). **14. Blotting out the handwriting.** The Revision says, “The bond.” That is, the written law of ordinances; the law of Jewish rites. This was “blotted out,” erased, removed. **Against us.** Especially in the sense that they made Gentiles aliens and strangers to the covenant, and without God and hope. **Nailing it to his cross.** When the Jews nailed Jesus to the cross they drove the nails into their own law. The old dispensation was ended; the blood of the new covenant was shed from the wounds of the nails. **15. Having put off from himself the principalities** (Revision). Christ overcame and disarmed the spirits of darkness, the evil angels. He triumphed over Satan and all his powers. **Made a show of them.** Put them to an open shame by triumphing over them in his resurrection and ascension.

16–19. Let no man therefore judge you. As the law was nailed to the cross ([verse 14](#)), let no man compel you to keep its ordinances. **In meat, or in drink.** By requiring you to eat only what the Jewish law prescribes ([Lev. 7:10–27](#)). See [Rom. 14:17](#); [1 Cor. 8:8](#); [Heb. 9:10](#). Compare [1 Tim. 4:3](#). **Or in respect of a holy day.** Such as the Passover, Pentecost, etc. **Or of the new moon.** The monthly observances ([Num. 28:11](#)). **Or of the Sabbath day.** The Jewish Sabbath had passed away with the law. **17. Which are a shadow of things to come.** The body, or substance, which casts the shadow is Christ. We are to pay no attention to the shadows since Christ has come, but to observe what we find in him and the gospel. **18. Let no man beguile you.** Rob you of your reward by his guile. He will do so if you become unworthy of it by **a voluntary humility.** By a humility that is willed, and therefore is affected rather than real. It is probable that the false teachers made a great pretence of humility, and taught a self-abasement, like that of monks clad in sackcloth, or who go barefoot. **And worshiping of angels.** One feature of the heresy against which Paul warned them was angel worship. See [Rev. 19:10](#). Angel worship, the worship of saints, dead or living, of pope, or

any created thing, is forbidden. “Worship God,” said the angel before whom John bowed. Church history states that at a later period Michael the archangel was worshiped. **Dwelling in the things which he hath seen** (Revision). Claiming special revelations. He refers to “no man.” **19. Not holding the Head.** Not clinging to Christ the Head, from whence the whole body, the church, derives its nourishment and increase.

20–23. Wherefore. Ye died with Christ, died to the world, and to its **rudiments**, or fleshly ordinances. See note on verses 8 and 12. Why, then, as though belonging to the world, should you be subject to obsolete Jewish ordinances? **21. Touch not, etc.** Why are you subject to prohibitions of food and drink which command you to “touch not?” etc. **22. Which all are to perish.** The prohibition applies to “things all of which perishing in the using;” *i. e.*, to food and drink. **After the commandments.** These ordinances, whether Jewish traditions, or those of ascetics, are dependent upon the commands and teachings of men. **23. Which things.** The doctrines just condemned. **Have a show of wisdom.** But only a show. **In will-worship.** Self-imposed, arbitrary worship. **And humility.** Ostentatious humility. **And severity to the body.** By starving it and refusing proper food. This implies that these teachers demanded mortifications of the flesh, such as have been always commended in the Romish church. **But are not of any value.** They have no efficacy in overcoming the lusts of the flesh. In the [first verse of the next chapter](#) we are told the only way of overcoming the flesh. In this chapter can be discovered traces of the ascetic spirit which a few centuries later became so dominant in the church. It is well to note that it is placed under the condemnation of the Holy Spirit.



Chapter III

The New Life in Christ

Summary —*Fellowship with the Risen Christ. Our Lives with Him. Hence, All the Evil Deeds of the Old Life Must Be Put Away. All Distinctions Done Away in Christ. Hence, Brotherly Love Must Be Cherished. The Indwelling of Christ's Word. Concerning Songs. Various Duties.*

1–4. If then ye were raised together with Christ. The Revision is correct. A definite act, not a state, is referred to. The definite act is named in [2:12](#) above. When they were “buried with him in baptism,” they were also raised from this burial with him through faith, quickened. Hence here he says, “If then ye were raised with him,” if your obedience was from the heart and in faith, if you rose therefore *with him* (these are the emphatic words), then **seek those things which are above**. The risen Christ ascended; let your aspirations ascend also. **Where Christ sitteth, etc.** See notes on [Eph. 1:20](#). **2. Set your affection on things above.** This is a condition of seeking the things above. Our hearts must be in heaven with our beloved Lord. **3. For ye died.** This is a reason for not loving earthly things. We died to the world, crucified with Christ, and were buried. See notes on [2:12](#). Also [Rom. 6:2](#); [Gal. 2:20](#). This death was a definite act, like the burial and the rising, not a state. The Revision is a great improvement on such passages. **Your life is hid.** They died, but they are not dead. Yet the world does not see their true life, the eternal principle within. Their life is in Christ, and can never be fully manifested until he shall be manifest; but ([verse 4](#)) **when he shall be manifested**, then the glory and the blessedness of the life in us shall be shown forth. Like the tree in the winter, not dead, but the life hidden. When the spring comes, its life shows itself in glory. Compare [Rom. 8:19](#).

5–8. Mortify therefore your members. The Greek word is stronger. It means, “Put to death.” Since you died to the world and the flesh, slay also the earthly lusts and passions which belong to the flesh. They belong to the old nature, not to the new creature. **Unclean-ness.** Every kind of impure act. **Inordinate affection.** Lustful passion. **Covetousness.** See note on [Eph. 5:5](#). **6. For which things' sake.** Because these things are practiced by those who live in disobedience, God's wrath is coming upon them. **7. In the which ye also walked.** They had been Gentile heathen, and among them licentiousness was at that time universal. See notes on [1 Cor. 6:9–11](#). Even moralists sanctioned every kind of unchastity except that of a wife. **8. Also put off all these.** The sins that follow as well as those named above. **Anger, wrath, malice.** A climax, full of evil to other men. **Blasphemy, filthy communication.** The Revision says, “Railing, shameful speaking.” Sins manifested by the tongue. The reference is to low, profane, filthy abuse, due to “anger, wrath, and malice.”

9–11. Lie not. Christ is truth, and they who are of Christ will be truth in word and deed. **Seeing.** Lying would be a proof that **the old man** (the old fleshly nature, [Eph. 4:22](#); [Rom. 6:6](#)) **with his deeds** had not been put off. **10. Have put on the new man.** Are born again ([John 3:5](#)) and become new creatures in Christ. The new man has a new heart, new thoughts, a new life. **Is renewed in knowledge.** With the new man there is a growth, a renewal. He grows continually in knowledge of Christ and into his image. **11. Where there cannot be Greek, etc.** In Christ there can be no distinction of race, or of caste. The Greek, when he is converted, becomes a new being; not a Greek, but a Christian. So of Jew, Roman, Scythian. They are all naturalized into a new kingdom, that of Christ, and belong to a new, holy nation ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). All the old barriers to fraternity are removed. **Barbarian.** The Greeks long called all who were not Greeks barbarians, but in the apostolic age applied it more particularly to those who had not accepted the Greek civilization. **Bond nor free.** The master and the slave were on a level in the church. “*Humanity* is a word which you look for in vain in Plato and Aristotle; the idea of mankind as one family, as the children of one God, is an idea of Christian growth.”—*Max Muller*. **But Christ is all.** He is the life of all the new creation, and in all.

12–15. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God. As a chosen, holy and beloved nation, put on these graces. **A heart of compassion** (Revision), **etc.** These are all traits of Christ, and must be found in us if he is our life. **13. Forbearing ... forgiving.** How often and earnestly long-suffering and forbearance are enjoined! Nor have we grounds for expecting that God will forgive us unless we also forgive ([Matt. 6:12](#)). Christ is our example. **14. Above all these things put on love.** If our souls are imbued with love, like that of Christ, it will be easy then to forbear and forgive. **The bond of perfectness.** All the Christian graces are bound together in love. It is the source of them all. **15. Let the peace of Christ rule.** The peace of those who are made brethren in Christ and filled with his love. It must reign in the heart, then it will rule in the acts. This is the peace to which Jew, Gentile, and every race is **called in one body.** There must be no discord, schism, or factious spirit in the fold.

16, 17. Let the word of Christ. The word that has been preached to you. **Dwell in you.** As in a temple. **Richly in all wisdom.** If we treasure it up richly we will have the divine wisdom in our hearts. **Teaching and admonishing.** Those having the indwelling word would have ability to teach. **In psalms, etc.** Teaching and admonishing were to be present even in song. Song was to have another object than to please the ear. It was not for enjoyment, but for edification. The species of song are named here and in [Eph. 5:19](#). For the distinction, see notes there. **Singing with grace.** With Christ's grace in your hearts; that is, with hearts pervaded by the love of Christ. **17. Whatever ye do.** Whether it be singing, whether it be word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.** Neither in worship, nor in his business and pleasures, must be the Christian engage in anything that cannot be done in Christ's name; *i. e.*, by his authority and in prayer to him. This covers the whole life. It applies to



conduct, to places of resort, to secular calling. If doubtful, see if you can on your knees ask Christ to go with you and bless you in what you are about to undertake. **Giving thanks.** The Christian should always be thankful, because if he “does all in the name of Jesus,” the Lord will always be with him, and work out all for good.

18–21. The section from [3:18 to 4:1](#), is very similar to [Eph. 5:22 to 6:9](#). I will refer the reader to Ephesians for fuller notes. **Wives, submit yourselves.** See notes on [Eph. 5:22](#). **19. Husbands, love your wives.** See notes on [Eph. 5:25](#). **20. Children, obey your parents.** See notes on [Eph. 6:1](#). **21. Fathers, provoke not your children.** See notes on [Eph. 6:4](#).

22–25. Servants, obey. See notes on [Eph. 6:5, 6](#). **23. And whatsoever ye do.** See notes on [Eph. 6:7](#). **24. Knowing that of the Lord.** See notes on [Eph. 6:8](#). **25. He that doeth wrong.** Whether master or slave. All will be required, and before Christ, all, master and slave, stand upon the same footing.



Chapter IV

Final Exhortation

Summary —*A Charge to Masters. Prayer and Prudence Commended. Tychicus, the Bearer of the Letter, Introduced. Onesimus Commended. Greetings from Brethren at Rome. The Epistle of the Laodiceans.*

1. Masters, give unto your servants. See notes on [Eph. 6:9](#). This verse ought to have been joined to the section of the preceding chapter in which mutual duties are enjoined. It should be remarked that such a charge as this is not found in all the profane writings of antiquity. Even in the pages of the moralists a slave was regarded as a chattel with which the master had a right to deal according to his will. The Christian rule, at once introduced into the church, was for the master to treat his servants as he wished to be treated by his Master in heaven, and to expect the same kind of treatment that he meted out.

2–4. Continue in prayer. Prayer ought to be regular, habitual. The Christian should every day have a season of prayer. See [Luke 18:1](#); [Acts 1:14](#); [Eph. 6:18](#). **Watch.** Watch that you pray aright, in earnest, and ask for what you ought. **With thanksgiving.** Let thanks for mercies given ascend as you ask for new mercies. **3. Praying also for us.** Note the spirit of this prayer; not a thought of his ease, comfort, or even safety, but only that he may be given full opportunity to preach Christ. So sublime a self-forgetfulness in a suffering prisoner is almost divine. **The mystery of Christ.** The gospel of Christ. It was a mystery, *i. e.*, a hidden truth until it was revealed. See [1 Cor. 4:1](#); [Eph. 6:19](#); [Col. 1:26](#); [2:2](#). **In bonds.** See notes on [Eph. 6:20](#); [Phil. 1:7](#).

5, 6. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without. Let your conduct be prudent and sagacious. Do not provoke persecution. **Redeeming the time.** Using every opportunity and seeking time to do them good. **Redeeming.** Buying by giving up your own pleasure. **6. Let your speech be always with grace.** Use courteous speech, calculated to attract rather than to repel. **Seasoned with salt.** Food without seasoning is insipid. Let the speech be so seasoned by “grace” that it will not be rejected with aversion. **That ye may know how, etc.** So that your answer to **every man** may be such as the case requires. The idea is to always say what is pertinent and best for the occasion.

7–9. All my state shall Tychicus declare. See [Eph. 6:21](#) for note on Tychicus. He carried the Epistle to the Ephesians, and that to the Colossians on the same journey. He was probably a native of Ephesus, and was one of Paul's most trusted evangelists. See [Acts 20:4](#); [2 Tim. 4:12](#); [Titus 3:12](#). It should be kept in mind that all Paul's Epistles were sent by messengers. There were no postal arrangements for carrying private letters such as exist in our times.

8. Whom I have sent. Not only to carry letters, but to ascertain the state of the churches, and to instruct and comfort them. He came as an evangelist to help them on. **9. With Onesimus.** A peculiar interest is connected with Onesimus because he is the subject of the Epistle to Philemon. He belonged to Colosse, was probably a slave of Philemon, and had fled to Rome, and now returns as “a faithful and beloved brother.” Tychicus bore also at this time the letter to Philemon.

10–13. There follow Christian remembrances from several of Paul's companions. **Aristarchus, my fellow-prisoner.** A Macedonian from Thessalonica ([Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2](#)). He accompanied Paul from Jerusalem to Rome. He is named in [Philemon 24](#). **And Marcus.** The old companion of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary tour. **Sister's son to Barnabas.** It is now conceded that this should be, “Cousin to Barnabas.” Since in this year (probably a.d. 62) Mark attends Paul, it is inferred that Barnabas was dead. **Touching whom.** Mark. **Commandments.** Commendations. **Receive him.** Perhaps these churches knew that at one time Paul had refused to have Mark in his company ([Acts 15:38](#)), and hence would not have received him cordially without such a commendation. **11. And Jesus, which is called Justus.** We only know of this man that, like Mark, he was a Jewish Christian, **of the circumcision**, and highly commended by Paul. **12. Epaphras.** See note on [Col. 1:7](#). He is thought to have founded the church at Colosse. **One of you.** A member of the Colossian church. **For you in prayers.** In his absence from you he continues to labor fervently for you in his prayers. **13. Them that are in Laodicea.** The sister city near at hand across the valley of the Lycus. **Hierapolis.** Another city close at hand, in which a church had been planted. Probably Epaphras planted it also.

14, 15. Luke. The historian. Note that two, Mark and Luke, were both with Paul at this time. See [Introduction to Luke](#). He was a Gentile. **Demas.** Named also, and not to his credit, in [2 Tim. 4:10](#); also in [Philemon 24](#). **15. Nymphas.** An inhabitant of Laodicea. **The church which is in his house.** “His” in the Old Version; “her” in the Vatican MS., but the best authority renders it “their house;” *i. e.*, the house of Nymphas and his family. In the first century no church building existed, and the Christians met in private houses. A portion, at least, of those in Laodicea met in the house of Nymphas, and are greeted as “the church in their house.” See also [Rom. 16:5](#); [1 Cor. 16:19](#); [Philemon 2](#).

16–18. Likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea. The Epistles addressed to these contiguous churches were for each other. Tychicus no doubt bore also a letter to the Laodiceans. Whether that letter was lost, whether it is the Epistle to the Ephesians, or whether the letter was a general letter to the churches of Asia, has been much discussed. My own opinion is that more than one copy of the Ephesian letter was made, one being delivered to the Ephesian church, and the other to the church at Laodicea. Space will not permit of a discussion upon this point. **17. Say to Archippus.** He is named in [Philemon 2](#). He had some important work, and was possibly a preacher. **18. The salutation by the hand of me Paul.** Paul dictated his

epistles to an amanuensis ([Rom. 16:22](#)), but was wont to add a salutation in his own hand ([Gal. 6:11](#); [2 Thess. 3:17](#); [1 Cor. 16:21](#)). **Remember my bonds.** Three times this chapter he alludes to his chains, in [verses 3, 10, 18](#). The thought is, “Be willing to suffer for the gospel even as I do.”

**The First Epistle of Paul to the
Thessalonians**



Introduction to the First Epistle to the Thessalonians

This epistle bears the distinction of being the first in the order of time of the letters written by the Apostle Paul which have been preserved. Indeed it is the earliest of any of the epistolary Books of the New Testament, the beginning of that body of writing to which the churches are so much indebted. It was written at least five or six years before the great doctrinal and ecclesiastical treatises known as the Roman, Galatian, and the Corinthian Letters, and with the Second Letter to the Thessalonians which followed it by only a few months, it shares the distinction of being the only epistles that came into existence before the beginning of Paul's third great Missionary journey. These epistles, so long antedating the others, differ also from them in character. Written only a short time after the church at Thessalonica was founded, and called forth by the trials and needs of a young congregation which he felt it in his heart to visit again, but was prevented, they illustrate the apostolic instruction given to a newly organized church, composed of Gentiles, suffering under the persecution of both Jewish and heathen adversaries. They are fresh in allusion to the experiences of Paul while among them, and reveal his deep solicitude when forced away.

When the apostle, on his third missionary journey, passed into Europe, he first planted a church at Philippi, but after a little season was driven from there by heathen persecution. Then, attended by Silas and Timothy, he went westward along the great Egnatian Way, the Roman road which led through Greece to Macedonia. He did not pause until he reached Thessalonica, nearly a hundred miles westward, the chief city of Macedonia, situated around a noble harbor at the head of the Aegean Sea. Its situation on the great Roman thoroughfare, its position on the extremity of the sea, and the rich country in its rear, had contributed to make it a great commercial city, with a mixed population of Greeks, Romans and Jews, the first being the most numerous. Here, where there was a synagogue, the apostle paused, found employment to meet his frugal wants, and began to preach among his own countrymen. "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."

But soon after the unbelieving Jews stirred up an uproar which made it necessary for Paul and Silas to leave, and the brethren sent them away by night. Going from thence to Berea to the southwest, they first labored there, and later the apostolic labors were extended to Athens and to Corinth. Shortly after Paul's departure from Thessalonica, the persecutions which had driven him away turned upon the church (2:14; 3:3), a circumstance that made him yearn to return (3:5). Twice he resolved to do so but was prevented (2:18). Finally he sent back Timothy from Athens (3:1, 2), and when Timothy returned to him at Corinth, to which he had proceeded, the message which he brought was the occasion of this epistle, an epistle full of comfort, instruction and encouragement, but withal, containing also the in-

struction in righteousness so much needed by a congregation of those so recently heathen and addicted to heathen vices.

It is interesting to know that this church, honored with the first of the apostolic epistles, long continued to enjoy a glorious history. It was afterwards visited by the apostle more than once; and is often mentioned in the history of the church. Though for more than four hundred years under the sway of the Turk, the majority of its population has always continued to profess the religion of Christ. The city is still great and flourishing, in point of commerce the third in the Turkish empire, possessing a population estimated all the way from 75,000 to 100,000. Of these about one-half are Greek Christians, and the remainder nearly equally divided between Mohammedans and Jews. The excellence of the harbor makes it a constant object of eastern diplomacy, and at this time one of the obstacles in the way of settling the "Eastern Question" is to determine what power shall be awarded Thessalonica.

As to the date of the epistle, it can be nearly determined. About a.d. 52, the church here was planted. From thence the apostle went to Berea and Athens. From the latter, probably several months after leaving Thessalonica, he sent Timothy back. Several months more would intervene before Timothy could return at Corinth. It is therefore probable that the letter was written in a.d. 53, perhaps at least a year after the planting of the church. It was not written at Athens, as an unauthorized addition in the Common Version states.

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Chapter I

Introductory Greetings

Summary — *Salutation. Thanksgiving for the Faith of the Thessalonians. Commendation for Spreading the Gospel. The Great Change in Their Lives.*

1. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Silvanus is the same as the Silas of Acts. We learn from Acts ([chapters 15 to 18](#)) that both Silas and Timothy attended Paul on the second missionary journey during which the Epistle was written. Paul does not speak of his apostleship in this salutation, as in later epistles, because at this early period the Judaizing Christians had not begun to spread doubts whether he was an apostle. **In God the Father.** Hence, separated from the Gentiles. **The Lord Jesus Christ.** Hence, separated from the Jews.

2–5. We. The plural, perhaps, is used because Silas and Timothy were joined in the greeting, but the Epistle is Paul's, not the joint work of three persons. **Give thanks.** Almost all Paul's letters begin with thanksgiving. **3. Remembering ... your work of faith.** He states reasons for thankfulness. **Work of faith.** Works which result from faith. **Labor of love.** Toil for others caused by love for them and for Christ. **Patience of hope.** Patient endurance of toil, hardship and persecution through a hope in Christ. Probably a hope that soon these would cease with the coming of Christ. The Thessalonians, as we learn, expected his speedy coming. **4. Knowing ... your election of God.** That you are of the elect, the "chosen nation." All Christians were the elect, and the expression is another way of saying, "Knowing that you have become Christians." **5. For our gospel came not unto you in word only.** God gave the spoken word power, the power of the Holy Spirit which dictated it. Observe that the "power" is referred to the preachers. **Ye know.** Ye know what was the life, the earnestness and the power in the Holy Spirit of us while we were preaching among you.

6, 7. Ye became followers of us. Followed them as they followed the Lord. **Having received the word in much affliction.** In the midst of opposition and persecution. See [Acts, chapter 17](#). **With joy of the Holy Ghost.** With rejoicing as soon as they accepted the gospel. **7. So that ye were ensamples.** Their earnestness was such that they were worthy of imitation by all who had become Christian. **Macedonia.** The great Roman province, of which Thessalonica was the capital, lying north of the Ægean Sea. **Achaia.** The Roman province of which Corinth was the capital. It embraced most of Greece.

8–10. For from you sounded out. The effect of the gospel in Thessalonica was so striking that the report of it went through all Macedonia and Greece, and awakened inquiry, so that a knowledge of the gospel was thus spread abroad. **So that we need not to speak anything.** Wherever he went he found that the news of the church in the great city of Thessalonica had preceded him, so that he did not need to tell it. **9. For they themselves.** The people "every place" ([verse 8](#)). **How ye turned to God from idols.** Most of them had



been heathen. See the accounts in [Acts 17:4](#). **10. And to wait for his Son from heaven.** The apostles saw the Lord ascend, but he left a promise that he would return, with the time wholly unrevealed. Hence, in preaching the gospel, they made his return to the world very prominent, and perhaps believed themselves in his speedy coming. Until after Jerusalem was destroyed the churches *waited*, as though the Lord would soon be revealed. We should still wait, “watch and pray.” We know not the hour when he may either come, or we be called to him.



Chapter II

Paul's Ministry at Thessalonica

Summary —*How the Gospel was Brought to Thessalonica. The Manner of Paul's Preaching. His Manner of Life. His Exhortations. Their Persecutions. His Desire to Return to Comfort Them.*

1–4. Our entrance ... was not in vain. The existence of the flourishing church, where none had before existed, was proof of that fact. **2. Were shamefully treated ... at Philippi.** See [Acts 16:19–24](#). Even after such cruel treatment at the first place in Europe where they preached the gospel, they were no less **bold in ... God to speak ... the gospel** at Thessalonica, the second place they labored, though **with much contention**. With fierce opposition. See [Acts 17:13](#). **3. For our exhortation was not of deceit.** The message they preached did not spring from deceit, or unclean lives, or guile. It was in all sincerity, and hence they were bold. **4. So we speak.** God had given them the gospel as a trust. They were “stewards of the mysteries of God.” They spoke as those faithful to a trust, seeking to please God instead of men.

5–8. Flattering words. He would have used these if he had sought to please men, but he told them plainly of their sins. **Nor a cloak of covetousness.** Nor did he have a covetous motive and conceal it by fair pretences. **6. Nor ... sought we glory.** Enemies of the cross sought some motive to explain the devotion of the apostles to the work. When all others failed, they named the desire of glory, as though men would make themselves “offscouring” for the sake of glory. **When we might, etc.** They might have demanded glory, and stood on the dignity of the apostles' office, and required pecuniary support. Instead, they worked at Thessalonica with their own hands for a support (see [verse 9](#)). **7. Were gentle.** Instead of throwing ourselves on our dignity as apostles. **8. But also our own souls.** You were so dear to us that we not only were willing to impart the gospel, but would have given our lives to you and for you.

9–12. Ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail. There was hard and exhausting labor, “night and day.” The apostle was not willing to be chargeable to them; hence, while preaching “in season, out of season,” he labored at his trade for a support. To this day the weaving of black cloths for tents is a great industry at Thessalonica. **10. Ye are witnesses.** How holy and blameless were our lives. **11. As a father doth his children.** As tenderly and earnestly. **12. Hath called you unto his kingdom.** The kingdom of Christ, visible as the church on earth.



13–16. Not as the word of men. They had received the gospel preached by Paul as the word of the Lord, a divine message. **Which effectually worketh.** The word, received into the heart, is the good seed of the kingdom, and springeth up to eternal life. **14. Became followers.** Imitators of the churches in Judea, enduring persecution faithfully. **Ye also have suffered.** As the Jews persecuted the churches in Judea, so you have been persecuted by your own countrymen. The persecution at Thessalonica was first stirred up by unbelieving Jews, but they induced the heathen to join in it. They “stirred up the people” ([Acts 17:13](#)). **15. Who both killed.** The Jews in Thessalonica had incited the persecution there. Their hostility to righteousness elsewhere is cited. They not only slew the Savior, but had killed their own prophets ([Matt. 23:31](#)). **Persecuted us.** The apostles and evangelists, and especially Paul. Their hatred pursued them everywhere. **16. Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles.** Nothing created such animosity on the part of the Jews as preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. See [Acts 22:21–23](#). **To fill up their sins alway.** To fill the measure of their sins so full that God would reject them as a people. Compare [Gen. 15:16](#); [Matt. 23:32](#). **For the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.** They were ripe for destruction. Before twenty years it came.

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17–20. We, brethren, being taken from you. Forced away from them, his heart remained with them. **18. We would have come.** Once and again, twice, he had purposed to return to them, **but Satan hindered.** How, is not stated, but some difficulties intervened that Paul attributed to Satan. His agency is often manifest when we do not recognize it; sometimes in wicked opposition, sometimes even “as an angel of light.” **19. What is our crown of rejoicing?** As the victor in the games could point to his crown as the proof of his powers, so Paul could point to the Gentile churches as the proof of ministry. **At his coming.** Paul took pride in the thought how great a work the Lord at his coming would behold which he had wrought in the gospel.

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Chapter III

Paul's Feelings Toward the Thessalonians

Summary —*Paul in His Great Solitude Sent Timothy to Them. The Joy that Timothy's Report Gave Him. His Prayer to See Them Face to Face. A Prayer for Them.*

1–5. When we could no longer forbear. The [closing verses of chapter 2](#) show Paul's great desire to see them, as a father to see his suffering children. Hindered ([2:18](#)), he at last “thought it good to be left alone at Athens” ([Acts 18:1–5](#)). **2. And sent Timothy, our brother.** [Acts 18:5](#) shows that Paul had been left alone at Athens, went to Corinth alone, and was there joined by Silas and Timothy, who came from Macedonia. Timothy had been sent to strengthen the new church at Thessalonica. **3. That no man should be moved by these afflictions.** Timothy was sent to prevent any one being moved from Christ by the opposition and persecutions suffered. **Yourselves know.** Know that it is the lot of God's people to suffer persecution. **4. For ... we told you.** He had faithfully forewarned them that tribulation would come. **5. Lest by some means the tempter, etc.** The tempter is Satan. Unable to hear from them, fearing the effect of their fiery trial, he sent Timothy, not only to strengthen them, but to report to him their state.

6–8. Now when Timothy came. Timothy came to him at Corinth ([Acts 17:15](#)) and brought an excellent report of the young and persecuted church. **7. We were comforted.** The good tidings of the faithfulness of the saints filled him with joy. **8. For now we live, if, etc.** How tender his affection for them if he could say that good news from them filled him with new life!

9–13. What thanks can we render? How can we be thankful enough? **10. Night and day praying.** An expression of his intense longing to see again a band of young converts so tenderly endeared to him. **And might perfect that which is lacking.** Instruct them more fully in knowledge and duty. So recently heathen, they needed a wise teacher very much. **11. Now God himself.** An appeal that he may be permitted to return to them. The prayer was granted in due time ([Acts 20:1, 2](#)), though not for three or four years. **12. The Lord make you to increase.** Whether he may come or not, his prayer is for their increase in love, the greatest of all graces. **13. To the end he may stablish your hearts.** Love shed abroad in their hearts would have this effect, and fit them for every duty and trial. He that loveth supremely fulfill the whole law.



Chapter IV

Exhortation to a Godly Life

Summary —*Contenance Commanded. Brotherly Love Required. Each Should Quietly Follow His Own Business. Not to Sorrow Without Hope for the Dead. They, as well as the Living Saints, shall Meet the Lord at His Coming.*

1, 2. Furthermore then. In all Paul's letters to Gentile churches there is a closing exhortation to purity of life and against such sins as Gentiles especially needed to guard against. These exhortations to the Thessalonians begin with the fourth chapter. **How ye ought to walk.** He reminds them that he had instructed them how to live to please God. **2. What commandments.** What commands had been given as coming from the Lord Jesus.

3–8. This is the will of God. What he had taught them was the will of God and needful to their **sanctification**, or holiness of life. **That ye abstain from fornication.** The student of the Epistles will note how often this command is repeated to Gentile churches, a fact easily explained when we remember that fornication was considered no sin among the heathen. **4. That every one of you should ... possess his vessel.** Should restrain his bodily desires, and make even his appetites holy. **5. Even as the Gentiles which know not God.** Even the greatest of heathen moralists, Socrates, instructed a harlot how she should conduct her shameful business. The heathen moralists condemned unchastity only in the case of a child-bearing wife, as it would wrong her husband not to know the paternity of her children. **6. That no man go beyond.** Beyond the bounds of purity, so as to wrong his brother. In our age, to assail the purity of wife or daughter is counted as a fearful crime against the family. **The Lord is the avenger.** He will punish the adulterer, or libertine. **7. Unto holiness.** The Christian calling demands purity of life. **8. He that despiseth.** Who considers not the rights and welfare of his fellow-beings, and invades the purity of the home, let him know that it is God he despises, not man. God has required of him holiness instead of uncleanness. **Giveth his Holy Spirit.** The temple of the Holy Spirit must be holy. To defile it, that is ourselves, is to insult God.

9–12. As touching brotherly love. This subject springs out of [verse 6. Taught of God.](#) The whole gospel teaches you to love one another. When you are born of God, you are his children and all brethren. As Christ loved the brethren, so must you if you follow him. **10. And indeed ye do.** Their conduct showed their brotherly love. **11. Study to be quiet.** The Greeks were naturally a restless people, often given to intermeddling in the business of other people. **Work with your own hands.** A Christian must not be an idler. A “loafer” cannot show forth the life of Christ. We gather, elsewhere, that some brethren at Thessalonica thought the time so short until the Lord would come that work was unnecessary. **12. That ye may walk honestly.** Becomingly in the sight of those without. It would be a reproach if

the heathen could say, “This new religion makes men idle and brings them to beggary.” **Lack of nothing.** The necessities supplied by labor are especially meant.

13–18. But we would not have you ignorant. It seems that the Thessalonian brethren, expecting the speedy coming of the Lord, mourned over some of their number who had died, counting it a great loss that they did not live to meet Jesus. **Them which are asleep.** What we call death is only falling asleep in the arms of our Lord. **14. If we believe, etc.** If we believe in the death and resurrection of Christ, we must believe also that all who sleep in him will be raised with him. **15. For this we say.** He now explains how it will be at the Lord’s coming. **We which are alive.** We who are on the earth when the Lord comes, will not precede those who died in the Lord to meet him. **16. For the Lord himself.** They seemed to have thought that the living saints would hurry to meet the Lord, and that the dead would be powerless to follow. On the contrary, Christ comes to them. He will descend. **With a shout.** The voice of an archangel. The voice of command. **With the trump of God.** The trumpet blast as a signal and a summons. **The dead in Christ shall rise first.** Before the living are gathered, all the saints who slept in Christ shall be gathered around him. In the final day, the first act is the gathering of the departed saints; the next, the gathering of the living saints. **17. Then we, etc.** All the church, the saints of past ages, and the saints of the last age, shall ascend together to meet the Lord. **So shall we ever be with the Lord.** That glorious meeting shall never end. **18. Wherefore, comfort one another.** Cheer each other with these assurances. Tell the mourning ones that when they are called to meet the Lord they will find their own sleeping ones in the glorious company.



Chapter V

Closing Admonitions

Summary —*The Time of the Lord's Coming Unknown. Will Be Sudden. Hence, Let Us Not Be Asleep. Let Us Have Our Armor On. Mutual Duties of Shepherds and Flock. Christian Life. Benediction.*

1–3. But of the times and the seasons. Especially the time of the Lord's coming, which is the subject in the conclusion of [chapter 4](#). They had been instructed on this subject. **2. For yourselves know perfectly, etc.** They had been fully taught that the time of the Lord's coming was unrevealed, and that it would be unexpected. Compare [Matt. 24:43](#); [2 Thess. 2:2](#); [2 Peter 3:10](#); [Joel 1:15](#). **The day of the Lord.** Not alone, the day of each individual's death, nor of the destruction of Jerusalem, nor of the final coming of the Lord at the end of the world, but rather it may be applied to all of these. **As a thief in the night.** Without warning. Compare [Luke 12:39](#); [Rev. 3:3](#). **3. When they shall say.** When the thoughtless are persuading themselves that there is no ground for apprehension, then destruction shall come as suddenly as the pangs of childbirth.

4–7. Ye, brethren, are not in darkness. The Christian has been fully instructed, is a child of the light, and knows that he must always be ready. He follows the Light of the World. **5. Ye are all the children of light.** They are of the light, of the day, because they have come to Christ for light, and are taught of him. Hence on this subject they are fully informed. Those are of the **night**, who turn away from the light and refuse to accept it. **6. Therefore let us not sleep.** Since Christians are of the day, they should be wide awake. Day is not the time for sleep. A sleep of the spiritual faculties, which renders one insensible to danger, is meant. Instead of sleeping, Christians should **watch and be sober**. For a comment declaring how we should obey this, turn to [Luke 21:34, 36](#): “Take heed to yourselves, etc.” **7. They that sleep, sleep in the night.** Hence, Christians who are of the day, should be wakeful and watching. **They that be drunken, are drunken in the night.** In most countries they are ashamed to be seen intoxicated, and hence choose the night. In the East it is so. Peter thought the fact that it was day, and only nine o'clock, was proof that the scenes of Pentecost were not due to wine ([Acts 2:15](#)).

8–11. Putting on the breastplate of faith and love. The exhortation to the soldierly duties of watchfulness and sobriety suggests the thought of a sentinel and his armor. Compare [Eph. 6:11–17](#). There the shield of faith is spoken of; here the breastplate. Both were for the defense of the body. Nothing will better protect the heart from evil thoughts and keep us watching than faith and love. **And for an helmet, the hope of salvation.** See notes on [Eph. 6:17](#). What a power to protect, a blessed hope of salvation through Christ! **9. God hath not appointed us to wrath.** Hence it is our privilege to hope for salvation through Christ. **10.**

Who died for us. That we might secure salvation. Hence our salvation is so assured that even death cannot rob us of it. Whether we are alive, or sleep in death, we shall live together with Christ. **11. Wherefore.** This assurance is ground for comfort, and especially for comfort for mourners. **Edify one another.** Build each other up; strengthen each other.

12, 13. Know them. Recognize and appreciate. **Which labor among you.** Your preachers and elders. The three duties of those over them are to labor among them, to rule over them, and to admonish them. **13. Esteem them.** This esteem is due them on account of their work. Compare [Heb. 13:17](#), and [Phil. 1:22](#). **Be at peace.** Let there be no factious spirit.

14–16. Warn them that are unruly. The duties named in this section are those of the elders especially, but in a lesser sense the duty of all. **Unruly.** Those who are wayward, inconsistent, and disposed to follow their own will. **Feeble-minded.** Timid ones, who are easily discouraged by persecution, or cast down by trouble. **Support the weak.** Those weak in the faith. **15. See that none render evil for evil.** See note on [Rom. 12:21](#). This doctrine was subversive of the practice of the whole world. **16. Rejoice evermore.** Religion is not sullen and sour, but full of joy; so full that the saint can even be joyous when all the world seems to frown. He has a hidden source of joy, a present Savior, a blessed hope.

17–22. Pray without ceasing. See notes on [Luke 18:1](#), and [Eph. 6:18](#). **18. In everything give thanks.** Always be thankful for God's benefits, and always express your thanks. For scriptural examples, see [Acts 27:35](#); [2 Cor. 1:11](#); [Acts 28:15](#); [Eph. 5:20](#). **This is the will of God.** The three duties just named are probably comprehended. **19. Quench not the Spirit.** Do not resist it, or counteract its influence by sensual lives. He does who disobeys the word of God, or refuses to follow the exhortations of those led by the Spirit, or who stifles his own conscience. **20. Despise not prophesyings.** Inspired teachings. The prophets were specially inspired men in the early church. They were needed, because as yet it did not have the New Testament Scriptures for a guide. This inspired preaching must not be despised. **21. Prove all things.** What was spoken they must put to the test, and all that stood the test, they must hold fast to. There were those who could "discern spirits" ([1 Cor. 12:10](#)). There were also rules for testing ([1 John 4:1–8](#)). **22. Abstain from all appearance of evil.** The meaning is to avoid evil in every form.

23–26. The God of peace. Who bestows peace of soul. **Sanctify you wholly.** Make you holy in every respect. **Your whole spirit and soul and body.** Let the whole man be preserved blameless. **24. Faithful is he.** He who has called you is faithful, and if you trust him he will preserve you. **25. Pray for us.** How often Paul requests this prayer! See [Eph. 6:19](#); [Col. 4:3](#), and [2 Thess. 3:1](#). **26. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.** See notes on [Rom. 16:16](#), and [1 Cor. 16:20](#).

27, 28. I charge you by the Lord. His affectionate solicitude impels this solemn charge. Otherwise those in charge of the new church might think the letter was for them specially

and that they were to teach its spirit and thoughts to the people. **Read unto all.** In the public assembly. **28. The grace of our Lord.** The usual farewell benediction.

**The Second Epistle of Paul to the
Thessalonians**



Introduction to the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

The circumstances connected with the planting of the Church at Thessalonica, the character of the surroundings, and the trials of the young Christian brotherhood have all been explained in the [introduction to the preceding epistle](#), to which I refer the reader. Those circumstances called for a second letter, which must have followed the first after an interval of only a few months, the only instance save that of the Corinthian letters in which the apostle directed two successive epistles to the same congregation.

That the Second Epistle is followed soon after the First is indicated (1) by the fact that almost the same state of affairs is described in each: There was persecution and trial, there was an eager expectation of the speedy Advent of the Lord, excepting that in the Second Epistle the excitement had led to greater extremes, and in each certain ones are described who were neglecting their ordinary employments as unnecessary in view of the Lord's coming. Compare [2 Thess. 3:6–14](#) with [1 Thess. 4:10–12](#), and [1 Thess. 2:9](#). In the second place both Silas and Timothy were present with Paul at the writing of each epistle. Compare the [opening salutations](#).

The reasons for writing the letter are apparent. The conditions that called out the preceding letter still existed, and the information brought by the messenger who had carried the letter showed the need of further instruction. The principal object is to correct the erroneous belief that the day of the Lord's coming was very close at hand. This belief had received the more currency because some reported that Paul had so declared, and had even so stated in a letter. Hence he now shows that certain great events must precede that day, and that these events are yet future. He again enforces the teaching of the Lord that the time is unknown, and charges that all follow their usual employments.

This epistle, like the First, was evidently written during Paul's long stay at Corinth, and both may be assigned to the same year.

Chapter I

Greetings

Summary — *Salutation. Patient Waiting Under Tribulation. The Revelation of Christ for Judgment. The Punishment of the Disobedient.*

1, 2. Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus. See note on [1 Thess. 1:1](#). The [first two verses](#) are nearly identical.

3–5. We are bound to thank God. In [1 Thess. 3:9–13](#), he states that he prayed ceaselessly for the Thessalonians. Here he points out how his prayers were answered. The messenger who had returned to him told him many things concerning the church which filled him with thankfulness. One of these was that their **faith groweth exceedingly**. Though persecuted, their faith did not fail, but became stronger. And with their faith their **love ... toward each other** also abounded. **4. So that we glory.** On account of these things he spoke their praises in the churches, those of Achaia, where he then was. It is always a stimulus to report to the churches the good work elsewhere, **Churches of God**. A designation given by the apostles to the churches oftener than any other, though also spoken of as churches of Christ. **Your patience.** There was a patient endurance of trial for Christ. **5. A manifest token of the righteous judgment.** Your sufferings are a proof of judgment to come. The wicked are not receiving their deserts; the righteous are suffering. A future judgment, hence, must come, because God is righteous. **That ye may be counted worthy.** Their sufferings not only proved a judgment to come, but tried them, purified them, and prove them worthy.

6–10. Seeing it is a righteous thing. Your trials prove a coming judgment, because it is a righteous thing for God to punish those who trouble you. They must be requited for their wrongs. **7.** And not only that, but it is a righteous thing that he give **to you who are troubled rest**. That rest would come when there would be no persecutors, no stripes, no stonings, no prisons. It shall be **when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed**. At the Lord's coming. Compare [Matt. 24:30](#). **8. In flaming fire.** The flaming fire denotes brightness, glory, purity, and also destruction to adversaries. Dazzling brightness is always associated with his coming. God was revealed at Sinai in flaming fire ([Exod. 3:2; 19:18](#)). **Them that know not God.** Know him not because they refuse to know him. See [Rom. 1:28](#). **And obey not.** This class refuse to accept and obey the gospel. Their day of grace will end with the day of the Lord. **9. Who shall be punished.** Those who obey not the gospel shall be punished. The punishment is **eternal destruction**. This does not mean annihilation, but an eternal banishment from the **presence of the Lord**. In [Matt. 25:41](#), the doom of the wicked is, “*Depart from me.*” The saints are “*ever with the Lord;*” the wicked are driven forever from his presence. **10. When he shall come.** These final judgments shall be when he comes **to be glorified in his saints**.



The saints risen, glorious, rejoicing in salvation, shall be a glory of the Lord. **Admired in all them that believe.** All believers will look upon him with wonder and admiration.

11, 12. Wherefore we pray always. In view of this glorious judgment, he prays that they may stand and be counted worthy. **Of this calling.** The Christian calling. **Fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness.** The idea is “Perfect in you the love of goodness and the work of faith.” **12. That the name of our Lord ... glorified.** Holy lives glorify the Lord.



Chapter II

The Man of Sin

Summary —*Not to Be Troubled Supposing the Day of the Lord at Hand. An Apostasy Must First Come. Then the Revelation of the Man of Sin. The Wicked One Destroyed at the Lord's Coming. Exhortation to Stand Fast.*

This chapter is written to remove misapprehension on the subject of the Lord's coming. It shows that it might not be expected until certain events have taken place. These are, (1) A falling away, or apostasy; (2) The removal of some power which hindered the manifestation of the man of sin; (3) The manifestation of the man of sin, and following this, the coming of the Lord. He had told them of these things while with them ([verse 5](#)), but now writes more fully. He does not seek to show all, but some of the events which will precede Christ's coming.

1, 2. By the coming. Rather, concerning the coming. His importunity is respecting this and “the gathering of the saints.” **2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind.** Be not agitated, or in distress (**troubled**). **Neither by spirit.** By some one who says he has a revelation of the Spirit. **Nor by word.** Nor by one who claims to quote a word or letter from us. It is thought that a forged letter had been circulated to which Paul alludes. In the close of this Epistle he shows how his letters may be known to be genuine. Some suppose, however, that by “letter” he refers to an incorrect interpretation which was placed on his first letter.

3. Except there come a falling away first. An apostasy must precede the Coming. That is, there shall be a general falling away from the purity of the faith. No apostasy of magnitude occurred in the history of the church for centuries, which could answer to Paul's description, but the gradual declension, corruption, and departure from the ancient faith, which was fully developed a few hundred years later, has always been spoken of by Protestant church historians as *The Apostasy*. There is no good reason for doubting that it is to the apostle refers. **And that man of sin be revealed.** He shall be revealed then in connection with the apostasy. **The son of perdition.** This expression occurs once elsewhere, and is there applied to Judas, an apostate. Here it evidently has a similar application. Some power, once Christian, falls away and becomes opposed to Christ.

4. Who opposeth and exalteth himself. I shall endeavor in a few words to identify this power. Various explanations have been given, but there is only one power that exhibits all the marks given by Paul. Observe these: (1) The man of sin exalts himself above God. (2) He sits in the temple, that is, in the church, for that is always the sense in which Paul uses the term. He is a church power. (3) He claims powers that only belong to divinity. (4) He shows off signs and lying wonders ([verse 9](#)); or, in other words, lays a claim to miraculous powers. Every one of these marks applies to the papacy: (1) Its development was simultaneous



with that of the apostasy. (2) Its development was *let* (hindered) until the pagan Roman empire fell, but was rapid after it was *taken out of the way* (verse 7). (3) The papacy has set aside divine laws and has made other spiritual laws to bind men, and has claimed divine prerogatives. A newly-elected Pope is adored and styled "Lord God, the Pope." (4) It is in the temple of God, that is, it arose in the church, and still claims to be the "Holy Catholic Church." (5) The claim of Infallibility is "sitting as God in the temple." (6) The papacy has always claimed miraculous powers, and it is a fact well known that it has often worked off *lying wonders* (verse 9). No fact is better established than that the hierarchy of the church have often deceived by false miracles. Indeed, these have often been detected and explained.

6–10. Ye know now what withholdeth. They knew because Paul had told them when with them. We have not that advantage, but I believe that he told them that this development could not take place until pagan imperial Rome fell. We know that it did *withhold*, or prevent it. **7. For the mystery of iniquity.** This revelation of the man of sin. It was a mystery, that is, something yet hidden. **Doth already work.** Causes are beginning to work which will lead to it. **Only he who now letteth.** He that hindereth must first be taken out of the way. There was no room for an arrogant spiritual power in Rome as long as imperial Rome continued to persecute the church. A persecuted church cannot be a haughty church. Two things were needful before the papal power could be developed; viz., the overthrow of paganism, and the removal of the capital of the Empire from Rome. When these things were done, it was free to seize the old Roman scepter. **8. Then shall that Wicked be revealed.** After the hindering power is removed. **Whom the Lord shall consume.** The Wicked power will be destroyed by the Lord's coming, and will continue to exist, possibly, until that event. **9. Whose coming.** That of the Wicked power. **Is after the working of Satan.** That is, it will deceive men as Satan does. **Lying wonders.** False miracles. **10. Deceivableness of unrighteousness.** Unrighteous delusions which will be accepted by its votaries, **them that perish.** Those that perish, **receive not the love of the truth.** They have a disinclination to receive it.

11, 12. For this cause God shall send them strong delusion. Because they do not receive the truth. He who refuses to receive the truth will at last believe lies. It is the law of human nature. God sends the delusion by natural laws. **12. Be damned.** Because "they had pleasure in unrighteousness."

13–17. Chosen you to salvation. In contrast with those who fall victims to the man of sin, the Thessalonian Christians had been chosen to life. **From the beginning.** From the beginning God had determined on the salvation of the Gentiles, and arranged the plans by which they were saved. See notes on [Romans, chapter 9](#), for a full discussion of this subject. **Through sanctification of the Spirit.** This clause tells how God chose them to salvation.



To this there are two sides, the human and the divine. On the human side they **believed the truth**. On the divine side, God sanctified them by the Spirit. He had chosen from the beginning all that believe and accept the truth. **14. Whereunto he called you.** See how God calls! It is by the gospel. **15. Therefore, stand fast.** In view of your calling. **Hold the traditions.** Instructions. **16. Everlasting consolation.** God's consolations are eternal in their effects.



Chapter III

Closing Admonitions

Summary —*A Request for Prayer. A Command to Withdraw from the Disorderly. An Admonition to the Idle. The Salutation with his Own Hand.*

1–5. Pray for us. How often Paul makes this request in his letters! Compare [1 Thess. 5:25](#); [Eph. 6:19](#); [Col. 4:3](#). **That the word of the Lord, etc.** He asks no prayers for his own ease, or worldly prosperity, but that he may be helped in his work of the gospel. **Have free course.** Not be hindered by opposition which might prevent success. When in bonds ([2 Tim. 2:9](#)) he rejoiced that the word of the Lord was “not bound.” **Be glorified.** By its powers to save. See [Acts 13:48](#). **2. That we may be delivered.** That the wicked may not have power to prevent us from spreading the gospel. He is not moved by a desire to escape such hardships or dangers as these may cause, but by a desire that his work may move right on. **All have not faith.** In all ages the preaching of the gospel divides those who hear it into two classes, the believers and unbelievers. **3. The Lord is faithful.** Men may be unbelievers, and hostile, but the Lord is faithful to every promise, and in spite of evil men will **keep you from evil.** From the power of the evil one. **4. We have confidence in the Lord.** That by the Lord's power and protection **ye both do and will do the things” commanded.** **5. Patient waiting.** “The patience of Christ” (Revision). A patient endurance for Christ.

6–10. Now we command you. He has ([verse 4](#)) expressed a belief that they will readily obey his commands. He now gives one. **Brethren.** The command is not directed to priest or presbyter, but to the whole church. Compare [1 Cor. 5:4, 5](#). **Withdraw yourselves.** Decline to receive as a brother longer. Exclude from fellowship. **Every brother that walketh disorderly.** This command applies to other disorderly walking also, but has a direct reference here to those who refused to work. **Not after the tradition.** The instructions received from us. **7. Ye know how ye ought to follow us.** For Paul's example in the matter of work at Thessalonica, see [1 Thess. 2:9](#). He labors for his own support. **9. Not because we have not power.** A right to support at your hands, but because we wished to set you an example of industry. **10. We commanded.** Even then he gave a command that if any refused to work for their food, they should be refused support by others. He who is able to work, and unwilling, should not be fed.

11–13. We hear. The word was brought, no doubt, by the messenger who returned to him. **Which walk among you disorderly.** By doing nothing. It is a sin to be an idler. God requires industry. **Busybodies.** “The devil finds some mischief, still, for idle hands to do.” **12. Now ... such we command.** Such are solemnly commanded in the name of Christ to go to work, to live quiet lives, and to support themselves. The idlers were restless and

meddlesome. **13. Be not weary in well doing.** Do not get weary of the duties of life, so as to desire an idle life. Discharge all duties faithfully, whether secular or religious.

14–16. If any man obey not. Whoever does not obey these charges, let him be noted, withdrawn from. See [verse 6](#). He must be made ashamed of his course by seeing that it is repudiated by the church. **15. Yet count him not as an enemy.** The object of discipline is to save. Compare [1 Cor. 5:5](#). Give him kind and brotherly admonition, and let him know the reason for your course. **16. The Lord of peace.** Christ, who bestows peace upon all who walk in him.

17, 18. The salutation of Paul. Here he adds the salutation in his own hand-writing. The Epistle thus far had been written by one to whom he dictated, as was his custom, but he now adds his autograph. This autograph was proof of the genuineness. Their attention is perhaps called to this on account of a spurious epistle ([2:2](#)).

**The First Epistle of Paul to
Timothy**



Introduction to the First Epistle to Timothy

Four of the epistles of Paul are addressed to persons; one, that of Philemon, on personal matters; the other three to evangelists who had long labored under his directions, and who were charged at the time they were written with responsible trusts in which they needed his instructions. From the circumstance that Timothy and Titus were each exercising the care of the churches of a district these have been called the Pastoral Epistles. Yet the words Shepherd or Pastor, flock, and feed do not occur in them, as they do in [John 21:16](#); [Acts 20:28](#); [Eph. 4:11](#); [1 Pet. 5:2](#), but at the same time the duties implied in those relations are strongly urged. They deal more intimately with church organization and church culture, than any of the other epistles.

If the generally accepted view of the date of these three epistles is received they have the common feature of belonging to the closing years of the apostle's life. The epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, are the epistles of the captivity. On the hypothesis of Paul's release from the first imprisonment at Rome, in accordance with the universal statement of the early church, these epistles are held to have been written after his release, and after he had once more made a tour of the churches which he planted in Asia and Europe. Conybeare and Howson assign First Timothy to the date of a.d. 67. Certain allusions in these epistles can only be explained by assigning them a date as late as this. The apostle had, after a circuit of the churches of Asia Minor, come into Macedonia, and from thence sent back to Timothy, who had been left in charge of the work in the city and district of Ephesus, instructions and admonitions which would be of service to him in his duties. Well aware of the difficulties he would meet at Ephesus, of the factious spirit of certain false teachers, the epistle is written not only to show him how he ought to act, but in order to support him by its authority. It was probably written a little more than a year before the apostle's martyrdom at Rome.

Timothy, to whom it is directed, was his own "son in the gospel." From the Acts and the Epistles the outlines of his history are easily gathered. He was born in the Asiatic district of Lycaonia. His father was a Greek but his mother a Jewess. From his infancy he was instructed by his mother and grandmother, who names have been preserved, in the Hebrew scriptures, but had remained, probably at the demand of his father, uncircumcised. Converted by Paul, showing good gifts among the Lycaonian churches, Paul determined to make him a traveling assistant, and as it would aid much in enabling him to reach Jews, he had him circumcised. Indeed a *Mamzer*, a "bastard," as a child of a Jewish mother and heathen father was called by the Jews, would have had no access to the synagogue without circumcision.

From this time the allusions to Timothy in connection with Paul's work are so frequent that, did space permit, we could easily trace his course. Finally, we find him attending Paul

to Jerusalem on the occasion when Paul was made a captive. During the imprisonment at Cæsarea he was probably absent, sent to the churches by Paul, but after the arrival at Rome, as we learn from “the Epistles of the Captivity,” he again joined him. He had probably attended him on his last tour of the churches of Asia, was left behind at Ephesus, was there the recipient of two letters, which are the last allusions to him in the New Testament, unless he be “the angel of the church of Ephesus” named in [Rev. 2:1](#), as some have supposed.

The genuineness of the Pastoral epistles was never questioned in the primitive church. They are the oldest translation of the New Testament, the Peshito, which belongs to the second century, are in the oldest canon of the New Testament books, the Muratori, which is assigned to the date of a.d. 170, are quoted by several of the Fathers of the Second Century, and are declared by Eusebius in his church history to be “universally received.” Some objections have been raised to them by certain rationalistic German critics, such as Baur, but these objections have been fully answered. The space that our plan allows us will not permit me to consider these, further than to say that if they differ somewhat from the keen logic of Paul's earlier letters that is easily accounted for by the fact that they are *personal*, and are addressed to the most intimate of personal friends, to whom he writes in unreserved freedom and with the tenderest affection. The style of every writer differs according to the subjects treated and the persons addressed.

It only remains to be added that nothing has ever been written which contains, in the same space, so much that is indispensable to the preacher, the pastor, and to every church official. These classes may consider themselves especially addressed in the persons of Timothy and Titus, and they should study and reflect upon these letters until every charge, every truth and every admonition is written upon their hearts.



Chapter I

The Work Assigned to Timothy

Summary — *Greetings. Why Timothy was Left at Ephesus. The True Object of the Commandment. Whom the Law Affects. Paul's Call to the Apostleship. Hymenæus and Alexander.*

1, 2. Paul, an apostle. As one object of this letter was to strengthen Timothy's authority, Paul writes as an apostle. **By the commandment.** See [Rom. 16:26](#). As the Judaizing opposers tried to show that Paul was inferior to Peter and the other apostles, he often recalls the fact that his appointment came not from them, and that he was independent of them. The Lord sent him to the Gentiles, as they were sent to the Jews ([Acts 9:15](#)). **2. Timothy, my own son in the faith.** One of his converts. Compare [Titus 1:4](#).

3, 4. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus. Paul, it is presumed, seeing on the occasion of his last visit the need of a trusty evangelist at Ephesus to counteract the errors which were arising, had left Timothy behind. He was not left there as a bishop, as has been sometimes claimed, for we find that a part of his business was to appoint bishops; but as the representative of the apostle, an evangelist. The office of Titus in Crete was similar. **That they teach no other doctrine.** Than the gospel which they had been taught. Some of the errors which he was to correct are stated in the [next verse 4](#). **4. Neither give heed to fables.** In [Titus 1:14](#), the fables are called "Jewish." It is likely such fables as those of the Talmud are meant, legends which have been added to the history of the Old Testament, additions to the Scriptures. Though the Talmud was committed to writing a little later, it aimed to collect the legends and traditions which had been long in existence. **Endless genealogies.** Philo, a learned Alexandrian Jew who wrote a little before Paul's time, built up a whole system on genealogies. The names in the genealogies with him represented the various conditions of the soul. Some have supposed that Paul refers to some foolish fancies of the Gnostics, but those were of later date. **Which minister questions.** Raise discussions.

5–7. The end of the commandment. The purpose of the charge (Revision) entrusted to you (see [verse 3](#)) is love. You must show these teachers that instead of teaching foolish fables they must inculcate love. **Out of a pure heart.** The three things essential to a pure and holy love are: (1) A pure heart; (2) a good conscience; and (3) sincere faith. **6. From which some having swerved.** From love based on these three principles. **Unto vain jangling.** Are engaging in idle disputes. **7. Desiring to be teachers.** To be teachers of law; there is no article. These aspire to a work for which they are totally unfitted. Who has not met the class of men described?

8–11. The law is good, if a man use it lawfully. Its object was not, however, to teach fables, and genealogies, and foolish fancies. The men he opposes asserted that the law was good, but made a wrong use of it. **9. The law is not made for a righteous man.** Law (there

is no article) is not given to justify righteous men, but to restrain, condemn, and punish the wicked. A long catalogue of sins, common in the Gentile world, are given, which were all condemned by the law. **10. Men-stealers.** Those who stole men and sold them into slavery. **Contrary to sound doctrine.** Everything is forbidden which is opposed to the gospel. **11. According to the glorious gospel.** The sound doctrine taught in the gospel, which was his trust.

12–14. Who hath enabled me. Hath given me power to preach this glorious gospel, by counting me faithful, and appointing me to his service. **13. Who was before a blasphemer.** Paul never could forget his old life, before he was converted. **But I obtained mercy.** The reason is that he was honest, sincere in his opposition, being an unbeliever, and acting ignorantly. Had he been a willful sinner, he would never have been chosen. **14. And the grace of our Lord abounded.** In the mercy shown to him, for his eyes were opened, he became a believer and was filled with love of Christ.

15, 16. This is a faithful saying. That Christ came to save sinners. He, a sinner saved, was a proof that the saying was faithful. **Of whom I am chief.** Because he had sinned so grievously in persecuting Christ. He was a great sinner saved. **16. Howbeit.** One cause of his obtaining mercy was that in him Christ might show how long-suffering he is. He forgave, saved and blessed the bitter enemy. **A pattern.** An example for all believers to follow.

17. Now unto the King. The remembrance of the great mercy to him causes him to break forth in praise. Compare [Rom. 16:25–27](#), and [1 Tim. 6:16](#). **Eternal.** King of the ages.

18–20. This charge I commit unto thee. The charge referred to in [verses 3 and 5](#). **According to the prophecies.** Timothy was selected for the ministry by divine direction. One so chosen was chosen according to prophecy, the ordinary meaning being simply a declaration of the divine will. See notes on [1 Cor. 12:28](#). **That thou by them mightest war, etc.** For this purpose the prophetic will chose him. **19. Holding faith.** Essential to every saint, and especially to a minister. Some, however, had swerved from the faith, and **made shipwreck.** Faith is an “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” **20. Of whom is Hymenæus.** He is mentioned as a heretical teacher in [2 Tim. 2:17](#). Of Alexander nothing is known. **Delivered unto Satan.** Excommunicated. Compare [1 Cor. 5:5](#).



Chapter II

Directions Concerning Public Worship

Summary —*Prayers for Rulers. The Will of God that All Should Be Saved. How Men Must Pray. Concerning the Dress of Women at Worship. Concerning Women Teaching.*

1, 2. I exhort, first of all. This chapter contains some directions concerning public worship. Paul probably means that, first in order, prayers should be offered for all men, etc. So says Conybeare and Howson, and many others. Thus should the worship open. **Supplications, prayers, intercessions.** It is difficult to distinguish between these three words. “Perhaps the idea in ‘supplication’ is that of want; in ‘prayers’ that of solemn devotion, and in ‘intercessions’ that of individual petitions to God.”—*Plumptree*. **2. For kings, and for all that are in authority.** For all rulers over us. This duty is not dependent on the righteousness of the rulers. The Roman emperors were intensely wicked. Jews were enjoined to pray for their heathen rulers (*Jer. 29:7; Ezra 6:10*). **That we may lead, etc.** The special object of these prayers is that the earthly rulers may be so overruled that Christians shall live and worship in peace. Wars, seditions and persecutions would be injurious to the saints.

3, 4. For this. This custom of praying for rulers. Our prayers should be as comprehensive as the will of God to save. **4. Who will have all men to be saved.** The Scriptures uniformly represent it as the divine will that all should come to life. But he does not will to save men irrespective of the conditions of salvation. They must, in order to be saved, **come to a knowledge of the truth.** In other words, must hear, receive, and obey the gospel.

5–7. For there is one God. One God of all men, not many gods. Hence the One God desires equally the salvation of all his creatures. **And one mediator.** For all men. The gospel scheme is universal. **The man, Christ Jesus.** Taking upon himself manhood in order to be the Savior of all men. **6. Who gave himself a ransom for all.** Not for an elect nation, like the Jews, or for the elect individuals arbitrarily selected, but for all men. All men have been redeemed by his blood, if they will accept the ransom. **To be testified.** The testimony, or preaching of this ransom, was to be given at due seasons. **7. Whereunto.** To testify of this ransom. **I am ordained a preacher.** Appointed a herald. See margin of Revision. **An apostle.** An apostle also, with the authority of an apostle. **I speak the truth.** The Judaizers denied his apostleship. Hence this special affirmation.

8. I will therefore that men pray everywhere. This refers back to [verse 1](#). **Everywhere.** In all places of public worship. **Lifting up holy hands.** This seems to indicate an attitude in prayer. The hands lifted up must be sanctified to holy deeds. **Without wrath and doubting.** Wrath would unfit for prayer. So would doubt; but the word rendered “doubt,” is better rendered “disputing,” as in the Revision.

9, 10. In like manner, that women also. When they come to the public worship, let them not spend their thoughts in adorning their bodies, but **adorn themselves in modest apparel.** In simple attire which not attract attention. **With shamefacedness.** A shrinking from all that is indelicate. **Sobriety.** Self-restraint; not yielding to vain impulses. **Not with braided hair.** The Gentile women were much given to arranging the hair in plaits over the head, with bands of gold. Such vain and idle show at worship is forbidden, as well as the wearing of pearls, or costly array. At the house of God a display is not comely. Compare [1 Peter 3:3](#). **10. But.** There is another adorning which better becomes godly women. Let their lives be adorned by kindly, helpful deeds.

11–15. Let the women learn in silence. In the public worship on the Gentile churches the teaching was confined to the men. For a discussion of the reasons, see notes on [1 Cor. 14:33–36](#), where the same directions are given. **With all subjection.** Submission to the authorized teachers of the church. **12. I suffer not a woman to teach.** To become an authorized teacher of the church, a work confined to the presbyters. **Nor to usurp authority.** Authoritative teaching and ruling were united. **13.** Some reasons drawn from the story of man in Eden are given for these rules. It will be seen that Paul regards these events as shadowing forth spiritual lessons. **Adam was first formed.** Man came in order before woman. **14. And Adam was not deceived.** It was man who was first created, but woman who first led into the transgression. For these reasons a burden was laid on women which is spoken of in the [next verse](#). **15. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing.** Rather, *through* childbearing. Work was laid upon the fallen man; the pains of childbearing on the fallen woman. The apostle means here, that women will be saved in the line of their duties, and that those duties are domestic rather than public. There surely is no recommendation of the celibacy of monasticism. Possibly, too, another thought still may be alluded to. The first woman was assured that her seed should bruise the serpent's head. It was woman's glory that one of her sex was chosen to be the mother of our Lord. Thus through childbearing the Savior of all men comes into the world. **If they continue.** Domestic duties will not save unless to these are added the graces of a holy life.



Chapter III

Bishops and Deacons

Summary — *The Qualifications of Bishops. Of Deacons. Their Wives. The Reason for Writing to Timothy of These Matters. The Mystery of Godliness.*

1. If a man desire the office of a bishop. Here, for the first time in the New Testament, is there a delineation of the qualifications and duties of bishops and deacons. Both offices have been alluded to in [Acts](#), and both are named in the [first verse of the Epistle to the Philippians](#). To form a correct idea of the New Testament bishop we must get away from modern episcopacy. The New Testament bishop was not diocesan, but in charge of a single church. Each church had a plurality. Elders or presbyters, and bishops were only different designations for the same office. This arrangement was not changed until after the close of the first century and the death of the last of the apostles. Of these statements, admitted by the candid learned even of episcopal bodies, the following proofs may be submitted: (1) Paul ([Acts 20:17](#)) summons the “elders” of the church at Ephesus, and in [verse 28](#) calls them “bishops.” (2) In the church of Philippi the “bishops and deacons” are named as the officers ([Phil. 1:1](#)). (3) Paul in this Epistle names bishops and deacons as the officers ([chapter 2](#)), but in [5:17–22](#), names “elders” as officers intrusted with the same duties already named as those of the bishops. (4) In the Epistle to Titus, Paul commands ([1:5](#)) to “ordain elders in every city,” but in turn describing the qualifications of an elder he calls him a bishop ([1:7](#)). (5) Peter ([1 Peter 5:1, 2](#)) addresses “elders” and commands them to exercise the office of “bishops” over the flock. The Greek word as well as the word bishop, etymologically means to act as an overseer, or to take the oversight. (6) I might add that Clement of Rome, who wrote to Corinthians about the beginning of the second century, uses the terms interchangeably. **Desireth a good work.** A very important duty.

2–7. A bishop then must be blameless. None must be appointed because they desire the place. None are eligible unless they fill the following qualifications. **Blameless.** Not under charges; of good repute. **The husband of one wife.** A married man, and having only one wife. In those loose times of divorce, men might be converted who had successively several wives. Divorce for unscriptural reasons would not free a man from his first, lawful wife. Hence the limitation to those who had only one living wife. I do not think there is any reference to re-marriage after the death of a wife. **Vigilant.** Temperate. See Revision. **Sober.** Sedate. **Given to hospitality.** Often saints by persecution were made homeless. The bishops must set the example of receiving such. **Apt to teach.** Men who have the knowledge and discretion which fit them to teach the flock. **3. Not given to wine.** Not a drunken brawler, is the idea of the Greek. We must always bear in mind that the church had been formed of Gentiles whose morals had been at a very low standard. **4. One that ruleth well his own**

house. This implies that he must be a man of family. **Having his children.** He must be a father with obedient children. **5. For if a man know not.** The order of his own house will show whether he is fit to have a charge in the house of God. The sins of Eli's sons showed that Eli, though a good man, was unfitted to rule. **6. Not a novice.** One recently converted. Those chosen for bishops must be old and tried. Paul and Barnabas did not ordain elders until their second visit to the churches ([Acts 14:23](#)). **Lifted up with pride.** A novice, suddenly exalted, was in danger of undue elation. **7. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without.** Have an established character which speaks well for the church among the unconverted. **Lest he fall into reproach.** Into some snare of the devil, some improper conduct, which will bring reproach on the church.

8–10. Likewise must the deacons. The ancient church understood that the seven appointed in [Acts, chapter 6](#) were the first deacons. They were not called deacons, but filled a diaconate. In [Phil. 1:1](#), we find deacons existing. Their office seemed to have been to look after the temporal matters of the church, and especially to care for the poor and the widows. **Not double-tongued.** Not saying one thing to one man, and another thing to others. **Not greedy of filthy lucre.** Men who are covetous and unscrupulous as to modes of getting money are not to be chosen. **9. Holding the mystery of the faith.** The gospel, God's revealed mystery to all believers. **10. Let these also first be proved.** Not novices, but men fully tested. Before they **use the office of a deacon**, their character must be thoroughly examined, and they must be found **blameless**.

11. Even so must their wives. The word in the Greek may mean women or wives. It is rendered wife in [verse 12](#). The Revision says, "Women must be, etc." I believe that the Old Version is nearer right. The duties of women generally are not spoken of in the midst of a discussion of elders and deacons. Either deaconesses are meant, or the wives of bishops and deacons; more likely the latter. We know that an injudicious wife may mar the work of a church officer. **Not slanderers.** Not given to tattling.

12, 13. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife. The same word is used in the Greek here for wife that is used in [verse 11](#). See notes on "one wife" under verse 2. **Ruling their children.** See notes on verses 4 and 5. **13. For they that, etc.** These demands for the office are high, for those who exercise it **well purchase a good degree**. Secure a high position in the church and in God's favor. **And great boldness in the faith.** To fill these duties well gives strength, and often fits for higher duties. Stephen and Philip became evangelists.

14–16. These things I write, ... hoping to come unto thee shortly. It is not certain that he was ever able to visit Ephesus again, though it is thought that he did on his way to Crete. **15. But if I tarry.** In that case he wrote that Timothy might understand how to act. **Behave thyself in the house of God.** Conduct thyself in the management of the church. **Which is the church of the living God.** The house of God is not the temple of Diana, which stood there at Ephesus. **The pillar and ground of the truth.** The church is the pillar and support

of the truth because it preaches it to the world, preserves it, and transmits it from generation to generation. **16. Without controversy.** Undoubtedly. **Great is the mystery of godliness.** The mystery that God has revealed to us in the gospel in order to make men godly. The great things revealed in this mystery are next named, certainly wonderful things, well called *great*. **God was manifest in the flesh.** Was manifested in Jesus Christ. **Justified in the Spirit.** When, after his condemnation to death, the power of God raised him from the dead. **Seen of angels.** The angels were at the open tomb and told the women of his resurrection. **Preached unto the Gentiles.** A wonderful fact in the mind of a Jew like Paul, who had been trained to believe that the Gentiles were accursed. **Received up into glory.** At the Ascension. Six elements enter into this mystery of godliness, elements all of which were fully revealed in the gospel. The mystery is not something incomprehensible, but the hidden wisdom of God revealed in the gospel; a sense similar to that in which mystery is always used in the Scriptures. Compare [Matt. 13:11](#); [Rev. 1:20](#); [Rev. 17:5, 7](#).



Chapter IV

A Falling Away Predicted

Summary — *An Apostasy in Latter Times. Some of the Marks of that Apostasy. Directions to Timothy in View of This. The Preacher to Be an Example. To Take Heed to Himself.*

1–3. Now the Spirit speaketh expressly. In revelations made to Paul and other inspired men. See **2 Thess. 2:3. In the latter times.** In future times. How far away is not indicated. **Some shall depart from the faith.** There shall be an apostasy. Compare **2 Thess. 2:3.** Some of the marks of this apostasy are now given. **Giving heed to seducing spirits.** The apostle seems to recognize a preternatural element which speaks by false prophets, in false utterances which claims to be from God. These seducing spirits might work through hierarchs, who claimed to speak for God, or through councils which claimed to make infallible utterances. **Doctrines of demons.** Doctrines suggested by demons. The Greek *daimonion*, demon, not devil, always refers in the New Testament to an evil spirit. **2. Speaking lies through hypocrisy.** Rather, “Some shall depart ... through the hypocrisy of men, speaking lies.” (See Revision). **Having their conscience.** The liars just mentioned. The sensitiveness of their consciences is destroyed by the brand of the devil. **3. Forbidding to marry.** Not long after Paul’s time the superior holiness of the unmarried life began to be preached in the church, and this resulted at last in monasticism and a celibate clergy. **Commanding to abstain from meats.** The ascetic practices which began to grow up in the church a little later extended to foods. To eat the least palatable food which would sustain life was counted a virtue. These ascetics generally forbade animal food, and some lived only on bread and water. These practices are still found among certain orders of the Latin and Eastern churches. **Which God hath created.** The foods which God hath created are for use, to be eaten thankfully by those who **know the truth**, instead of having their minds darkened by delusions.

4, 5. For every creature. Everything God had created **is good** and has its proper use. Hence, it is not to be refused as sinful. This applies to what God has created. He did not create one drop of alcohol. **5. It is sanctified.** The food we eat is made holy when we offer thanks to God for it and pray his blessing upon it. This passage shows that the early saints were always wont to offer thanks before eating.

6–9. If thou put the brethren in remembrance. Impress upon them what has just been written. **A good minister.** Thus shall Timothy well discharge his office, and prove himself a faithful minister. **7. Refuse profane and old wives’ fables.** The foolish myths and legends of the heathen, and also the marvelous additions which Jewish rabbis had made to the Old Testament. Reject all these. **Exercise thyself rather unto godliness.** Train thyself to a godly life, as a gymnast trains himself to bodily exercise. **8. For bodily exercise.** The Greeks gave great attention to bodily training. At Ephesus, where Timothy was, may still be seen the re-



mains of the stadium where the athletes displayed their skill. Let Christians display the same assiduity in training for godliness. For the bodily exercise profits little, while the godly training **is profitable in all things**. It makes men happier, more prosperous, more healthy here, and in addition it prepares them for the life to come. The way to reach heaven is not either to starve, or to exercise the body. **9. This is a faithful saying.** A trustworthy saying. [Verse 8](#) is referred to.



10, 11. For therefore. On account of the eternal life which godliness insures. **We labor and suffer reproach.** Compare [2 Cor. 11:21–27](#). **11. These things.** Especially what has been embraced in [verses 8–10](#).

12–16. Let no man despise thy youth. The remainder of the chapter is personal. Timothy was much younger than Paul, much younger than most of the presbyters, but he must have been fully thirty-five years old. He was converted about a.d. 46 and was then a young man, quite young, according to the ideas of that age, to be over presbyters. In a.d. 51 ([Acts 16:1–3](#)), Paul had taken him away from home. I suppose that he must have been twenty at that time. If so, he was from thirty-five to thirty-eight years old at this time. **Be thou an example.** So should every preacher be, and in all the characteristics which follow. **13. Give attendance to reading.** To the reading of the Scriptures to the people. In that age, when printed books were unknown, the knowledge of the Scriptures had to be communicated in this way. **To doctrine.** To instruction. **14. Neglect not the gift.** The allusion is to special spiritual gifts given to him to fit him for the duties of an evangelist. These were given, and were essential, in that first age. **By prophecy.** As the Spirit at Antioch said to the prophets, “Separate for me Paul and Barnabas” I suppose a revelation was given that Timothy was to be set apart, and that he would be spiritually endowed for his work. **With the laying on of the hands.** He was ordained in the usual way, and at the ordination the Spirit conferred upon him new gifts. It must be borne in mind that the ancient evangelists had no New Testament to guide them, and hence needed special qualifications. **15. Meditate upon, etc.** Rather, Let these things be thy special care. **Give thyself wholly to them.** The preacher must be heart and soul in his work in order to succeed. **16. Take heed unto thyself.** This is the special duty of every minister. Let him watch himself first of all. **And unto the doctrine.** Take heed what you teach.



Chapter V

The Widows of the Church

Summary —*Rules for Repeating. Honoring Widows. How They Should be Supported. Who are to be Taken into the Number of Widows. The Younger Widows. The Presbyters. A Charge Concerning Timothy's Death.*

1, 2. Rebuke not an elder. An aged man. Treat him with deference due to age. It is evident from the four classes named together, the young men, aged women, and the young women, that the reference in the word “elder” is not to office, but to age.

3, 4. Honor widows that are widows indeed. In the church at Jerusalem the widows were honored with support (*Acts 6:1*). The teaching of Paul here seems to place widows who were above sixty years old, and without children or grandchildren to support them, in a class of church widows devoted to the work of the church, and supported out of its funds. Such were “widows indeed.” **4. But if any widow hath children or nephews.** These must support them, and thus “show piety at home.” Nephews is better rendered “grandchildren.”

5–8. She that is a widow indeed. Has neither husband nor children, and is left desolate. Having no earthly trust, she **trusteth in God**, and shows this by her devout life. **6. She that liveth in pleasure.** The widow that plays the wanton is dead spiritually. **7. These things give in charge.** Insist upon these things. **8. If any provide not for his own.** The support of his relatives and servants is referred to. Children and grandchildren must support their aged parents. Any one who does not provide for his own family, whether it be wife and children, or aged parents, has practically denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever, for even unbelievers do these things.

9, 10. Let not a widow be taken. Into the order of widows supported by the church and engaged in its work. **Under threescore.** None but the aged. **Having been the wife of one man.** Not having had more than one husband living at the same time, as was very common in those days of easy divorce. **10. Well reported of.** Good character was a requisite. **Good works.** The good works are named. **Brought up children.** Either her own, or orphans or neglected children. **Lodged strangers.** The duty of hospitality is often urged. Often, in that age, saints were made homeless by persecution. **Washed the saints' feet.** A duty of hospitality, not a church ordinance. **Relieved the afflicted.** A ministering angel.

11–16. The younger widows refuse. Do not take them into this number for the reason that they in part will wish to marry again. **12. Having damnation.** Not because they marry, but because after entering a class consecrated entirely to church work, they forsake its duties in order to marry. **13. Withal, they learn to be idle.** They have not that gravity which is required for this work of visitation and ministration laid upon the “widows indeed,” but wander from house to house to gossip. **14. I will, therefore, that the younger women**

marry. None are to enter upon this consecrated life but the aged; there are to be no young nuns. The apostle distinctly forbids the conventual system which now exists in the Romish church. **16. If any ... that believeth have widows.** If any have widows among their relatives, let them support these, instead of the church, in order that the church may support the “widows indeed.”

17–20. Let the elders that rule well. The officials called “bishops” in [3:2](#), are here called elders. See note on the passage referred to. **Counted worthy of double honor.** Held in especial esteem, and not only treated with respect, but maintained. **Especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.** The class we call preachers, or pastors. That support is referred to is shown by [verse 18](#). **18. The Scripture saith. Deut. 25:4.** See note on [1 Cor. 9:9](#). **And the laborer is worthy of his reward.** This is quoted from [Luke 10:7](#). Paul says it is Scripture. Therefore, Luke's Gospel was already written and in Paul's hands when this Epistle was written. He calls this Gospel “Scripture.” Peter applies the same term to Paul's writings ([2 Peter 3:16](#)). **19. Against an elder receive not.** Accusations against bishops might be brought before Timothy. They were not to be considered unless supported by two or three witnesses. The same rule is found in [Deut. 19:15](#). **20. Them that sin.** Whether they be elders, or private members, if convicted, rebuke them publicly, for the sake of the lesson to others. Do not hush the matter up privately.

21–25. I charge thee. The solemnity of this charge shows that Paul had a fear that Timothy's sympathies might lead him aside from a strictly judicial course. **The elect angels.** Why “elect” we do not certainly know. They may be the good angels as distinct from the bad angels, or those who were chosen to assist in the work of human redemption may be meant. Angels are often mentioned in this connection. **Observe these things.** Carry out this discipline without respect to persons. **22. Lay hands suddenly on no man.** “All the old commentators, and the great majority of modern ones, applies this to ordination.” The meaning is that no man must be ordained to office until his fitness is surely known. **Neither be partaker, etc.** He who appoints an unfit man to office becomes in a certain sense responsible for that man's sins. **Keep thyself pure.** Free from the sins of other men. **23. Drink no longer water.** I suppose the thought of Timothy's trials called to mind a sense of his physical condition. Hence, he gives a medical prescription. The water of that region is not good. The writer well remembers a fearfully sick day that he passed at Ephesus in 1889, due to the water. Paul, hence, advises that instead, he try the light wines, with only the smallest percentage of alcohol. The prescription is not of a beverage, but of a remedy for an invalid. **24. Some men's sins are open beforehand.** Discipline has been spoken of. Some men's lives are fully known, and their sins cry out, but others conceal them, and they will only be fully manifest at judgment. **25. Likewise also the good works.** The same rule applies to good



works. Some get credit for more by far than they deserve, while the good deeds of others will not be fully revealed until judgment. Then all will be estimated aright.



Chapter VI

Various Duties Enjoined

Summary — *Duties of Servants. Life the Test of Doctrine. The Blessedness of Contentment. The Danger of the Love of Money. Charge to the Man of God. A Lesson for the Rich.*

1, 2. Let as many servants as are under the yoke. Under the yoke of slavery. The slaves were as numerous as the free population, and many of the early Christians belonged to this class. **Count their own masters worthy of all honor.** There was danger that these converted slaves would despise their heathen masters. If they were to do so, it would create a great odium against the Christian religion and lead to attempts to extirpate it. Slavery was to be destroyed, not by putting a spirit of insubordination into slaves, but by putting a Christian spirit into masters. **2. Because they are brethren.** Converted slaves must not despise their masters, because in the church they are equal. Rather, they must serve them better, because they are beloved brethren, and partakers of the benefit of their service.

3–5. If any man teach otherwise. Teach new doctrines or duties which differ from the doctrine of Christ. See [1:3](#), [4](#). **4. He is proud.** The idea is that he is blinded with pride, so that he really knows nothing. **Dotting.** Morbidly dwelling upon foolish questions. He no doubt refers to foolish disputes which had been sprung upon the church by heretical teachers. **5. Thinking that gain is godliness.** Men who have come into the church for gain and think that godliness is a source of gain.

6–8. Godliness with contentment. In contrast with this false view a godly life with contentment is a great gain. It brings its greatest gain in eternity. **7. For we brought nothing.** See [Job 1:21](#). Since we must leave the earth as we came into it, contentment and an immortal hope are better than earthly gains. **8. Having food and raiment.** Having the necessities of life let us be content without piling up wealth.

9, 10. They that will be rich. Who have set their heart on riches. **Fall into temptation.** Are tempted to do sinful things in order to build up wealth. It is not much the possession of wealth, as cupidity and a trust in riches, which constitute the danger. See notes on [Mark 10:24](#). **10. For the love of money is the root of all evil.** Not the money itself, which if used as by a steward of God is a blessing, so much as the love of it. This greedy love is the source of every sin. Men murder, cheat, lie, rob, run saloons, gambling houses, brothels, all for the love of money. For love of money Judas sold his Master. **Some ... have erred.** Have wandered from the faith through the love of money. Judas is one example.

11, 12. O man of God. This expression is used in the sense of an evangelist devoted to God's work. See [1 Sam. 9:6](#), [8](#); [1 Kings 13:1](#), [4](#), [8](#). **Flee these things.** The love of money. Instead of following after money, seek after righteousness, etc. **12. Fight the good fight of faith.** The thought is of a soldier. See [1:18](#). The Christian life is a struggle. Oppose hurtful earthly

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lusts, but seize upon **eternal life**. **Hast professed a good profession**. When called to eternal life. “This refers probably to his baptism, when, as we know from very early times, a public profession of faith was made.”—*Speaker's Commentary*. “The Divine call, and the confession of believers are correlatives; they imply each other.”—*Bengel*. Compare [Acts 8:37](#).

13–16. I charge thee. See [1:5, 18](#). The whole epistle is a charge, and here at the close Paul renews the charge very solemnly. **Quickeneth**. Giveth life to. **Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession**. The Greek may be rendered “under Pontius Pilate.” Jesus before the Sanhedrim confessed that he was the Christ, the Son of God, and on that confession they condemned him to death and hurried him to Pilate for execution. I believed this is what Paul refers to. Though before Pilate our Lord reaffirmed in substance this same confession. **14. That thou keep the commandment**. Not one only, but the will of Christ. **Until the appearing**. The language seems to imply a feeling that Christ would come in Timothy's time; at any rate Timothy is to keep that in view. **15. Which in his time he shall show**. In his own times. Man knows not the day or hour. **The Blessed and only potentate**. All power in heaven and earth had been placed in Jesus Christ's hands ([Matt. 28:18](#); [Rev. 17:14](#); [19:16](#)). **16. Who only hath immortality**. See [John 5:26](#). He is the source from whence there comes to man eternal life. **Dwelling in light**. Surrounded by the divine splendors which no mortal can gaze upon.

17–19. Charge them that are rich. Some in Ephesus had riches. These must be humble and “condescend to men of low estate.” Their trust must be in God, rather than in uncertain riches. **18. That they do good**. The right use of wealth is given. Let it be a means of doing good so that they may be rich in good works. **19. Laying up store**. Treasure in heaven by giving for good purposes. See close of [verse 18](#).

20, 21. O Timothy. A final exhortation to faithfully discharge his trust. **Oppositions of science**. The wild speculations which were already taught by dreamers and which were probably derived from Jewish sources. These speculations a half century later had ripened into what was called Gnosticism. Some had already run off after speculations and departed from the faith. There are allusions in the Epistles to Ephesus and Colosse to the germs of the same false teaching.



**The Second Epistle of Paul to
Timothy**



Introduction to the Second Epistle to Timothy

The Second Epistle to Timothy has a melancholy interest as the last letter which Paul ever wrote, written from his second imprisonment in Rome, only a short time before his martyrdom. In the Introduction to First Timothy the uniform first testimony of the early church that Paul was released, shortly after the close of Acts, and engaged for several years in missionary work, was stated. On this point the testimony is clear, and goes back even to Clement of Rome, a companion of Paul named in one of his Epistles, who states in his Epistle to the Corinthians that Paul was enabled to carry out his purpose of preaching the gospel in the extreme West. This verdict of antiquity is supported by criticism, and the allusions in the three Pastoral Epistles can only be explained by conceding that there was a release, a period of missionary activity, and finally a second arrest, and imprisonment in Rome.

On this hypothesis Conybeare and Howson outline the interval between the dates of the two letters of Timothy. Shortly after the first was written Paul is supposed to have again visited Ephesus, to have gone from thence, in company with Titus, to Crete. The latter was left in charge of the work there when Paul left for Europe ([Titus 1:5](#)). Where the Epistle to Titus was written cannot be certainly known, but it was at some point on the route from Crete to Nicopolis, a city situated on the Grecian shore of the Adriatic Sea ([Titus 3:12](#)). If Paul reached there for the winter, as he proposed, it is probable that here he was again arrested, and from thence borne to Rome to trial. The only writing extant that came from this second period of imprisonment is the Second Epistle to Timothy.

Timothy, his "beloved son" in the gospel, was still laboring in distant Ephesus, but the aged apostle, about to go to rest from his weary labors, desired to see him once more in the flesh. Hence, he bids him come, as speedily as possible; but, lest he might arrive too late to receive his parting words, he impresses upon him in this letter, with the earnestness of a last charge, the various duties of his office, and especially of opposing the dangerous heresies which threatened to destroy the vitality of the Christian religion.

Chapter I

Timothy's Preparation for His Work

Summary —*Paul's Affection for Timothy. Timothy's Early Training in the Scriptures. Paul's Suffering for Christ. The Charge to Hold Fast Sound Words. Phygellus and Hermogenes.*

1, 2. Paul, an apostle. See note on [1 Tim. 1:1](#). **2. To Timothy.** See sketch of the public life of Timothy in the [Introduction to 1 Timothy](#).

3–5. Whom I serve from my forefathers. Like Timothy ([verse 5](#)), he had been taught by his parents to fear and serve the Lord. Even before he became a Christian, he verily thought he served God. See [Acts 23:1; 24:14](#), and [Rom. 11:23, 24, 28](#). **4. Greatly desiring to see thee.** There is something pathetic in this language. The lonely prisoner calls to him the tears of Timothy at their last parting, and feels a yearning desire to see and counsel him face to face once more. **5. When I call to remembrance.** As he looked back he saw Timothy from his youth up a believer. His grandmother and mother had been converted before him, and he had followed them into the kingdom. See [Acts 16:1](#).

6–7. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance. From the earnestness with which he stirs up Timothy in both Epistles, it seems likely that he did not possess the rugged, restless energy of Paul. **Stir up the gift of God.** The supernatural gift which he received by the imposition of the apostolic hands. The gift of office was conferred by ordination at the hands of the presbytery; the gift of miraculous powers, by the imposition of the hands of an apostle. **7. God hath not given us the spirit of fear.** When the gifts of the Spirit were bestowed at the laying on of my hands, not a spirit of cowardice, but of **power**, miraculous power, and of **love**, and of a **sound mind**, of divine wisdom, was imparted.

8–12. Be not ... ashamed. Since “the spirit of fear” was not imparted, there must be boldness to testify for the Lord. **Of me, his prisoner.** Though a prisoner, he was a prisoner for righteousness' sake. It may be that this was a gentle rebuke; that Timothy had failed in boldness. **Be thou partaker.** Ready to share with me whatever may befall. **According to the power of God.** Suffer afflictions, bearing them, sustained by the power of God. **9. Who hath saved us.** God's power hath saved us and all believers. **Not according to our works.** He called us according to his purpose to call men before the world began. He purposed to call the Gentiles—a race rebellious. See notes on Romans, [chapter 9](#). **10. But is now made manifest.** His purpose, formed before the world began, was revealed when Christ appeared. **Who abolished death.** Took away from death his power, and will finally destroy him ([1 Cor. 15:26](#)). **Brought life and immortality to light.** Revealed them in the gospel. **12. For which cause I also suffer.** Because he was appointed an “apostle and teacher of the Gentiles.” See [verse 11](#). Compare [Acts 22:21](#), and [Eph. 3:1](#). **That which I have committed unto him.**

His whole interests, his life, body, soul and spirit. He leaves all in God's hands with perfect confidence.

13, 14. Hold fast the form of sound words. Hold and teach sound doctrine, the pure faith, the gospel as Paul taught it to him, preaching it in faith and love. **14. That good thing which was committed unto thee.** The sound faith just alluded to. Don't let it be perverted. Keep it by the help of the Holy Spirit. This charge is given in view of the conduct of some from the province of Asia, where Timothy was then dwelling, referred to in [verse 15](#).

15–18. This thou knowest. The language seems to mean that there had been a large defection in Asia already. Some think that Paul refers to professors of Christ from the province of Asia, then in Rome, who had all deserted him. **Phygellus and Hermogenes.** Nothing more than this reference is known of them. **16. Onesiphorus.** How different with this faithful disciple, from the rest of the Asiatics! In spite of Paul's chain, and danger, he often visited and cheered him. Paul was chained to a soldier. **17. He sought me.** Not only was not ashamed, but sought him at great pains and found him. **18. In that day.** The day when he shall be called to meet the Lord. **He ministered to me at Ephesus.** He then belonged to Ephesus, had ministered to Paul there, and shown his faithfulness again at Rome. The language seems to imply that these kind deeds were past. Perhaps Onesiphorus had started back home.



Chapter II

To Be a Workman Approved of God

Summary — *Training Other Evangelists. Warring as a Good Soldier. Suffering with Christ. Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth. Purity of Life.*

1, 2. Thou, therefore, my son. Since his son, Timothy, should follow his example, and seek to be strong through the grace of Christ. **2. And the things that thou hast heard of me.** The instruction that I gave thee to fit thee for preaching Christ, do thou impart to other men, faithful, in order that they may **be able to teach others also**. As Paul prepared Timothy to preach the gospel, so he is to prepare other men. **Among many witnesses.** This probably refers to Timothy hearing Paul teach these things before many congregations. **Faithful men.** Trustworthy men.

3–6. Thou, therefore, endure hardness. Timothy was a soldier of the cross. It is the part of a soldier to suffer as well as to fight. **4. No man that warreth.** The soldier to do good service must devote himself entirely to the soldier's life, giving up worldly affairs. So the soldier, like Timothy, engaged as a minister, should have no other business. **5. And if a man also strive.** In the various athletic games of the Greeks. Unless he complies with the regulations, no prize will be assigned to him in any contest. So one, striving for the Christian crown, must seek to please the Master. **6. The husbandman that laboreth.** The farmer has the first right to the fruits. Three illustrations, that of the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer are here given. They all bear on the life of Timothy. "All three must deny themselves and suffer, in order to receive the reward. The soldier denies himself the world; the athlete obeys rigid laws; the husbandman labors and waits for a reward. So you must be content to deny yourself, to suffer, and to wait for your reward."

7–10. Consider what I say. Reflect, and take in its meaning. **8. Remember.** This is spoken for encouragement in suffering. **That Jesus Christ of the seed of David.** Even as the prophets had predicted that he should be. **Was raised from the dead.** He suffered, died, but was not holden of death, and was exalted.

My gospel. The gospel I preach everywhere. **9. Wherein I suffer trouble.** For this gospel. For it I am now a prisoner as an evil doer. **The word of God is not bound.** Its great preacher was, but the Word could not be. It was being preached abroad by thousands of tongues. **10. Therefore I endure.** Since the work goes on, I endure cheerfully. **For the elect's sakes.** All came upon him on account of his devotion to the church. He suffered that others, God's chosen ones, might **obtain salvation**.

11–13. It is a faithful saying. A true saying. Some think that the [11th and 12th verses](#) were part of an early hymn. **If we be dead with him.** Rather, as in the Revision, "Died with him." Compare [Rom. 6:4, 5, 8,](#) and [Col. 2:12](#). The reference is to death to the old life, and

burial into the death of Christ at baptism. **12. If we suffer.** We die in order to live. So our suffering with Christ “works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Compare also [Rom. 8:17](#), and [Matt. 19:27, 28](#). **If we deny him.** See [Matt. 10:33](#). **13. If we believe not.** If we prove faithless, he will still be faithful to keep every promise he has made.

14–18. Put them in remembrance. Those to whom you minister. **Charging ... that they strive not about words.** We see proofs in both letters to Timothy that the idle speculations which did the church such damage a little later had already begun. **15. Study to show thyself.** To this end the utmost diligence must be used. **Approved unto God.** Such a preacher that his work will please the Heavenly Father. **A workman that needeth not to be ashamed.** Whose life and work are such as to honor Christ and the gospel. This requires a pure life as well as judicious work. **Rightly dividing the word of truth.** The Revision reads, “Handling aright.” The Greek word means, literally, “cutting straight.” The thought, probably, is to present the truth clearly, truthfully, without blunders, and with an exactness which cannot be gainsaid. **16. But shun.** Preach the truth. Shun foolish speculations. **Profane.** Unholy. **17. And their word.** The profane and vain babblings. **Eat as doth a canker.** Eat deeper and deeper, like a gangrene. **Of whom is Hymenæus.** See [1 Tim. 1:20](#). **18. Who concerning the truth have erred.** Their speculation is stated. They preached, as some do in our own times, that the resurrection which Christ teaches is only a moral resurrection, a resurrection of the soul to a better life. This error was taught also in Corinth ([1 Cor. 15:12](#)), and found some currency in the second century. **19. Nevertheless.** Notwithstanding the faith of some is overthrown ([verse 18](#)), **God's firm foundation stands.** It stands unshaken. His promises are sure. **Having this seal.** On seals were often inscriptions, and the thought here is of the inscription. Upon this seal are two inscriptions. The first cheers with the assurance that the Lord knows his own, and will not forget them; the second shows who are his. The Lord knows his people, and his people obey him. Thus they may know that they are known of God.

20–22. But in a great house. As in a house there are vessels of honor and dishonor, gold and earthen, so in the house of God, the church, there are even some earthly materials. **21. If a man therefore purge himself from these.** If a man wishes to be a noble vessel, of gold, for honorable uses in the Lord's house, let him cleanse himself from earthly lusts. **22. Flee also youthful lusts.** Hence, let youthful passions be controlled. Flee these, and **follow righteousness, etc.** See note on [1 Tim. 4:12](#).

23–26. Foolish and unlearned questions avoid. Such unprofitable questions and speculations as the false teachers raise. **24. The servant of the Lord must not strive.** Hence, should not engage in these profitless discussions. **25. In meekness correcting.** Opposers must be corrected, but not rudely; rather gently, kindly, humbly. **If God ... will give them repentance.** God gives repentance often by providences which lead to repentance. **26. And that they may recover.** They are in “the snare of the devil,” taken captive at will. The only

hope is that in the providence of God they “may recover” themselves (the idea is, to “return to soberness.” See margin of Revision), repent, and acknowledge the truth. Men are commanded to *Repent*, [Matt. 3:2](#); [Acts 2:38](#), etc., but here God is alluded to as “peradventure” giving repentance. The meaning is made clear by comparing with [Acts 11:18](#): “Then hath God also the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” The meaning there is that God has granted to the Gentiles the privilege of repentance, even as unto the Jews. So Paul's idea here is that God, peradventure, may grant these, though sinning so grievously, opportunities for repentance, instead of delivering them over to hardness of heart.



Chapter III

A Defection from the Truth Foretold

Summary — *False Teachers Predicted. Enemies of the Truth Described. Paul's Life Known to Timothy. His Example Commended. The Holy Scriptures.*

1–5. In the last days. In the last ages of the world. The expression is often used of the gospel dispensation. **Perilous times.** Grievous, times of distress. **2. For men shall be.** Some of the characteristics of men in that period are given. Such men probably exist in all ages, but at the time referred to by Paul they shall be in the predominance. **Lovers of their own selves.** Selfish. **3. Truce-breakers.** “Implacable,” in Revision. Those who will not make or keep peace. **4. Heady.** Headstrong. **Lovers of pleasures.** Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. **5. Having a form of godliness.** This implies that the persons described professed to be religious, worshippers of God in outward form. A godless church is described. **Denying the power.** Rejecting its power. Their lives are not moulded by it. **From such turn away.** This implies that some of this formal, godless religion had begun to show itself even at that time.

6, 7. This sort are they. Men of this sort are they who form a party by creeping into houses and by their seductive influences lead silly women captive. Not the sensible, pious women, but silly women already **laden with sins.** Hence, easily led away. **7. Ever learning.** Listening with greedy ears to every one that comes along, but never learning anything.

8, 9. As Jannes and Jambres. These were the traditional names of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses. See [Exod. 7:11](#). Paul adopts these names in referring to them. As these opposed Moses, so do the false teachers just described oppose the truth. These names are found in a Jewish Targum on [Exod. 7:11, and 22:11](#). **Reprobate.** Have abandoned the faith. **9. They shall proceed no further.** They shall be exposed, and their folly revealed to prevent them from further success. As Jannes and Jambres could not stand before Moses, these men shall fail before the truth.

10–13. Thou didst follow my teaching (Revision). Timothy had known his teaching and manner of life, and followed it. **11. Persecutions ... at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra.** See [Acts, chapters 13, 14](#). These persecutions befell Paul in the part of Asia where Timothy was reared, and hence he would be familiar with all. **Out of them all the Lord delivered me.** Hence, let Timothy cheerfully suffer, if need be, and trust the Lord. **12. All that will live godly.** In that age persecution was inseparable from a devoted Christian life. The same has been true, to a certain extent, in all ages. If the church was less worldly it would be more persecuted. **13. Evil men and seducers.** The men who hate the church shall become worse and worse. **Seducers.** Enchanters, men who lead astray.

14–17. Continue thou. Refusing to heed the evil men, continue in the truth. **Knowing of whom thou hast learned them.** Of pious parents first, but more especially of Paul. **15. And that from a child.** Taught by his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice, he had learned to know the Scriptures from childhood. **Holy Scriptures.** The Books given by inspiration. The Jewish Scriptures are primarily meant, but a part of the New Testament was already written. **Make thee wise.** Give thee the wisdom that leads to salvation. If the Old Testament could make him wise, how much more the New! **Through faith which is in Christ Jesus.** This is essential. Unless the Scriptures lead to Christ, there is no salvation. **16. All Scripture.** The Revision is much better. “Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable,” etc. Whether it is, depends on its inspiration. For instance, the Apocrypha is called Scripture, but is not inspired. **For doctrine.** For teaching. **17. That the man of God.** The preacher. See [1 Tim. 6:11](#); [1 Kings 13:1](#); [2 Kings 6:6](#). **May be perfect.** Fully fitted for his work. The sense is “complete.” **Thoroughly furnished.** Fully equipped. If he is master of the Holy Scriptures, he is so equipped. If this was true when Paul wrote, with only a part of the New Testament written, with what emphasis may it be said now when we have both the Old and New Testaments in full!

Chapter IV

The Last Solemn Charge

Summary — *A Charge to Preach the Word. Paul's Time of Departure at Hand. His Blessed Confidence. Timothy Asked to Come. Deserted by Others in the Hour of Trial, Yet the Lord was with Him. Parting Salutations.*

1, 2. I charge thee. How impressive this charge from the weary, war-worn apostle, as he stood on the edge of the grave! The names of God and of Christ are invoked to give it solemnity. Christ is named in his capacity of Judge, who shall judge not only Timothy's hearers, but himself. **Quick and the dead.** See [1 Thess. 4:15](#). **At his appearing and his kingdom.** This final judgment is placed at the time when Christ shall appear in his kingdom of glory. See [Matt. 25:31](#). **2. Preach the word.** Proclaim the Word, as a herald of Christ. This is implied in the Greek. The Word is the Gospel and its teachings. Nothing else must be preached. The excellence of the Scriptures has just been mentioned ([3:16, 17](#)). These equip the preacher for his work. **Be instant, etc.** Preach on all occasions. Be urgent in the work.

3, 4. For the time will come. Hence, there is need of diligence now. **Sound doctrine.** Gospel teaching. **Heap to themselves teachers.** Run from one teacher to another; unsettled and restless. **Having itching ears.** Ears which seek to be tickled by some new sensation. This class is numerous still. **4. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth.** It is a moral law, continually illustrated, that those who do not seek truth will receive untruth.

5–8. Watch thou. Rather, be thou sober, and on the alert. Do not sleep. **Do the work of an evangelist.** Preach the gospel and look after the churches. **Make full proof.** Discharge thy ministry fully. **6. For I am now ready to be offered.** Poured out as an offering by having his blood shed. See margin of Revision. **The time of my departure.** Death, to Paul, was simply a departure, a leaving the body and this world for a better state. **At hand.** His death had been predetermined by his enemies, and was near. **7. I have fought the good fight.** The figure is drawn from the Grecian games. Literally, "I have striven a good strife." **I have finished my course.** Drawn from the games also. The race is run to the end. **I have kept the faith.** In spite of every opposition and affliction he has remained true. How true, his who life shows. **8. Henceforth there is laid up for me.** As the successful competitor in the games receives a crown, so the crown awaited him. **The crown of righteousness.** The crown given for righteousness. **The righteous judge.** He was about to die by the sentence of an unrighteous judge. The higher Judge would reverse the sentence and give him a crown. **And not to me only.** All can have the same hope. All who serve him, and would love to see him come as their best friend, shall have the same crown.

9–13. Do thy diligence to come. In view of his speedy departure, in view of Paul's need of him. **10. For Demas hath forsaken me.** Demas is named in [Col. 4:14](#) and [Philemon 24](#) favorably, but in the time of trial his courage failed. Death seemed to threaten, and as he clung to life, he fled. **Crescens.** Not named elsewhere. **Titus.** Well known as one of Paul's companions. **Dalmatia.** The district east of the Adriatic in Illyricum, where we know churches were already planted. It is likely he was there by Paul's orders. See [Titus 3:12](#). **11. Only Luke is with me.** Of my traveling companions. The old friend is faithful to the last. **Take Mark.** John Mark, so well known. He seems to have been at this date at Ephesus. For more of [Luke](#) and [Mark](#), see Introduction to the Gospels which they wrote. **12. Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.** He probably carried this letter and was to supply Timothy's place. Tychicus is named several times ([Acts 20:4](#); [Titus 3:12](#) and in the last chapters of [Colossians](#) and [Ephesians](#)). **13. The cloke.** If his imprisonment is prolonged he will need it. **Carpus.** Probably his host at Troas. **The books.** Manuscripts. **Especially the parchments.** Papyrus and parchment were both used for books, and he wishes particularly the latter.

14, 15. Alexander the coppersmith. An Alexander is named in [Acts 19:33](#) and in [1 Tim. 1:20](#) as belonging to Ephesus. This may have been the same man. We cannot be sure whether the evil was done in Ephesus, or Rome. **Did me much evil.** By his opposition. **The Lord reward him.** The Christian, when wronged, is to turn over to the Lord the recompense for the wrong. **15. Of whom be thou ware.** This seems to indicate that Alexander was at Ephesus still.

16–18. At my first answer. This seems to point to a first hearing of the case, which had then been adjourned, perhaps to wait for witnesses. Then, as now, cases were often postponed, or there were second trials. **No man stood with me.** None of his brethren dared to appear in his support. It was the last year of the reign of Nero, and times were terrible. **17. The Lord stood with me.** He had a better helper than man. He had an assurance that the Lord was with him. **That by me.** The Lord strengthened him, so that in his defense he could proclaim to the Gentiles boldly the principles of the gospel. For the manner in which he was wont to defend himself, see in Acts his famous speeches before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. **Out of the mouth of the lion.** Probably a proverbial expression indicating deliverance from great danger. Some have thought it meant that he was delivered from being thrown to the lions. **18. And the Lord shall deliver me.** In the future as in the past. **From every evil work.** From evil doers.

19–22. Salute Prisca and Aquila. These tried friends, whom he first met in Corinth, afterwards in Ephesus, who returned also to Rome, were now again in Ephesus. **The house of Onesiphorus.** See [2 Tim. 1:16](#). Some have thought that this form implies that Onesiphorus was dead, but that does not follow necessarily. **20. Erastus abode at Corinth.** Probably his old home ([Rom. 16:23](#)). **Trophimus.** He was an Ephesian ([Acts 21:29](#)). These personal details were better understood by Timothy than by us, but I suppose this statement is made to ex-

plain why Trophimus was not in Rome. This verse proves that this letter does not belong to the date of Paul's first imprisonment, since years have passed between Paul's last visit to Miletus and the first Roman imprisonment. **21. Come before winter.** He could not come in the winter because navigation was suspended. **Eubulus.** Not before mentioned. It is probable that all these were Roman brethren. **Prudens.** He is thought to have been a Roman senator, from data secured outside the New Testament. **Linus.** A Linus appears as a bishop of Rome not many years later. **Claudia.** It has been argued that this lady was the daughter of a British king, and the wife of Prudens. See Conybeare and Howson.

Shortly after this Epistle was written, within a few months at most, Paul had his second hearing, was sentenced to death by execution, was led out of the city at the Ostian Gate to a place called the Three Fountains, and there was beheaded. At least all early tradition, and the Fathers, among them Clement, one of his companions, support this view.

**The Epistle of Paul to
Titus**



Introduction to the Epistle to Titus

The Epistle to Titus was written before the Second, and there is good reason to believe, after the First Epistle to Timothy. It belongs to a period when Paul was not a prisoner, and can hardly be assigned to that portion of his life which is covered by the historian of Acts. There is not in Acts any allusion whatever to a visit to Crete, or to churches in that great island, a fact that cannot be accounted for except by placing his Cretan missionary tour after his first imprisonment. It is probable that churches had been planted before his visit, as in Rome and many other places; that after his first letter to Timothy he returned to Ephesus, and from thence passed into the island. When he left, as the work of organization was left incomplete, Titus remained in order to “set in order the things that are wanting” (1:5), and afterwards Paul wrote to him to give further instructions concerning the work. Hence the date of the letter will be somewhere from a.d. 65 to 68.

Crete is a great island, stretching one hundred and fifty miles from east to west, but only about thirty-five miles in width, mountainous but fertile, and had in 1867 a population of 210,000, mostly Greeks. It is closely connected with early Greek legend and history, and although under Turkish rule, is in full sympathy with the Kingdom of Greece. Its modern history is mainly a record of resistance to the Turkish power.

Titus, to whom the letter is addressed, was a Greek. He attended Paul to Jerusalem at the time the question of Gentile Christians was considered ([Acts 15](#)). Paul refused to allow him to be circumcised ([Gal. 2:1–5](#); [2 Cor. 2:12](#); [7:5–16](#)). He bore Paul's first letter to Corinth, and is often referred to in the epistles, although his name is not mentioned in Acts. From [2 Tim. 4:10](#), we learn that he was in Dalmatia, at the time Paul wrote from his prison, and we find ([Titus 3:15](#)) that Paul bade him come from Crete to Nicopolis, which is on the same coast as Dalmatia. It is still claimed in Dalmatia that he was the missionary of that region.

The genuineness of the letter, like that to Timothy, was never questioned until a recent period, but every objection made by the rationalistic critics of the German school has been satisfactorily answered, and there is no reasonable ground for doubt that all three of the Pastoral Letters belong to the last years of the great apostle's life.

Chapter I

Directions to Titus

Summary — *Why Titus was Left. The Qualifications of Elders. False Teachers who Must be Stopped. The Character of Cretans. Condition of the Cretan Church.*

1–4. A servant of God. Paul usually calls himself a “servant of Christ.” [James 1:1](#) uses the form here. **According to.** His apostleship looked to the promotion of the faith of God's elect. **And acknowledging of the truth.** Bringing men to acknowledge the truth. **2. In hope of eternal life.** All his work as an apostle was in hope, etc. **3. Manifested.** God has manifested the eternal life promised by his word in the gospel. **4. To Titus, mine own son.** Concerning Titus, see [Introduction](#). The language here shows that he was one of Paul's converts.

5, 6. For this cause left I thee. Paul had then been in Crete, attended by Titus, and had left him there to set the churches in order. **In Crete.** See [Introduction](#). **The things that are wanting.** Not only in organization, but in instruction and practice. **Ordain.** “Appoint,” in the Revision. The mode of appointing is not here indicated. **Elders.** See notes on [1 Tim. 3:1–6](#). **In every city.** A plurality were to be appointed wherever there were churches. **6. If any be blameless.** The appointment is conditioned on finding the right kind of men. For a discussion of the qualifications, see notes on [1 Tim. 3:1–6](#).

7–9. For a bishop. An elder and bishop were then different names for the same office. See notes on parallel passage in 1 Timothy. **Must be.** Unless he has these traits he must not be appointed. **Blameless.** No charge against him. Compare [1 Tim. 3:2, 3](#). See notes there. **8. A lover of hospitality.** See note on [1 Tim. 3:2](#). **9. Holding fast the faithful word.** Sound in the gospel doctrine, and able to teach it to others, as well as to refute opposers.

10–13. There are many unruly and vain talkers. The last sentence suggests to Paul to speak of the Cretan errorists. The allusions to the false teachers show that the Epistle belongs to the closing years of the apostle's life. **Of the circumcision.** Jews, perhaps Judaizing Christians who had so troubled the Gentile churches. See the Galatian letter. **11. Whose mouths must be stopped.** Muzzled. The way to stop them is for the churches to refuse to hear them. All false teachers, or bad men, should now be stopped from preaching in the same way. **Subvert whole houses.** Subvert their faith. **For filthy lucre's sake.** For base gain. **12. One of themselves.** Of the Cretans. **A prophet.** A Cretan sage, seer and teacher, Epimenides by name, who lived about 500 b.c. **The Cretans are always liars.** The hard testimony of his countrymen is quoted from a poem, now lost. **13. This witness is true.** Paul's observations confirmed it. So do many ancient writers. *Cretize* (Cretanize) became a slang phrase for lying. **Wherefore.** Their bad conduct must be sharply rebuked until the gospel so transforms them that they will become sound in the faith.



14–16. Jewish fables. See note on [1 Tim. 1:4](#). **Commandments of men.** Commandments which are only the traditions of men, additions to God's ordinances. See [Mark 7:4, 8](#). **15. Unto the pure all things are pure.** In the “Jewish fables” just referred to were rigid regulations concerning foods and purifications. Hence Paul adds, “It is not food that makes one impure. To the pure all things are pure. When one is unbelieving and defiled, no food can make him pure.” See notes on [Rom. 14:14](#) and [1 Cor. 8:4–8](#). **16. They profess that they know God.** These teachers of Jewish fables and carnal ordinances profess to know and serve God, yet their immoral lives are a denial of him.



Chapter II

Practical Duties Versus Unsound Doctrine

Summary —*Duties of the Aged. Of the Young Men and Women. Of Servants. Christian Life. Christian Hope.*

1–6. Speak ... sound doctrine. Instead of inculcating Jewish fables and speculations impart healthy teaching; teach practical duties. **2. That the aged men be sober.** Not given to wine. We must keep in mind that the converts had recently been given to heathen vices. **Temperate.** Exhibiting self-control. **Sound in faith.** True believers. **In patience.** Steadfastly persevering. **3. The aged women likewise.** One general rule is given, in effect that they seek holy lives. **Not false accusers.** Not given to slander, and insinuations of evil, a fault by no means uncommon among certain classes of women. **Teachers of good things.** Both by example and precept. How beautiful is an aged Christian woman of saintly life! **4. That they may teach.** A special mission is to teach the young women. What they were to be taught follows. **5. To be discreet.** How often thoughtless indiscretion has caused great pain and trouble! **Keepers at home.** Those who are continually going must neglect the duties of domestic life. See [1 Tim. 5:13](#). **6. Young men ... be sober-minded.** The precept, sober-minded, occurs four times in [six verses](#), and may be accounted for by the volatile character of the Cretans. See [1:12, 13](#).

7, 8. Showing thyself a pattern. While exhorting others. **Showing uncorruptness.** Sincerity. **8. Sound speech.** Speech of a healthy, moral effect. **He that is of the contrary part.** Opposers, whether heathen, Jews, or false teachers.

9, 10. Exhort servants. Slaves. See notes on [Eph. 6:5–8](#). Many of the first converts were servants. **10. Not purloining.** Men robbed of liberty and labor have always been under temptation to steal. **Good fidelity.** Faithfulness in duty which will secure the master's confidence. **That they may adorn.** The virtues of a Christian servant would commend Christianity to the master. As a matter of fact we know that many masters were converted by their servants.

11–15. Hath appeared to all men. The divine favor shown forth in the gospel of salvation is for all men, servants as well as masters. **12. Teaching us.** We are taught in this system of grace that we must deny ourselves all sinful lusts, and live godly lives. **13. Looking for.** The attitude of Christians is that of waiting in expectation of the fulfillment of a glorious hope. Compare [1 Cor. 1:7](#); [Phil. 3:20](#); [1 Thess. 1:9](#). **14. Who gave himself.** The Lord who will appear gave the greatest of all things, himself, for us. **That he might redeem us.** To deliver us from sin, not only from its power, but its penalty. **A peculiar people.** Separate, chosen, holy in

life. The Jews were, under the old covenant, a peculiar people; now, Christians, are God's Israel. **15. Let no man despise thee.** Command respect.



Chapter III

Various Duties of Social Life

Summary —*Duties of Christian Life. The Former State of Christians. How God Saved Us. The Bath of Regeneration. The Treatment of Heretics. Personal Directions.*

1, 2. Be subject to principalities and powers. To the authorities over them. The Cretans were subjected to Roman sway b.c. 67, but had always been turbulent and impatient. Christians should keep aloof from seditions which could only work evil. **2. Gentle.** Forbearing and patient.

3–7. For we ourselves. We Christians. **Were sometimes.** Once we were just as foolish, disobedient, turbulent and sinful as others. **4. But after that.** That we are not so now is due, not to ourselves, but to the love of God shown in the gospel. **5. He saved us.** Not by our righteousness, but by his mercy. The means chosen by his mercy to place us in the state of salvation are next spoken of. **By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.** Two elements enter into the saving; these are referred to in [John 3:5](#) as the birth of water and of the Spirit. God's spirit effects the renewal of the spirit of man by bringing him to faith and repentance through the preaching of the gospel; thus the renewal of the Holy Spirit is begun, and the gift of the Holy Spirit is promised as a sequence of baptism. [Rom. 6:1–8](#) shows that the sinner dies to sin, is buried by baptism, rises to a new life, and is a new creature. **Washing of regeneration.** Literally, “Bath of regeneration.” All commentators of reputation refer this to baptism, such as Meyer, Olshausen, Lange, Plumptree, Schaff, Canon Cook, Wesley, etc. Regeneration is due to the Holy Spirit, but baptism is an outward act that God requires to complete the fact. The term “regeneration” only occurs here and in [Matt. 19:28](#). **6. Which.** The Holy Spirit. **Shed on us abundantly.** On the church. On some even in miraculous measure. See [Acts 2:1–10](#). **7. That being justified.** Our sins all forgiven, that through God's grace, we might be accepted as his children.

8, 9. This is a faithful saying. What has been said in the last [last four verses](#). **Affirm confidently.** That they are saved by the gospel, and hence must live holy lives. **Maintain good works.** Active in good deeds. **9. But avoid foolish questions.** How often this admonition! **Genealogies.** See note on [1 Tim. 1:4](#). **Strivings about the law.** Disputes over points connected with the Jewish law.

10, 11. An heretic. A divider, or schismatic. Any one who preaches doctrines which divide the household of faith is a heretic. So is any schismatic or factious man. **Reject.** First admonish and warn, repeat it, and if there is no change, then refuse his fellowship. **11. Knowing, etc.** No one can continue factious unless he is perverted from the truth. This is the only passage in the New Testament where “heretic” occurs, though “heresy” is [elsewhere](#) named.



12–15. When I shall send. Titus was not stationed permanently in Crete, as a diocesan bishop, but was left for a certain work (1:5), and is now bidden to leave as soon as another is sent to take his place. **Artemas.** Otherwise unknown. **Tychicus.** Often named as one of Paul's companions. See notes on [Col. 4:7](#) and [Eph. 6:21](#). **Come unto me to Nicopolis.** A town on the west coast of Greece in Epirus, so named because Augustus Cæsar gained the great battle of Actium there. It means, "City of Victory." History seems to make it probable that Paul did go there to winter, was again arrested, and carried to Rome to die. **13. Bring Zenas the lawyer.** Of him nothing more is known. **And Apollos.** See [Acts 18:24–28](#). It was the custom of the churches to help the early evangelists forward on their journeys. **14. Let ours.** Our fellow-Christians. This suggests that it would be a good work to aid Zenas and Apollos.



The Epistle of Paul to
Philemon



Introduction to the Epistle to Philemon

This, the fourth of the personal letters of Paul, differs from the other three, as well as from all other epistles of Paul, in that it is neither doctrinal, nor intended for general church instruction. It has its interest in that it shows by a particular example the application of the great principles of Christian brotherhood to social life. It is written to Philemon, an active Christian of Colosse, a convert of Paul, in behalf of Onesimus, a runaway slave of Philemon, who had found refuge in Rome, had in some way been brought under Paul's instruction during his first Roman imprisonment, and had been brought to Christ. In [Col 4:9](#) he is mentioned as belonging to Colosse, commended as a faithful and beloved brother who had been of great service, and it is there stated that he would return from Rome to his old home along with Tychicus, while this epistle explains the occasion of his return, and throws a practical light on the new relations of master and slave, which could not be done by precept alone.

A few words concerning ancient slavery will assist in an understanding of the lesson of the epistle. Slavery was universal. Aristotle, one of the most enlightened of the Greeks, held that the Creator had made the majority of the human race for slavery. Even the Mosaic law permitted the relation, but mitigated the condition of the slave by protective regulations which made Jewish slavery far the mildest in the world. Under the Roman law the slave was not considered a man, but a chattel without any civil rights whatever, completely at the mercy of his master. The master could sell him, give him away, torture him, crucify him, put him to death, even feed him to the fishes, and there was no law to interfere in his behalf. But when Christ came he introduced new relations between man and man. All in the church were a brotherhood. In Christ Jesus there was neither bond nor free, male nor female. All stood on a footing of equality before the Lord; all were brethren; all God's children, and to be bound to each other by the ties of brotherly love.

Such revolutionary ideas were sure in the course of time to destroy the condition of slavery, but in the meanwhile, Christianity sought to prepare men for the revolution before it was declared, and hence the relation was continued under new regulations. The servant was to continue to render faithful service to a master who was a brother beloved, and the master was to love and trust his servant as a brother, and to do unto him as he would be done by in such a relation. Hence in the early church thousands of masters and slaves met on an equal footing and often the slaves were the bishops who ruled the church and watched over the spiritual welfare of their masters.

Onesimus, an unconverted slave of Philemon, had fled, whether after or before his master's conversion, is unknown. When he was converted the principles of Christian teaching would require him to return, but the conditions of his return are explained in the affectionate letter which he carries back to Philemon. He returns a servant, but as a more

than servant, “a brother beloved, both in the flesh, and in the Lord,” and Philemon is desired to so receive him in a tender appeal to his consciousness of how much he owes to him who asks. He is reminded that Onesimus is Paul's own son in the Gospel, as well as himself. A sense of the fault is exhibited, and forgiveness for the offender is required, not by the authority of apostolic power, but of love.

This epistle must have been written about the same time as that to the Colossians, and was carried by the same messengers. Its genuineness is accepted by almost all critical authorities, the rationalist Baur being the only notable exception.



Chapter I

The Appeal of Onesimus

Summary —*Greetings. Thanksgiving for Philemon's Faith. Entreaty for Onesimus. The Change in Onesimus. His Return. An Appeal to Philemon's Love for Paul. Paul's Hope to Visit Colosse. Closing Salutations.*

1–3. Paul, a prisoner. A prisoner at Rome. The first words are an appeal to the sympathy of Philemon. He refers to his chains five times in this letter. **Timothy our brother.** Two other Epistles of the Captivity name Timothy in the first verse. See [Phil. 1:1](#) and [Col. 1:1](#). **Unto Philemon.** See [Introduction](#). Philemon evidently lived in Colosse, but Paul had never been there. He had probably converted him in Ephesus, the capital of the province, during his long sojourn there. **2. Our beloved Apphia.** Supposed to have been Philemon's wife. **And Archippus.** The connection has suggested that he was Philemon's son. He was no doubt a minister. See [Col. 4:17](#). **The church in thy house.** As the early church had no houses of worship, it met in private houses. **3. Grace.** The benediction of grace would remind him of God's mercy.

4–7. I thank my God. Here he begins to speak directly to Philemon, whom he always mentions in his prayers. **5. Hearing of thy love and faith.** The ground of his thankfulness is Philemon's godly life. **6. That the communication of thy faith.** Rather, “fellowship,” as in the Revision. The Greek word is *koinonia*, and the prayer is that the fellowship of faith between Philemon and Onesimus may **become effectual** in showing forth forgiveness, which would of course be comprehended in **every good thing**. Here, however, the statement is general. **7. For I had much joy and comfort.** Alluding to the time when news came to him of the state of the church at Colosse and of Philemon's active Christian life. The news was brought, no doubt, by Epaphras ([Col. 1:7](#)).

8–14. Wherefore. After this introduction Paul states the purpose of the letter. **Though I might be much bold in Christ.** As an apostle, and as the one who gave Philemon the gospel, he had the right to command what is befitting. **9. Yet.** Yet he does not come thus with commands, but as beseeching for love's sake. **Paul the aged.** That his appeal may be more sure to touch Philemon, he reminds him that Paul is an old, gray-haired, scarred veteran of Christ, who has grown aged in his service, and is now a prisoner suffering for his Lord. **10. For my son Onesimus.** His spiritual son, whom he **in his bonds**, while a prisoner in chains, had converted. It is possible that Epaphras met Onesimus, his fellow-townsmen in Rome, and brought him to Paul. **11. Which in time past was to thee unprofitable.** He may not only have been a restless, discontented servant, but in addition, he ran away. **But now profitable.** Such a change has taken place in him. He has served Paul in his bonds well, and will also serve Philemon well. **12. Whom I have sent again.** Not only that he may make

amends to thee for his wrong, but that thou mayst be able to treat him as a brother in Christ. **Mine own bowels.** Rather, “My very heart” (Revision). I am so much attached to him. To be unkind to him would wound Paul's very heart. **13. Whom I would have retained.** Would gladly have kept him with me to render for thee the service you would be glad to give me while I am in chains, only (14) **without thy mind would I do nothing.** He wished, if such a service was rendered, it might be with Philemon's free consent.

15–17. Perhaps he therefore departed, etc. Perhaps his departure was providential, to lead to his conversion, to give you a faithful helper, and to save him forever. **16. Not now as a servant.** His relation is changed. He is more than a servant, a Christian brother, **beloved, specially to me.** See [verse 12](#). **How much more unto thee.** He has both temporal, fleshly relations to thee (those of master and servant), and besides is your brother in Christ. Both these ties ought to bind him to you. The gospel held Christian masters responsible for both the moral and the physical welfare of their servants. **17. If thou count me a partner.** Christian fellow-laborers are partners. See [2 Cor. 8:23](#), where Titus is named as Paul's partner. Then receive him, as you would me.

18–21. If he hath wronged thee. By defrauding thee of his service. Some have seen in this a suggestion that Onesimus had robbed Philemon, but that inference is not necessary. See [Introduction](#) on the gospel and slavery. **19. I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand.** If you hold this wrong against him, here is my written bond that I will repay it. **Albeit.** Here is a reminder that Philemon owed his salvation to Paul, a reminder which would certainly prevent him from putting in a claim against the apostle. **20. Let me have joy of thee.** By learning that you have cheerfully granted all I ask in this letter. **21. Having confidence.** This letter is written in full confidence that even more than I ask will be granted. Perhaps this is a hint that Philemon might grant Onesimus his freedom.

22–25. Prepare me also a lodging. All the letters of the first imprisonment express confidence that he will be set at liberty. That Paul visited Asia again is almost certain, and perhaps he visited Colosse. **23. There salute thee Epaphras.** See notes on [Col. 1:7](#). He probably founded the Colossian church. See also [Col. 4:12](#). **My fellow-prisoner.** Perhaps only in the sense that he shared Paul's imprisonment by becoming his companion. **24. Marcus.** Mark. See [Introduction to Mark](#). **Aristarchus.** A Macedonian. See [Acts 27:2](#). **Demas.** See [2 Tim. 4:10](#) for his later history, **Lucas.** See [Introduction to Luke](#). Also [Col. 4:14](#). These are all mentioned in the closing salutations of the Colossian letter.



**The Epistle of Paul to the
Hebrews**



Introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews

That this Epistle is entitled to a place in the New Testament Scriptures has been discussed but little in comparison with the question of its authorship. It is quoted at large by Clement of Rome before the close of the first century, by Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and others in the second century, is found in the Versions of the second century, is named in the Ancient Canons, and is affirmed to be a part of the Holy Scriptures by the Council of Antioch (a.d. 269) and of Nice (a.d. 325); as well as by the later councils.

On the other hand, both the ancient and modern church have been divided concerning the writer to whom it is to be ascribed. Contrary to the usual custom the writer's name is not given in the opening verses, nor in the closing salutations. It differs somewhat in style from any other portion of the New Testament. Some have thought it improbable that Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, should have addressed an Epistle to the Hebrews; for these, and perhaps other reasons, many devout critics have held that it was written by Barnabas, or by Apollos, or by Luke, and even Clement of Rome has been named as the author. In the ancient church the East with one consent declared in favor of Paul, while the West asserted that it belonged to some other writer, though in modern times the Latin Church has decided the question by the weight of infallibility in favor of the apostle to the Gentiles. Luther and Calvin both held that it was not Pauline, and have been followed by many moderns.

The limits of this work will not allow details concerning this discussion, and I will content myself with briefly stating reasons why I think it is to be ascribed to Paul. (1) There is no proof whatever, of any kind, that any one else was the author. There is only conjecture. (2) Paul is named as the author in the second century by Christian Fathers who were the disciples of men who had sat at the feet of the apostles. (3) The greatest of the Ante-Nicene Fathers who make mention of its authorship affirm that it was written by Paul. (4) It was written in Paul's lifetime, for the temple was evidently still standing; it was written by a friend of Timothy, written from Italy, and evidently by one who was a prisoner. (5) The salutation, or benediction with which it closes is found in the other thirteen epistles of Paul, and is found in the New Testament epistles of no other writer. Paul alone invokes *grace* upon those whom he addresses as his farewell words. (6) The second Epistle of Peter, an Epistle evidently written to Hebrews, declares that Paul had written an Epistle to them. "As our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him hath written *unto you*; as also in all his Epistles." This refers to some particular letter, sent to the same persons whom Peter was addressing, and hence there seems to be little doubt that there existed, before Peter died, an Epistle to the Hebrews written by Paul. (7) The argument is thoroughly Pauline. There can be no doubt, even if the language is not Paul's, that he inspired the thoughts. Hence, we are justified in concluding that the Epistle is really one of Paul's, even if his thoughts are in part clothed in the language of another writer.

It is addressed to Hebrews; evidently Hebrew Christians; probably not so much those of Jerusalem as the “Dispersion,” the multitudes of Jewish Christians in Gentile lands. It shows that those addressed were persecuted, were in danger of being tempted to fall away, that they had not yet shed their blood for Christ, and, in order to strengthen them, the superiority of Christianity to Judaism is demonstrated by showing the superlative excellence of Christ. He is (1) superior to the *prophets*; (2) superior to the *angels*; (3) superior to *Moses*. (4) His priesthood is superior to that of *Aaron*, being a priest after the order of Melchizedek. (5) Then the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old is shown, being a better covenant, based upon better promises. This is shown in [Chs. 8, 9, 10](#), and then follows in the remaining chapters an exhortation to steadfastness, based upon faith and strengthened by examples of the heroes of the faith.

It is evident from the closing words, whatever may have been the writer's reasons for not incorporating his name in the Epistle, that he was well known to those addressed. He asks their prayers, prays for them, speaks of visiting them with Timothy, and closes with the usual Pauline farewell benediction.



Chapter I

Christ Greater Than Angels and Prophets

Summary — *The Message Spoken by the Son. The Glory of the Son. His Superiority to the Angels.*

1–4. God, who. Instead of the introductory greetings usual in an Epistle, the apostle plunges into the midst of his subject by a grand exordium. **At sundry times.** Rather, “In divers portions,” as in the Revision. The Old Testament was given in “portions,” not all at once, and at wide intervals. **Spoke.** Though prophets might be chosen as the instruments, the message was that of God. While God spoke through them, the prophets were only men. **2. Hath in these last days.** “At the end of these days” (Revision). At the end of the Jewish dispensation. **Spoken unto us by his Son.** “Last of all he sent his Son.” The importance of the message is shown by the messenger. No longer an inspired prophet, but, instead, the Son of God is the speaker. **Whom he hath appointed heir of all things.** The Father delivered all things into the hands of the Son ([Acts 2:36](#); [John 17:10](#)). “The heir is lord of all” ([Gal. 4:1](#)). **By whom also he made the worlds.** Through his agency or instrumentality. Christ, the Logos, is represented as God's medium in creation. See note on [John 1:1](#). **3. Who being the brightness of his glory.** A manifestation of the glory of God. **The very image of his substance.** In Christ we have a tangible, visible representation of the substance of God. We see God in him. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” ([John 14:9](#)). **By the word of his power.** The Son hath all power, and his power was always manifested by his word. He spoke and it was done, whether it was to still the winds or to raise the dead. So in creation, the word was spoken and it was done. **When he had by himself purged our sins.** Made an atonement for them. **Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.** Of God. The right hand was always the place of honor. See note on [Eph. 1:20](#). **4. Having become so much better.** Superior to the angels. His superiority is shown in the greater name, which he received by inheritance; that of the Son. Our Savior has other names, but this name only is received by inheritance. This superiority is shown by the manner in which God addresses the Son. The apostle particularly shows Christ's superiority to the angels, because through angels the Jewish law was given. See [Acts 7:53](#); [Gal. 3:19](#); [Heb. 2:3](#).

5–12. For to which of the angels. To none of them did he ever use such language as follows. The style in which the Father addresses Christ shows his superiority to the angels. **Thou art my Son.** See [Ps. 2:7](#). The [second Psalm](#) was regarded by the Jews as a prophecy of the Messiah. **This day have I begotten thee.** What day is referred to in the prophecy? [Acts 13:32, 33](#) answers the question by quoting this very passage and declaring that it was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He was born from the dead and God, who raised him, thus demonstrated that he was his Son. **I will be to him a Father, etc.** Quoted from 2

[Sam. 7:14](#). They were spoken originally of David's son Solomon, chosen to be king after him, but he was in a certain sense a type of Christ. Expression "Son of David," "Seed of David," while applicable to Solomon, pre-eminently refers to Christ. **6. When he again bringeth the first born into the world.** Macknight thinks that Christ was brought into the world the first time when he was born at Bethlehem; that the time referred to here is when he comes again to judge the world. Whatever the time referred to, [Ps. 97:7](#) shows his superiority to the angels for it says, "**Let all the angels of God worship him.**" **7. But of the angels he saith.** The quotations made show how God speaks to and of the Son, but quite different are the words used of the angels. **He maketh his angels spirits.** In the Revision we have "winds" instead of "spirits." The Greek word is *Pneumata*, a word which uniformly in the New Testament means *spirit*, and *spirits* in the plural, and I believe that "spirits" is the better rendering. The passage is quoted from [Ps. 104:4](#) and means that he maketh spirits his messengers, or angels, and flaming ones (the burning seraphs) his ministers. It is incongruous with the thought to introduce into the passage winds and lightnings, natural phenomena, when the theme is the status of angel intelligences. **8. But to the son.** The quotation is from [Ps. 45:6](#). **Thy throne, O God.** Then the Son has an eternal throne, and is divine. **The sceptre, etc.** He then has a kingdom, and rules it with a righteous scepter. The point is that he is a Divine King with an eternal throne. **9. Therefore God, even thy God, etc.** Because of the holiness of the Son, God the Father hath anointed him. The exaltation of the Son cometh from the Father. He is *the* Anointed, and above all other anointed kings, priests, and prophets. **10. And thou Lord in the beginning.** From [Ps. 102:25–27](#). A part of the [preceding part of the Psalm](#) speaks of the Messiah's Kingdom, and hence these verses may well apply to the Messiah, especially as they harmonize with what we are told elsewhere of his glory. See notes on [John 1:1](#). **11. They shall perish.** All created things shall grow old and pass away. **12. As a vesture shalt thou fold them up.** The heavens shall be rolled away. They are rolled up to be put away like a worn out garment. **But thou art the same.** The Son is eternal, the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

13, 14. Sit thou on my right hand. Quoted from [Ps. 110:1](#). **Make thy enemies thy footstool.** The custom is alluded to of putting the feet on the necks of conquered enemies. See [Josh. 10:24, 25](#). This passage is applied to Christ in [Acts 2:35](#), and in [1 Cor. 15:25](#). **14. Are they not all ministering spirits?** The real office of the angels is indicated. It is to give service in working out the plans of God for the salvation of the elect. The passage does not teach that each heir of salvation has a guardian angel, but that the angels do service in working out the Divine plans in behalf of the saved.

The work of angels can be learned in the Scriptures from the missions in which they are engaged. It is to aid in carrying out the plans of God for the government and salvation of our race. Under the rule of Christ they are his ministers to aid in the work of redeeming



man. For examples of their work, see [Gen. 19:1–26](#); [2 Kings 19:35](#); [Acts 12:23](#); [Jude 6](#); [Acts 10:1–8](#); [Matt. 18:10](#); [Acts 5:19](#), etc. Christ is Lord; they are servants.



Chapter II

The Superiority of the New Dispensation

Summary — *The Danger of Neglecting the Great Salvation; the Salvation Offered by Christ. The Superiority of Christ to the Angels Further Shown. Christ, the Divine Man, Put Over All Things. Fitted to be Our Savior by Taking upon Himself Humanity; and by Suffering. Hence, He Took Not the Nature of Angels, But Became the Seed of Abraham. He, a Tempted and Suffering Savior, Can Succor Us Who Suffer and Are Tempted.*

1–4. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed. Because the message to us is spoken, not by angels or prophets, but by the Son of God. **To the things which we have heard.** To Christ's gospel, and to his words of instruction. **Lest ... we should let them slip.** Lest we should let them slip from us because we drift away from them and refuse to heed them. **2. For if the word spoken by angels.** The Jewish law. See notes on [Acts 7:53](#) and [Gal. 3:19](#). The law was given through the medium of angels, as was confessed by the Jews. See Josephus, *Antiq.* XV: 5, section 3. **Was steadfast.** Confirmed by a penalty upon transgressors. **Every transgression.** Nothing is plainer in all Jewish history than that obedience to the law was rewarded and disobedience punished. **3. How shall we escape.** How then, if this was true of the law, can we hope to escape if he neglect the message of the Son? **So great salvation.** Not a temporal, but an eternal salvation, the salvation of the gospel. **Begun to be spoken by the Lord.** More especially after his death and resurrection when he bade his disciples go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. **Was confirmed to us.** If Paul was the writer of Hebrews he places himself in the position of the church, for elsewhere he tells us plainly that he received the gospel from the Lord himself. The apostles who had heard and seen the risen Christ first proclaimed his gospel publicly on Pentecost, an event evidently alluded to in this passage. **4. God bearing them witness.** God bore witness to the truth of their words by the signs and wonders of Pentecost. He also bore witness afterwards by giving them miraculous powers, and by the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. Note that when he Law was given on Sinai God bore witness by signs and wonders. Also when the gospel, the message of Christ, was given on Mt. Zion God bore witness with signs and wonders.

5–12. The world to come. Literally, “the inhabited earth in the future.” The Jewish dispensation was called by the Jews “the present world.” A dispensation following it would be “the world to come.” The reference is rather to the future gospel ages than to the eternal world. These are not subjected to the angels. **6. But one in a certain place.** David, in [Ps. 8:4](#). **7. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels.** Man, for the time, was made lower than the angels. Yet he was crowned, as the Psalmist tells us, with glory and honor, and given dominion. **8. Thou hadst put all things in subjection under his feet.** This introduces the point of the quotation. It declares that all things (except God, [1 Cor. 15:27](#)) have been

made subject to man. But we do not see our race in dominion over the heavens, the powers of nature and eternal world. **9. But we see Jesus.** Jesus is the solution of the problem. He was made while in the flesh on earth apparently **lower than the angels**, and suffered death, but he, the Son of Man, who died as mortals die, the now glorified man, has “all power in heaven and in earth” ([Matt. 28:18](#)). Through him, the Son of Man, all things are subjected to glorified humanity. **Taste death for every man.** To die. He became man in order that he might die for every man, and because of the suffering of death was crowned ([Phil. 2:9](#)). It was after his suffering that “all power was given unto his hands.” Compare [1 Cor. 15:27](#); [Eph. 1:20](#); [Phil. 3:21](#). **10. For it became him.** It became God, was fitting, and God's purpose. **For whom are all things.** God, who is over all and possesses all. Paul uses this expression [Rom. 11:36](#); [Col. 1:6](#); [1 Cor. 8:6](#). **The captain of their salvation.** Christ, a Prince and a Leader. **Perfect.** Not perfect in holiness, for he was sinless, but perfectly fitted to be our Savior. To this end it was needful that he should also suffer as one of our race. **11. Both he that sanctifieth.** He who makes men holy by purging them of their sins, and those who are made holy **are all of one.** Are made of one nature because he took our nature and suffered. Hence **he is not ashamed to call** all the saved, though they are mortals, by the name of brethren. This is done in the Hebrew Scriptures ([Ps. 22:22](#)). The language quoted from the Psalm is ascribed to Christ, but is addressed to God. The point is that the speaker calls the worshipers brethren. **12. In the midst of the church.** In the Psalm “Congregation” is the term used. The Revision has so rendered it here.

13–15. And again. A quotation is now given from [Isa. 8:17](#), in which the Messiah is represented associating himself with the saints as all children of God. The point is that Christ makes himself the brother of the saved. [Verses 17 and 18](#) are quoted in order to give this point clearly. **14. He himself likewise.** As these children are all mortal he, though divine, took on himself our mortality. He did this, **that through death** he might bring to nought the power of him who first brought death on our race. It was needful that he be clothed with mortality in order to die, and needful to die in order to deliver men from the power of sin and give them a glorious hope. **15. That he might deliver them.** Not only from sin, which gives death its sting, but from all fear of death by giving the hope of a blessed life to come.

16–18. He took not the nature. He did not lay hold of an angel form in order to save angels, but the human form and nature, in order to be our Savior. He chose to be **the seed of Abraham**, being the Son of Mary, a descendant of Abraham. **17. It behoved him to be made like his brethren.** Hence, for the reasons given above, it was necessary that he take our nature. **A merciful and faithful high priest.** To be our high priest he must be in full sympathy with us, having experienced our trials and our sufferings. **To make propitiation.** As our high priest he made atonement for us. Conscious of all our frailties he intercedes for us. In him, the Divine man, all who are found in him are justified before God. **18. In that**

he suffered, he is able to sympathize with all who suffer and to **succor** all who have trials and need help.

These two chapters show that Christ is higher than the angels, and hence that the gospel is superior in its demands to the Law. They show that to Christ as the Son of Man, subjected to death, and glorified, all things have been subjected; that he becomes a brother to the saints, and that he took our nature, suffered and tasted death, in order that he might become a faithful and merciful high priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, able to make atonement for us, and to come to us with an Elder Brother's help in every time of need.



Chapter III

Christ Superior to Moses

Summary — *Our Apostle and High Priest. He Above Moses, as the Builder is Above the House. Moses a Servant in the House; Christ the Son. Lessons Drawn from Israel Under Moses. How the Israelites Provoked God in the Wilderness. How He Refused Them Admission to the Rest. Unbelief Caused Their Fall.*

1, 2. Wherefore. Seeing Christ is so exalted as the first and second chapter show. **Holy brethren.** Christians made holy by being purged of their sins. **Partakers of the heavenly calling.** Called by a gospel which came from heaven and which will lead those who obey it, and thus become partakers, to heaven. **Consider the Apostle and High Priest.** Christ. An apostle is one sent. Moses, in this sense, was an apostle. Christ was sent from heaven. The Twelve were sent out by Christ. He is not only Apostle, but High Priest; superior to both Moses and Aaron combined. **Our profession.** More correctly, “Our confession,” that is, of all confessors of Christ. The confession of Peter ([Matt. 16:16](#)) was the confession of primitive Christians. **2. Who was faithful.** As Moses was faithful to his trust, so has Christ been. **In all his house.** The house of Israel, the nation, the congregation of God. Israel, a type of the church, is spoken of under the figure of a building. In [Numbers 12:6–8](#), it is declared that Moses was faithful in his house.

3–6. For this man was counted worthy of more glory. Jesus, the house-builder, the builder of Israel, as well as of the church, the Divine Savior, is more glorious than Moses, a member of the house of Israel, even as the builder of the house is superior to the house. **4. Every house is builded by some one.** The word man does not occur in the Greek. The meaning is “every house has a builder, but the Builder of all things is God.” He built the house of Israel, but Christ is God manifest to us, the Divine personality at work in human redemption; hence, the builder of the typical church, as well as of the antitype. **5. Moses was faithful, etc.** See [Numbers 12:7](#). **As a servant.** Not as the builder, or as the master, but as a waiting man in the house. **For a testimony.** The whole ministry of Moses was a “testimony” to what would follow after, a shadow of what was to come. This will be brought out more fully in subsequent chapters. **6. But Christ as a son.** Moses was a waiting man in the Lord’s house, but Christ, the Son, is Lord over the house, his own church. **Whose house we are.** “Ye are God’s building” ([1 Cor. 3:9](#)); “My church” ([Matt. 16:18](#)). **If we hold fast the confidence.** We Christians, are Christ’s house, and will continue to be Christ’s house, if we hold fast, etc. The possibility of falling away, as Israelites fell away from God’s house of Israel, is pointed out in the [following verses](#).

7–11. Wherefore. Take warning from the fate of Israel. **As the Holy Ghost saith.** The words quoted are found in [Psa. 95:7–11](#). David there exhorts his brethren to learn a lesson

from Israel in the wilderness, and not to provoke God. **To-day if you will hear his voice.** At that very time. So to-day, and ever, God wishes us to hear him, *to-day*, not to-morrow. **8. Harden not your hearts.** To harden the heart is to reach such a state that God's voice makes no impression. **As in the provocation.** The Hebrew of the Psalm says *Like Meribah*. The meaning is "Harden not your hearts as our fathers did at Meribah." See the account in [Exod. 17:1-7](#). See also [Num. 27:14](#), where Kadesh Meribah is named. Both may be referred to. **Day of temptation.** Day of trial. **9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me.** Tempted me by proving me. Seeing how much murmuring and sin I would endure. **Saw my works forty years.** All his mighty manifestations in their behalf during all the period of their sojourn in the wilderness. **10. Wherefore I was grieved.** The word more nearly means "disgusted." **They do always err.** Not simply by making mistakes, but their hearts are wrong. **11. So I swear in my wrath.** A figure of speech which means that God, indignant at their unbelief and sin, declared they should not enter Canaan. See [Num. 14:20-35](#). **Shall not enter my rest.** Canaan, while the Israelites were yet in bondage, was promised as a land of rest. On the weary journey in the wilderness it was still looked to as the rest. To prohibit from entering the rest was then to prohibit from entering Canaan. It is, however, a type of heaven, the land of eternal rest. Hence, the warnings that are pointed out in the [next verses](#).

12-19. Take heed ... lest, etc. They fell from unbelief, which led them to depart from God. Take heed, lest you Hebrew Christians seeking the heavenly rest, should so fall. **13. But exhort one another daily.** Continually stir each other to duty, lest you be hardened against God's voice by **the deceitfulness of sin**. How sin does deceive us by making false promises of happiness and of safety. **14. Partakers of Christ.** In fellowship with Christ, partakers of his benefits and glory. **If we hold, etc.** If we persevere to the end. The Israelites started well, but did not persevere. The only final perseverance of the saints is to persevere until the work of life is over. **15. While it is said.** The thought and connection are, "You are partakers of Christ, if you remain steadfast, and listen to the exhortation, **To-day if ye will, etc.**" **16. For some, when they had heard, did provoke.** Some in the wilderness heard God, but refused to listen, and did not provoke him. **Howbeit not all.** There were a few exceptions; Joshua and Caleb, Eliezer, and perhaps some more of the Levites. **17. With whom was he grieved forty years?** With what sort of persons? The answer is, **with them that sinned**, all of whose bodies were left in the wilderness. **18. To whom sware he? etc.** It was to them who sinned because of their distrust of God. See [Num. 14:20](#). **19. So we see ... because of unbelief.** It was unbelief that kept them out of Canaan. Hence, the lesson which is given more fully in the next chapter. These warnings show us that the Hebrew Christians addressed were subjected to trials, and some of them in danger of apostasy, falling away through unbelief. Hence, the fate of Israel in the wilderness is pointed out. If unbelief shut

out the Israelites from the rest in Canaan, unbelief will shut the gates of heavenly rest to those who have started on the way.



Chapter IV

The Rest that Remaineth for the Saints

Summary — *Diligence Needful to Enter the Rest. A Rest for the Saints. God's Rest a Type. Old Israel Did Not Find the True Rest. There Remaineth a Rest.*

1–3. Let us therefore fear. God's promises are conditional. A rest is promised, but we must take heed that we do not come short of it by failing to keep the conditions. **2. For unto us was the gospel preached.** We have the promises of the gospel, but they had the promises of an earthly land of rest preached to them. They broke the covenant on which the promises were based. **The word preached did not profit them.** The reason was that it was not received in unflinching faith. Hence they did not obey it. So unbelief would make the gospel to us of none effect. **3. For we which have believed.** Believers in Christ **enter into rest**; have the hope of the promised rest. To have the rest is conditioned upon a trusting faith. **If they shall enter into my rest.** Rather, "They shall not, etc." See Revision. It is the same quotation that is found in [3:11](#). The argument is that the Israelites were excluded from God's rest, and hence it follows that some others must enter in, since the rest has not been prepared in vain. **Although the works were finished.** Though God completed his work in six days and rested the seventh, a type of the rest to be given to his saints, yet keeping the Sabbath is not entering into that rest.

4–7. He spake in a certain place. In [Gen. 2:2](#). There it is stated that "God rested on the seventh day from all his works." The Sabbath rest was therefore established long before Israel was denied entrance into the rest. Hence it is not *the rest*. **5. In this place again.** In [Psalm 95:11](#), which declares that Israel should not enter into God's rest. Though Israel had kept the rest of the Sabbath, they had not entered into God's rest, as this language shows. The rest of the Sabbath is not then the promised rest, nor is Canaan below, from which nearly all Israel was once excluded, because David exhorts the people, though in Canaan, to enter into the rest. **6. Seeing ... that some must enter.** Since God has a rest for his people, and it is not made in vain, there must be some who enter therein. Those to whom it was first offered entered not because of their unbelief. Hence it remaineth to all who, like Joshua and Caleb, have faith. **7. Again he limiteth a certain day.** The thought is that there is a day of opportunity. If that day is passed by, the opportunity is gone. The word of the Lord is, **To-day if, etc.**

8–11. For if Jesus. "Joshua" in the Revision. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew word Joshua. Joshua led Israel over the Jordan into Canaan, but that did not give them complete rest. If that had been true, David would not have exhorted them to seek to enter into rest. Five hundred years after they entered Canaan this exhortation is given in the [95th Psalm](#). **9. There remaineth therefore a rest.** Since God has a rest for his people, and neither the

Sabbath nor Canaan is the rest, these being only types of that rest, **a rest remaineth to the people of God.** **10. For he that is entered into his rest.** When God rested on the Sabbath, the type of the true rest, his works ceased. So when our rest comes, weary toil, trials and sufferings will be over. **11. Let us labor therefore.** Since this glorious rest, the heavenly rest, remains for faithful believers, we should seek to enter upon it, and especially take heed that we do not come short through unbelieving disobedience as did Israel.

12, 13. For the word of God. The Israelites came short because they refused to hear the word of the Lord. If we could enter in, we must take heed to the word. It is **living and active** (Revision), **sharper than any two-edged sword.** Cutting keenly and in all directions. **Dividing of soul and spirit.** It not only gives life, but slays, as was the case with the Israelites who fell in the wilderness, and pierces to the soul and spirit. It reaches the very fountains of life. **A discerner of the thoughts.** It lays bare the thoughts and the intentions. **13. Neither is there any creature.** In Christ appears the Word in personal form, while in the gospel we have his spoken word. Here the reference is to the personal Word. Every creature is manifest before him, and all our deeds and thoughts are open to his eyes.

14–16. Seeing then that we have a great high priest. As has been shown Our high priest now makes intercession in the true Holy of Holies. **15. For we have not a high priest, etc.** A high priest must be in sympathy with those for whom he ministers. Christ, who took upon himself our infirmities, is such a high priest. He was tried and tempted as man, but remained sinless. **16. Let us therefore come boldly.** Because our high priest can be touched by our infirmities.

The throne of grace. The Jewish high priest interceded before the mercy-seat. We may come boldly to the mercy-seat, knowing that our loving Elder Brother is our high priest in the heavens. Hence we may always have confidence when we ask for **grace to help in time of need.**

The practical lesson of the chapter is that the True Rest promised remains. It was not the Sabbath day, nor was it Canaan. It is the heavenly rest of which these are types. Unbelieving disobedience excluded the Israelites from the typical rest of Canaan. So, too, it will exclude those who have started to enter into the heavenly rest if they refuse to hear Christ through unbelief. The believing Joshua and Caleb entered into Canaan. So, too, the true and faithful believers who follow Christ will enter into the rest above.



Chapter V

The Superiority of Christ's Priesthood

Summary — *The Office of a High Priest. High Priests Chosen of God. Christ a Priest of the Order of Melchizedec. He Learned Obedience Through Suffering. The Need of Learning the Deeper Truths of the Gospel.*

1–3. Every high priest taken from among men. Such as Aaron and all the high priests of Israel. **Is ordained for men.** He is appointed to officiate in holy things and to intercede in behalf of his fellow-men. God did not need the high priest, but men needed him. **That he may offer both gifts and sacrifices.** “Gifts” were strictly bloodless offerings, while “sacrifices” required the life of the victim. These were offered in behalf of men, either by the high priest in person, or under his direction. **2. Who can have compassion, etc.** It is needful that the high priest be one in sympathy with men, because he has experienced in person the common infirmities of the race. Otherwise, how could he be a merciful high priest touched by the infirmities of men? **3. And by reason hereof.** Of his own infirmity, in that he was of men. **Ought, as for the people, so also for himself.** As one of a sinful race he needed to approach God in his own behalf, as well as in behalf of men. He offered “atonement for his own sins and for the sins of the people.” This was shown forth in the very garments he wore when he offered the national atonement once a year. On the shoulder of the ephod ([Exod. 28:10](#)) were two onyx stones, on which were engraved the names of the twelve sons of Jacob, the representatives of all the tribes of Israel, of Levi the priestly tribe as well as the others. As he stood before the mercy-seat interceding, he bore all these names before the Lord.

4–6. And no man taketh this honor unto himself. He must be called to it by God. Aaron was so appointed. See [Exod. 28:1](#); [Lev. 8:2](#). **5. So also Christ glorified not himself.** Did not take the office of himself, but God called him to his priesthood. The time is pointed out when he was so called. It was when God said, **Thou art my son, to-day have I begotten thee.** This refers to when Christ was begotten from the dead, the first-born of the new creation. See [Eph. 1:20–23](#). At this time he entered fully, at the call of God, upon his high priesthood in behalf of men. **6. A priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.** Christ's priesthood continues while time endures. He is not of the order of Aaron, but of Melchizedek, a king as well as a priest. See [Gen. 14:18, 19](#). For a fuller discussion of the priesthood of Melchizedek, see notes on chapter 7:1–10.

7–10. Who in the days of his flesh. Christ, while on earth, is referred to. **When he had offered up prayers, etc.** A particular time when these earnest supplications were offered is pointed out. The agony of Gethsemane is meant. It was then that he said, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from me.” Even there he **was heard.** For an angel descended to strengthen

him. **Feared.** Reverenced the Father in humble submission. A pious fear is meant. **8. He learned obedience.** He claimed no special exemptions because he was the Son, but learned and taught *obedience* in the supremest test that the world ever saw. *He learned obedience* experimentally. **9. Being made perfect.** Fitted in all points to be our high priest by his suffering; made, not a perfect man, for he was that already, but a perfect high priest. **He became the author.** Was able to offer the gospel to all nations, and thus to save **all them that obey him.** He does not save men in disobedience. **10. Called of God an high priest.** When he had suffered he was called of God an high priest, or entered upon his priesthood. **Order of Melchisedec.** See notes on verse 6 and chapter 7:1–10.

11–14. Of whom we have many things to say. Of Christ in his priesthood. **Hard to be uttered.** Hard to be expressed so that you will understand. The priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchizedek, opens up some difficult questions. **Seeing ye are dull of hearing.** Of slow understanding. **12. When ye ought to be teachers.** You have been disciples long enough to be able to teach others, but still need some one to teach you **first principles.** See notes on [Heb. 6:1, 2](#). **Oracles of God.** God's word. **13. Every one that useth milk, etc.** Those who only understand the A B C's of Christianity are only babes in Christ, like the babes whose food is milk. Such an one cannot handle **the word of righteousness** skillfully. **14. Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.** When one has reached manhood we do not expect him to live on the food of babes. So a church member, as time goes on, ought to feed on *strong meat*, the higher teaching of religion. There should be growth in knowledge. **Their senses exercised.** The reference here is to the faculties of the soul. A Christian ought to study, to gain a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and especially of the New Testament, to become able to teach others, and to explain the higher principles of our religion. In addition he ought to be able to discern the moral character of the environments of life, to know not only what to accept and what to reject, but how to warn his less instructed brethren.



Chapter VI

Going on Toward Perfection

Summary —*Leaving First Principles. First Principles Explained. Going On to Perfection. The Fatal Consequences of Apostasy. Exhortation to Diligence. The Absolute Assurance of God's Promises.*

1, 2. Leaving the principles. The rudiments, the milk fitted only for babes. **Let us go on unto perfection.** Go on to the higher lessons which belong to full grown men. The exhortation is to go on from the lessons of Christian childhood to those of manhood in Christ. See [verses 13, 14 of chapter 5](#). **Not laying again the foundation, etc.** To lay the foundation once is enough, if it is laid right. These first principles are the foundation of Christian life, but we must build higher and higher upon them. **Repentance.** This was essential in laying the foundation. All men are commanded to repent. Repentance is essentially a change of the will, the rebellious will becoming a will to serve the Lord. **Dead works.** Some try to save themselves by trusting in their works but they are as vain to save as though they were dead. **Faith towards God.** Faith as well as repentance enter into the foundation. The sinner must believe upon the Lord, and repent. See [Acts 16:31 and 2:38](#). **2. Of the doctrine of baptisms.** The third of these first principles which belong to the “foundation” relates to baptism. See [Acts 2:38](#), also [Eph. 4:5](#); [Matt. 28:19](#), etc. But why is the plural used? There is but one baptism in water when the penitent is baptized into Christ ([Eph. 4:5](#); [Gal. 3:27](#)). There is, however, another baptism which was promised before Christ came which was not of water. See [Matt. 3:12](#). Christ also promised it before his ascension. Hence there is not only the baptism of the body in water, but of the spirit in the Holy Spirit, as fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. **Laying on of hands.** In the primitive church the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit was imparted by the laying on of the Apostolic hands ([Acts 8:17](#)). **Of the resurrection of the dead.** One of the fundamental but primary principles of Christian teaching. **Of eternal judgment.** This was comprehended in teaching the resurrection. All were to be rewarded according to the deeds of this life.

3–6. If God permit. We will go on to these higher lessons if God permit. The author is led by the Spirit in what he says, and hence humbly defers all he shall say in the rest of the epistle to the will of God. **4. For it is impossible.** There are sins that have no forgiveness ([Matt. 12:31, 32](#)). There are Apostates who can never find a place for repentance, not because of the failure of God's mercy, but because they have destroyed their moral capacity for a heartfelt repentance. Usually the most hardened sinner are apostates. **Were once enlightened.** Had the light of the Gospel. See [John 8:12](#). **Have tasted.** Experienced. **The heavenly gift.** The new life in Christ. Christ “giveth life unto the world” ([John 20:31](#)). **Partakers of the Holy Ghost.** The Spirit of God is sent into the heart of all sons ([Gal. 4:6](#); [Rom. 8:9](#)). **5. And**

have tasted the good word of God. Fed on that word which is food for the soul. **The powers of the world to come.** The miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The world to come is used in the sense of the Christian dispensation. **6. If they fall away.** Apostasize from the faith. **To renew them to repentance.** He is so far fallen that he has no capacity left for repentance. Judas the Apostate sorrowed, but his sorrows became despair. There was remorse but not repentance. **Crucify ... the Son of God afresh.** By rejecting Christ they place themselves with those who rejected him and crucified him because he affirmed that he was the Son of God. Those meant are not those “overtaken in a fault,” or *backsliders* only, but men once Christian professors who not only turn away from but oppose Christ.

7, 8. For the earth, etc. These two verses show that treatment depends on what kind of fruit is borne. God sends sunshine and rain on the earth. If it brings forth food for man, it is blessed. But if it brings forth **thorns and briers**, they are rejected. So God, who blesses our lives, and refreshes them with the Gospel, demands righteous fruit. If they bear thorns, **the end** is destruction.

9–12. We are persuaded better things of. That you will not bear thorns and briers. **10. For God is not unrighteous to.** Though the Hebrew Christians had not advanced in knowledge (5:12), yet they had shown the fruits of the love of Christ in **ministering to the saints**. **11. Show the same diligence.** Not only continue your work of love, but show equal diligence in attaining the **full assurance of hope**, by going on to perfection in knowledge. **12. That ye be ... followers of them.** Of the glorious heroes of the faith, like Abraham and Moses, and the martyrs, like Stephen and James. **Faith and patience.** These qualities, essential to steadfastness, must be found in those who “inherit the promises.”

13–20. For when God made promise. The promises are absolutely sure. See how God confirmed his promise to Abraham! See [Gen. 22:15–18](#). **14. Saying, Surely blessing.** The promise so confirmed to Abraham is given in these words. **15. He obtained the promise.** It was sure, but he had to patiently endure in order to obtain. The history of Abraham shows how he was blessed. **16. For men verily swear by the greater.** When men make a solemn oath in order to settle a fact or covenant beyond controversy they usually swear in the name of God. God, however, could swear by no one greater than himself. **17. God willing, etc.** God, out of condescension to that human weakness which puts more confidence in an oath than in the bare word, confirmed his promise by an oath. **18. That by two immutable things.** By his word of promise, and by his oath, neither of which could ever be broken. **Strong consolation.** In the absolute certainty of God's promises **who have fled for refuge.** Fled from the wrath revealed against sin to the Gospel with its promises and blessed hopes. **19. Which hope ... an anchor of the soul.** As an anchor holds the ship when the storms are raging, so this hope holds the soul steadfast. **Entereth into that within the veil.** The veil was before the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, but it was a type of heaven. Hence this means that the hope reaches to heaven. It is a heavenly hope. **20. Whither the forerunner.** As the



High Priest entered within the veil into the Holy of Holies, so our High Priest has entered for us, and before us, into the heavens. **A High Priest forever, etc.** See notes on chapter 7:1-10.



Chapter VII

Christ's Priesthood After the Order of Melchizedec

Summary —*The High Dignity of Melchizedec as a Priest. Abraham Paid Him Tithes. Thus Did the Aaronic Priesthood Confess His Superiority. A Type of a Priest Forever. Christ to be a Priest After the Order of Melchizedec. Hence, the Aaronic Priesthood Imperfect. Hence, too, the Law Must be Changed. Christ, the Priest of the New Covenant, Hath an Unchangeable Priesthood.*

1–3. For this Melchizedec, king of Salem. See the account of him in [Gen. 14:18–20](#). That he was a character of exceeding dignity is manifest, not only from the statements of Genesis, but of this chapter. There have been many speculations concerning his personality, but no man can lift the veil. He bursts upon us as a priest-king, king of Salem, or Jerusalem, which we now know from discoveries in Egyptian records existed even in those very early ages; **priest of the most High God.** There is no account of his parents, none of his birth, none of his death, none of the beginning or end of his priesthood; hence, he appears in the record without parents, genealogy, beginning or end, simply as **one that liveth**, a fit type of him whose priesthood and kingly state endure forever. **Who met Abraham.** See [Gen. 14:20](#). Abraham was returning from the pursuit of marauders who had captured Lot, his nephew. **Blessed him.** The “great father,” “the friend of God,” thus acknowledges his superior spiritual dignity. **2. To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all.** Tithes were paid to him as priest of the Most High. **King of righteousness.** Such is the meaning of Melchizedek. The word may not be the name, but a title. **King of Salem.** This means “King of Peace.” It will be observed that the payment of tithes for religious purposes is at least 400 years older than the Jewish law. See also [Gen. 28:22](#). **3. Without father, without mother.** See note on verse 1. **Nor end of life.** None as he appears in history. As far as he is revealed to us he is a living character, one that lives right on, **like unto the Son of God.** The Apostle does not affirm this was absolutely so, but that it is thus that Melchizedek appears on the back ground of early history. He abideth, in the Sacred Record, **a priest continually.**

4–10. How great this man was. When one so great as Abraham recognized his superiority by paying him tithes. **5. The sons of Levi.** The Aaronic priesthood, all of them of the tribe of Levi. **Take tithes of the people according to the law.** They require the enactment of the law in order to collect tithes of the people, their own brethren. The tithes are paid, not because of their great spiritual dignity, but because the law compels it. **6. But he whose descent is not counted from them.** Melchizedek, who was not of the blood of Abraham or tribe of Levi, received tithes of Abraham, not because of the law, but because of his transcendent dignity. **7. The less is blessed by the better.** Though Abraham had the promises of God Melchizedek, as the higher in spiritual dignity and nearer to God, blessed him. See

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Gen. 27:27–29. 8. Here men that die receive tithes. The Aaronic priesthood die, and the death of the high priest is a matter of record. Their mortality was a prominent feature, but in the case of Melchizedek, he who receives tithes **liveth** right on as far as the records tell us. We behold him only as a living priest, typical of a priest who liveth forever. **9. Levi also, who receiveth tithes.** The sacred tribe of Israel, the tribe to whom tithes are paid, paid tithes to Melchizedek. **10. He was yet.** All Israel, kings and priests, though yet unborn, were represented in Abraham. Hence Levi paid tithes, and thus confessed the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek.

11–17. The superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek to that of Aaron in dignity having been shown, the imperfection of the latter is next pointed out. **If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood.** If it effected the complete pardon of sins and made men holy. **What further need was there, etc.** If it gave all needful spiritual blessings there would be no need of another priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood would have been continued on forever. But a change of the priesthood has been predicted, as will soon be shown. **12. For the priesthood being changed.** The law as given “under the Levitical priesthood” ([verse 11](#)), and was all grouped around the priesthood as its very center. Of course, if the priesthood was changed the law of the old priesthood, the law of Moses, must go with it, and give place to a new law. **13. For he of whom these things are spoken.** Of whom an unchangeable priesthood is predicted. **Pertaineth to another tribe.** All the priests of the Jewish dispensation had been of the tribe of Levi, but Christ was not of this tribe. **14. Our Lord sprang from Judah.** In the genealogies as given by Matthew and Luke. The Messiah was to be the son of David. **15. It is yet far more evident.** Still more clear than that the new High Priest should be of the tribe of Judah. That could be shown by an argument, because it was affirmed (1) that the Christ was to be the Son of David; (2) David was of Judah; (3) The Christ was to be a priest. On the other hand, without argument, is the clear affirmation that there was to be a new priesthood, a priest **after the likeness of Melchizedek.** **16. Who is made, etc.** The Levitical priesthood based their claims on a **a carnal commandment**, a fleshly claim, that of hereditary right. Eleazer succeeded Aaron because he was his son, and so each high priest. **The power of an endless life.** The claim of the great high priest is not fleshly descent, but that he lives forever. He demonstrated his title to the office by rising from the dead. He was exalted to the kingly priesthood when he arose from the dead ([Eph. 1:20](#)). **17. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.** See [Ps. 110:4](#). This declares that the Christ shall be a priest, a priest forever, a priest not of the order of Aaron, but of Melchizedek; a priest-king whose office abideth continually.

18–22. A disannulling of the commandment going before. The old law and the Aaronic priesthood are abrogated because of their imperfection. They could not make men perfect. **19. For the law made nothing perfect.** The law was only a preparatory arrangement. It did not fit men for eternal life. **The bringing in of a better hope.** See the Revision. The

idea is: The law was disannulled and a “better hope” brought in, that of the gospel, by which we draw nigh unto God. **20. Not without an oath.** God never interposed an oath except to show certainty and immutability. Thus he swore to Abraham (*Gen. 22:16–18*); to the rebellious Israelites (*Deut. 1:34*); to David, that his seed should endure forever (*Ps. 89:4*). Since the same solemn assurance is given concerning the priesthood of Christ, the meaning is that it is immutable. **21. For those priests.** The Aaronic priests. Their priesthood did not rest upon an oath. Hence, it was not eternal; Christ's did, for God (see *Psa. 110:4*) gave it the sanctity of an oath. The solemn words are significant, “The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, etc.” **22. By so much.** By such solemn means was Jesus made a *surety*, the pledge and firm assurance. A surety is intended to secure absolute certainty. **A better testament.** Rather, covenant. Jesus became the pledge of the new covenant, the Gospel. God has established him as its high priest forever, by the sanctity of an oath. This is the line of argument.

23–28. Were many priests. Since they were removed by death there were in succession many Aaronic high priests. **24. But this man, etc.** Christ was victorious over death before he entered upon his priesthood; he lives forever, and hence, there is no change of his priesthood. **25. Wherefore he is able also to save, etc.** Because he is such a high priest, and hath the power of an endless life. He is not a frail mortal like us; and can save, in every extremity, all who approach God through his priesthood. **26. Such an high priest became us.** We need just such a high priest; one who hath no sins and is exalted above the heathen. He needs not to save himself, and hence is able to save. **27. Who needeth not daily.** The daily sacrifice was offered on the altar, under the direction of the high priest, for the sins of the whole nation, including himself. **For this he did once.** Instead of the daily offering for himself and others, Christ made but one offering, himself, when he died upon the cross. This offering was complete when he, as the high priest, ascended into the Holy of Holies above to intercede for the sins of his people. The perfect high priest had offered the perfect sacrifice and had dedicated the new and better covenant. Christ made his offering as a priest in “The true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” **28. For the law, etc.** The law puts imperfect men into the Aaronic priesthood. **But the word of the oath ... maketh the Son.** The spotless and Divine one who became an eternal priest.

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Chapter VIII

The Two Testaments

Summary — *Our Glorious High Priest. His Sacrifice. The True Tabernacle Above. Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant Imperfect. Removed to Give Place to the New.*

1, 2. This is the sum. The crowning truth. **We have such an high priest.** Such as has been set forth in the preceding chapters: sympathizing, sinless, unchangeable, mighty to save, divine. **Set on the right hand.** He has offered his sacrifice and sat down in the heavens at God's right hand. Concerning the significance of sitting at the right hand of God, see notes on [Ephesians 1:20](#). **2. A minister of the sanctuary.** Not of any earthly temple, but of the sanctuary above. **The true tabernacle,** the tabernacle made of God, whose Holy of Holies is in the heavens, of which the earthly tabernacle was only a feeble pattern. The earthly tabernacle had an outer court, with the altar, a holy place, and a Holy of Holies. These parts have been understood to be typical (1) of the world, from whence we pass by the altar of sacrifice, the blood of Christ into (2) the holy place, the church, and from the holy place the high priest passed beyond the veil into (3) the Most Holy Place, typical of heaven itself. There our high priest, having rent the veil that all in the church may follow, dwells and intercedes for us. There he presented his offering, the blood of his atonement.

3–7. For every high priest is ordained, etc. It is his appointment to offer gifts and sacrifices. That is his office. Hence, if Jesus is a High Priest, he must have an offering, but his offering must be presented in the true Holy of Holies above. **4. On earth, he should not be a priest.** The law required all the priests who served in the temple to be of the tribe of Levi, but he was not of the tribe of Levi, or of the priests appointed to serve at the altar, hence could not serve at an earthly altar, or in an earthly sanctuary. The law was in force as long as he was on earth and that excluded him. **5. Who serve unto the example and shadow, etc.** The service of the priests and of the temple is after the example of, and a shadowing forth of heavenly things. **See ... that thou make all things, etc.** A pattern was shown Moses. All must be made after that pattern ([Exod. 25:40](#)). Hence the tabernacle made according to that plan shadowed forth heavenly things. The earthly high priest was a type of the great high priest in the heavens. **6. Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry.** More excellent than that of the Levitical priesthood. He serves in the heavenly sanctuary. **Mediator of a better covenant.** The high priest was a mediator, interceding with God for the people. Christ is the mediator of the **better covenant** with its more glorious promises; viz., the Gospel. **7. For if that first covenant.** The covenant of Sinai, the Law of Moses, the Old Testament. It was *faulty* and could not make men perfect. See note on chapter 7:18.

8–12. I will make a new covenant. By the mouth of Jeremiah (31:31–34) the Lord declared that he would make a new covenant which would take the place of the old covenant. This shows that the old did not meet the full needs of men. **9. Not according to the covenant, etc.** It shall differ from the covenant of Sinai made while the Lord was leading Israel up from Egypt. **Because they continued not in my covenant.** Israel had broken the covenant, and been unfaithful. **10. This is the covenant that, etc.** This shall be a principle of the new covenant. **I will put my laws in their mind.** Under the new covenant the minds and hearts shall be given to the Lord and filled with his law. They shall “worship in spirit and in truth.” **Write them in their hearts.** Instead of upon tables of stone. **11. They shall not teach every man his neighbor.** Under the old covenant children were born into covenant relation. As they grew up they had to be taught of the Lord, or they would never know him. As a matter of fact, many did not learn to know him. But under the new covenant all must learn to know God and the Son whom he hath sent before they can enter the covenant. Every one must enter by faith in Christ, repentance of sin, and surrender to the will of God. Hence all members of the new covenant **know God, from the least to the greatest.** **12. For I will be merciful, etc.** When they enter into covenant relation through the Gospel every sin will be blotted out. **13. In that he saith, a new covenant.** This language implies that the other covenant, the one made at Sinai, is the old covenant. **That which ... waxeth old.** This language implies that the old covenant is to pass away. That it has done so is shown in the next chapter.



Chapter IX

The Old and New Testament

Summary — *The Tabernacle. Its Furniture. The Significance of Its Service. The Greater Tabernacle and Its High Priest. The Two Testaments. When the New Testament Came into Force. The Dedication of the First Testament. This a Pattern of Heavenly Things. Christ, Our High Priest, Hath Entered the Perfect Tabernacle.*

1–5. The first covenant had also ordinances of divine service. The two covenants, the Mosaic and the Christian, have been named in [chapter 8](#). Here they are contrasted. The first, or Mosaic, had its ordinances, and a **sanctuary**, or tabernacle of worship, in this world. **2. For there was a tabernacle made.** The tabernacle prepared at Sinai. See [Exod. chapter 26](#). **The first.** The first room, or division, called the holy place. **Wherein was the candlestick.** See [Exod. 25:31–40](#). It was made of gold and had seven lamps for burning olive oil. Our space will not allow a discussion of the symbolical meaning of the furniture. Also in the holy place was a table on which were kept twelve loaves of bread, called shew bread. This table was overlaid with gold. See [Lev. 24:5–9](#). **3. After the second vail.** The first vail was over the door into the holy place. The second vail separated the holy place from the Most Holy Place, with the innermost recess, the Holiest Place in the worship of Israel. **4. Which had the golden censer.** The critics are divided whether the word rendered **censer** refers to the golden censer or to the altar of incense. Both our versions have adopted censer, which is probably correct. In the golden censer was burned incense in the Most Holy Place, when the High Priest entered it once a year ([Lev. 16:12](#)). The altar of incense stood against the vail of the Most Holy Place. **The ark of the covenant.** See [Exod. 25:10–16](#). This chest, made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, was the most sacred thing in the tabernacle. **Wherein was the gold pot that had manna** ([Exod. 16:32–34](#)). **Aaron's rod** ([Num. 17:1–11](#)). **The tables of the covenant** ([Deut. 10:1–5](#)). The two stone tables of the law. All these but the tables had been removed before the temple was built ([1 Kings 8:9](#)). Many hold that they were *by* the ark, not *in* it. See [Deut. 31:26](#); [Num. 17:10](#). The ark itself disappeared when the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. **5. And over it the cherubim.** These symbolic figures, made of gold, hovered over the lid of the ark, called the mercy seat. **Cannot now speak particularly.** Cannot discuss the significance of each of these objects. The cherubim were angels. See [Gen. 3:24](#).

6–10. The priests go in continually. The present tense used in the Greek as in the Revision. The temple, which was a copy of the tabernacle, was still standing when the Epistle was written. **Into the first tabernacle.** Into the holy place. The priests went in every day in the service. **7. But into the second.** Into the second part, the Most Holy Place, none entered but the high priest alone, he only once a year at the feast of the atonement, and then carrying

the blood of the atonement, which he offered for his own sins as well as those of the people. See [Lev. 16:11–15](#); [Exod. 30:10–25](#). **The errors of the people.** Their sins of ignorance and mistakes. High handed, open defiance of God's law was not atoned for. **8. The Holy Ghost this signifying.** The divine arrangement, which suffered only the high priest to enter into the Holiest of all, signified that the way into the Holy of Holies above had not yet been made manifest or revealed to men. It required the Gospel to open the way. The vail was yet over the mystery of redemption. **While as the first tabernacle was yet standing.** So long as the first tabernacle or temple worship stood as the divine service, the true and living way opened up through Christ was not made manifest. Even the high priest himself could go to the “mercy seat” only once a year. **9. Which was a figure.** The Jewish rites were not the true and complete divine service but only figures, types. **Both gifts and sacrifices** were symbols. Nor could they make the worshiper **perfect**. They could not cleanse him from all sin, deliver him from all fear, and make his conscience clear. They were not perfect sacrifices but pointed to the perfect sacrifice. The Jewish sacrifices only removed ceremonial impurities and sins of ignorance. **10. Being only.** See the Revision, which is much clearer. They pertained to the flesh, were outward, did not renew the spirit, and were temporal, imposed **until the time of reformation.** That is, until the new covenant was ushered in. **Divers washings.** “Baptisms” in the Greek. Immersions of the whole body were often required in the Jewish service. For examples see [Exod. 29:4](#); [Lev. 16:4](#); [Num. 19:7](#); [Lev. 17:15](#), etc. These washings were all carnal ordinances for ceremonial purification.

11–14. But Christ being come. The tabernacle service having been described, Christ's work is now placed in contrast. **Through a greater and more perfect tabernacle.** The high priest below passed through the first tabernacle to the Holy of Holies; Christ, our high priest, through a greater one not made with hands, not a material building. What is meant? Various answers have been given, none of which are entirely satisfactory. It seems impossible to limit the meaning to his body, or to the church, or to the world, as some have done. Rather the reference is to the rites of the true and great tabernacle service by which “good things,” heavenly blessings are secured, in contrast with those of the earthly tabernacle. The earthly high priest, by complying with its rites, which were only a figure, entered into the Holiest of all; Christ by his sacrifice, the rites of the greater tabernacle service, entered into the true Holiest of all of which the earthly most holy place was only a symbol. It is shown in the [next verse](#) that the reference is to the sacrifice by which he entered. **12. By his own blood.** The high priest always carried into the Most Holy Place the blood of the atonement, but Christ carried his own blood when he entered the Holy of Holies above. **Obtained eternal redemption.** By his offering. His ransom was complete, and for all time. **13. For if the blood of bulls and goats.** This was shed for the purification of the people on the day of atonement. **The ashes of an heifer.** See [Num. 19:21](#). The red heifer was burned, the ashes were put in water, and this water sprinkled on the people for their ceremonial purification. **14. How**

much more shall the blood of Christ. If the blood of animals had any efficacy to purify, how much more the blood of Christ? **Through the eternal Spirit.** Led by the Divine Spirit. He was dragged to the sacrifice like the victims, but laid down his own life to take it up again. This he did as God's Anointed, anointed with the Spirit, acting by its power. **Your conscience from dead works.** Cleanse it from the guilt of works which deserve death. **To serve the living God?** If the sacrifices of the tabernacle cleansed from ceremonial pollution so that men could engage in its service, will not the blood of Christ cleanse you so that you can join in the acceptable service of the living God? **15. For this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant.** Covenant here rather than testament. *Diatheekee* means both "covenant" and "testament," but here "mediator" shows that covenant is referred to. **That by means of death.** His own death. **Transgressions that were under the first covenant.** None under the old covenant could have complete redemption except by the death of Christ. Those who served God under it offered sacrifices which were types of Christ's sacrifices, but they could not be made efficacious without Christ. It is by his death that **they which are called**, of every dispensation, have the **promise of eternal inheritance.**

16–17. For where a testament is. An inheritance has just been spoken of ([verse 15](#)). That suggests a last will and testament, one meaning of the Greek word *diatheeke* used in [verse 15](#). A testament has no force until the testator is dead. **17. Is of force after men are dead.** As soon as a man dies, his last will and testament comes into force, but has no force whatever while he lives. The application of this is that Christ's testament, the new covenant, came into force when he died. The old covenant was in force to the cross; it was then "nailed to the cross," and Christ having died, the New Testament came into force. It has been urged against this view that the making of wills was not a custom of Israel. It was, however the custom of the whole Roman Empire, and Judea was now a Roman province. The Roman customs had made provinces of the empire familiar with the use of wills.

18–22. Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. The death and shedding of the blood of Christ was necessary to the inauguration of the New Testament, as has just been shown. Even when the First was inaugurated, Christ died in type and blood was shed. I believe that the apostle means to say that even in the inauguration of the Old Testament death was necessary, the death of a victim, which pointed to Christ's death. **19. For when Moses.** For the events alluded to, see [Exod. 24:1–8](#). All that God had proclaimed in the ten commandments and the accompanying precepts ([Ex. 21–23](#)) was written in the book of the covenant. This was read to the people, and they promised obedience. Then the book and all the people were sprinkled with blood. **20. This is the blood of the testament.** The covenant had been dedicated by blood. It is well to note that this covenant embraced the Decalogue, yet it was the covenant done away to make room for the covenant of Christ. The tabernacle worship had not yet been set up. **21. Moreover he sprinkled with blood.** Afterwards, about a year later, when the tabernacle was ready, both it and its furniture were



sprinkled (Exod. 40:9–15; Lev. 8:24). **22. Almost all things.** See Lev. 16:16, 19, 33. Under the law almost every thing was purified by blood, lest it had been defiled. **Without shedding of blood is no remission.** Every sin under the law required atonement, and no atonement could be made without blood.

23–26. The patterns of things in the heavens. See chapter 8:5. The tabernacle and all its service were shadows. These were purified, as we have just seen, by blood. **The heavenly things with better sacrifices.** By the heavenly things are meant all of which the tabernacle was typical. The holy place was a type of the church, which is cleansed with the blood of Christ. Perhaps, too, there is a reference to the redeemed church above, in the heavens, which eternally praises him who cleansed it with his blood. **24. The holy places made with hands.** The tabernacle on earth. **Figures of the true.** Pictures, copies. **Into heaven itself.** The true Holy of Holies. There, in the presence of God, Christ intercedes for us, as the high priest below interceded before the Shekinah. **25. Nor yet, etc.** The high priest entered once a year with the blood of a victim. Not so Christ, our High Priest. **26. For then.** In that case he must have suffered many times. **But now once.** Only once did he offer sacrifice, viz., himself. **In the end of the world.** At the end of the Jewish dispensation; literally, “the end of the ages,” the end of the antediluvian, patriarchal and Jewish ages.

27, 28. As it is appointed unto men once to die, etc. The fixed order for all men is to die once only, and to be judged after death. When they die, finality is stamped, on their life work. **28. So Christ was once offered.** Died once as a sin offering. But judgment followed, and he was justified and vindicated by his resurrection. He died once, and after it was the judgment, that made him the King of glory. His work of redemption was done once for all. **So unto them that look for him.** All the saints who desire his appearing; to them he shall appear a second time, at his second advent, sinless and the mighty Savior. He becomes a sin offering but once, and appears the second time without a sin offering, because he hath done the work once and forever.



Chapter X

Christ's Sacrifice Offered Once for All

Summary —*The Imperfection of the Sacrifices of the Law. In Such Sacrifices God Had No Pleasure. Christ's Sacrifice Offered Once for All. The Holiest of All Opened by the Blood of Christ. Exhortation to Faithful Perseverance. If Christ is Rejected, No More Sacrifice.*

1–4. The Law. The law of Moses. **Having a shadow of the good things to come.** It did not contain the good things, but only the shadow of them. They were typified in the law but exist in the gospel. **Can never ... make the comers thereunto perfect.** That is, free them from sin, and thus perfect their consciences. **2. For then would they not, etc.** If the legal sacrifices secured complete forgiveness, they would not have been offered over and over. The fact that it was done showed that there was still a consciousness of sin. **3. There is a remembrance, etc.** Besides the daily sacrifices, and the individual sacrifices, there was repeated every year the atonement for the whole nation. There were daily, monthly, and yearly sacrifices. **4. For it is not possible.** The blood of bulls and goats, the animals offered in the sacrifices, had no power to cleanse from sin. In their essence the only real efficacy of the bloody sacrifices of the altar was the moral effect upon the people and the fact that they pointed forward to the Lamb of God.

5–10. When he cometh into the world. Since the Levitical sacrifices could not cleanse from sin, Christ, the Redeemer from sin, said when he entered upon his mission, **Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not.** Quoted from [Ps. 40:6–8](#). Since the sacrifices and offerings of the Jewish altar did not meet God's will. **A body hast thou prepared me** for an offering. This is Christ's offering. **6. In burnt offerings.** Burnt offerings were wholly consumed. See [Lev. 1:17](#). **Sacrifices for sin.** See [Lev. 4:1 to 5:13](#). They were so called because of their special reference to sin. In neither had God pleasure; that is, they did not fully meet his will. **7. Then said I, Lo, I come.** The Psalmist represents Christ, who comes simply to do the will of God, completely surrendered to his will. **In the volume of the book.** In the roll of the law it is written of me; that is, there I am predicted. **8, 9. Then said he.** He said, first, "The Levitical sacrifices do not please God;" then he said, second; **Lo, I come to do thy will.** This is pleasing to God. Hence **he taketh away the first**, the old covenant with its sacrifices, and establishes the **second**, the new covenant inaugurated by complete submission to the will of God. **10. By which will we are sanctified.** By this complete submission our sins are removed from us and we are made holy. The meaning of "sanctified" here is remission of sin. **Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.** In Christ's surrender his body was offered on the cross, **once for all** for sin, and by that offering our sins are remitted.

11–14. Every priest standeth daily ministering. Christ offered his sacrifice "once for all," but Levitical priests offer daily their sacrifices **which can never take way sins.** **12. But**



this man. Jesus, **after ... one sacrifice**, himself on the cross, **sat down**, which implies that he needeth to make no more offering. **On the right hand of God.** Honored forever. **13. From henceforth expecting.** Waiting until every enemy is conquered. See note on 1:13. **14. For by one offering**, that of the cross, **he hath perfected forever.** Given them perfect consciences free from a sense of the guilt of sin. **Them that are sanctified.** All Christ's brethren are sanctified (2:11); so are all whose sins are forgiven (verse 10, also verse 29); all saints are sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2); hence all Christians are called the "sanctified."

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15–18. Whereof the Holy Ghost is also a witness. It testifies that Christ perfects the sanctified. See, too, that it bears witness in words. He spoke in Jeremiah the prophet. **16, 17. This is the covenant, etc.** See [Jeremiah 31:33, 34](#); also notes on 8:10. **Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.** It is thus God "perfects the sanctified," by forgiving all their sins. **18. Where remission of these is.** Hence, since there is complete remission, no more offering for sin is required.

19–22. Having therefore, brethren, boldness. It has now been shown that Christ has, as our high priest, opened the way into the holiest of all, the heavens, for us. Hence we may follow with boldness. We have the assurance of heaven. **20. By a new and living way.** Christ is *the way*. The way for us is not only pointed out but opened through his flesh. His rent body poured out the redeeming blood, and thus the veil before the holiest of all was rent open that we might enter in. For us the rent veil is the body of Christ. **21. And having an high priest.** Our high priest hath opened the way by rending the veil. He is priest over the House of God, the church on earth, and our high priest in the Holiest of all above. **22. Let us draw near**, the altar of incense, the open veil, and to God who dwelleth in the Holiest of all. **With a true heart.** Sincere and pure heart. **In full assurance of faith.** Filled with trust in our high priest. **Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.** By the blood of Christ through which we realize that our sins are forgiven. **Our bodies washed with pure water.** See [Titus 3:5](#), and [Acts 22:16](#). Alford, Prof. Stuart, Delitzsch, Moll, Meyer and most commentators refer the passage to baptism. That is undoubtedly the thought of the sacred writer; the heart and spirit are cleansed by the blood of Christ and the body sanctified by washing in pure water, effecting the purification of the whole man.

23. Let us hold fast. The thought is, cling to the faith professed and the hope in the soul without wavering.

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24, 25. Consider one another. Let each care for others and exhort others to love and to do good works both by word and example. **25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves.** In times of persecution there was a great temptation to stay away from the church assemblies, and some had fallen into dangerous neglect. **As ye see the day approaching.** There were signs that the Hebrew Christians could see that *the day* was near at hand. They probably thought that Christ would come in person at that day. He did come in judgment on the Jewish nation. As that awful time of trial seemed near at hand they should be zealous in

exhorting each other. Macknight, Stuart, Milligan, Meyer and many others refer “day” to the destruction of the Jewish nation.

26–31. For if we sin wilfully. Deliberately trample under foot Christ's will; apostasize from the faith in life. **Remaineth no more sacrifice.** We have, in that case, rejected Christ, the only sacrifice for sin. **27. There remains instead a looking for of judgment.** Cut off from hope of salvation by rejecting Christ, one has only judgment and punishment to look forward to. **28. He that despised Moses' law.** He who wilfully rebelled against the law of Moses had no remission. When proved guilty by two or three witnesses his fate was death. See [Num. 15:30–36](#); [Deut. 13:6–10](#). There was mercy for the ignorant, the mistaken, those “overtaken,” but not for the deliberate despiser. **29. Of how much sorer punishment.** Where much is given much is required. How great the sin of the apostate! **Trodden under foot the Son of God.** Despised him instead of Moses. **Counted the blood of the covenant,** the blood of Christ, the blood by which he was **sanctified** (cleansed from the guilt of sin), treated this blood as if it was unholy. **Done despite unto the spirit of grace.** Rejected all the work, the words, the preaching, the pleadings of the Holy Spirit. **30. We know him that hath said.** We know what God hath said. He promises vengeance and judgment upon sinners. **Vengeance.** See [Deut. 32:35](#). **The Lord shall judge.** See [Deut. 32:36](#). **31. It is a fearful thing, etc.** A fearful thing for the sinner who has despised God's mercy; for the apostate who has trampled it under foot.

32–36. Call to remembrance the former days. Some former day of persecution, after they were **enlightened** (Revision) by the gospel. Possibly the great persecution at the death of Stephen is referred to, or that of [Acts 12:1–3](#). **33. Made a gazing stock.** Looked upon with reproach, abused and afflicted personally. **Companions.** Sharing the suffering of those who were persecuted. **34. For ye had compassion on them in bonds** (Revision). And actively showed their sympathy. **Took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.** The losses made necessary by becoming Christians. **Knowing.** Knowing that if they lost on earth they would gain in heaven. **35. Cast not away therefore.** In as much as formerly ye endured so well, be faithful now. Some great period of trial was evidently being endured. **36. For ye have need of patience.** Patience is an essential element of patient endurance. See [Rom. 5:3–5](#).

37–39. For yet a little while. Quoted from [Habakkuk, chapter 2](#), and applied to Christ. Soon Christ will come, either in person or by his providence, in such a way as to bring relief. He did thus come very soon after and ended Jewish persecution by the overthrow of the nation. This is a frequent sense of oft-repeated allusions to the coming of the Lord found both in the Old Testament and New Testament. See [Habakkuk, chapter 2](#). The passage there quoted refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and is here applied to the destruction by the Romans. **38. Now the just shall live by faith.** [Hab. 2:4](#). Those who continued to walk in the full assurance of faith ([verse 22](#)) shall live by faith. **If any man draw back.** He who draws back through fear, or because of trial, in him God hath no pleasure.

See [Ps. 5:4](#). **39. But we are not of them.** The apostle has confidence that the Hebrew saints are of those who “shall live by faith” rather than those who draw back to **perdition**. He that draweth back is lost.



Chapter XI

Living by Faith

Summary —*Faith Explained. The Faith of the Elders. Remarkable Examples of Ancient Faith. All Seeking for a Better Country. The Victories of Faith. The Sufferings Endured by Faith. Christians Exhorted to Follow These Glorious Examples.*

1–3. Faith is the substance. The old meaning of substance, as well as of *Hupostasis*, the Greek word here used, is “stand under,” that is to be a foundation. Faith is the foundation on which all our hopes for the future are built. **The evidence.** Rather, the conviction or persuasion of things not seen. Without faith we would be limited to the very narrow world comprehended by the senses. **2. For by it the elders, etc.** The ancient men of God, through faith, so lived, that they have obtained a good name. **3. Through faith we understand, etc.** The creation of the world is among “the things not seen,” and all our knowledge of it rests upon our faith in the word of God. Indeed, our knowledge of all past history depends upon faith.

4–7. Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. See the account of [Gen. 4:1–5](#). Abel's faith was probably shown in offering just such a sacrifice as the Lord demanded, while Cain made an offering according to his own ideas. **Obtained witness.** In some way the Lord testified his approval of Abel's sacrifice, and showed his disapproval of Cain's, perhaps by sending fire to consume Abel's. **By it.** By his faith. His faith speaks to all ages. **5. By faith Enoch was translated.** See [Gen. 5:24](#); also [Jude 14](#). His faithfulness was rewarded by a translation to heaven without first becoming a victim of death. **Had this testimony.** The testimony is that he “walked with God,” and God took him, because he was pleased with him. **6. But without faith it is impossible, etc.** Man cannot please God without faith because in unbelief he cannot do what is pleasing to God. To please God we must come to him in the appointed ways, but this cannot be done without belief in his existence and trust in his blessings. **7. By faith Noah.** See [Gen. 6:13–22](#). When he was divinely warned of a coming deluge he believed it, simply upon the word of God. Now observe how his faith acted. (1) He was moved by fear; (2) he prepared the ark as God had directed. His faith moved him to obedience. **Condemned the world.** The example of his faith was a rebuke to all who were not moved by it. The man who gives heed to God by his conduct condemns those who refuse to heed him. **Became heir.** It was by the obedience of faith ([Rom. 1:5](#)) that he became an heir of the blessings vouchsafed to those who are counted righteous through faith. See [Rom. 1:17](#).

8–12. By faith Abraham. See [Gen. 11:31](#); [12:1–4](#). While in Ur of the Chaldees he was commanded to go where he should be led. In obedience to this call he obeyed through faith, a striking example of the action of faith. **9. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise.**

He was a stranger in the land promised to him and his seed, dwelling as did Isaac and Jacob, in tents, yet trusting the promise of God. **Heirs ... of the same promise.** See [Gen. 26:3, 4; 27:4, 13, 14](#). **10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations.** Not only for a permanent home for his seed in Canaan, but for a home above in the eternal city, the New Jerusalem. **Builder and maker.** Architect and maker. God not only projected the plans of the eternal city but has executed them. **11. Faith also Sarah.** See [Gen. 17:15–21; 18:11–14; 21:1, 2](#). Far beyond the years of child bearing, yet by faith she was given natural strength to bear the child of promise. She was about ninety years old. **12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead.** From an old man, a hundred years old, whose reproductive powers were dead, a people. **As the stars of the sky in multitude.** See [Deut. 1:10](#). These figures are used to express a vast multitude.

13–16. These all died in faith. All the patriarchs named. They died without the fulfillment of the promises, either those of a temporal possession or of an innumerable seed. **Having seen them afar off.** They beheld them in the future by faith. **Confessed.** By their whole lives that they were pilgrims. They had no fixed home and were waiting for a country. **14. They that say such things.** Who confess that they are pilgrims. **Seek a country.** This confession shows that they are seeking a country somewhere and have not yet found it. **15. If they had been mindful, etc.** They could have returned to their old home in Ur of the Chaldees, if they had chosen, but though homeless in a strange land they had faith in a future home. **16. Desire a better country.** They desired a country better than Chaldea, better even than Canaan. They had a faith which looked for a heavenly country.

17–19. Abraham, when he was tried. See [Gen. 22:1–14](#). **Offered up his only begotten son.** Abraham stands as the great Old Testament example of faith, “the Father of the faithful,” the man “whose faith was counted for righteousness.” Hence his faith was tried by the sternest test of any Man of God on record, not that God might be certain of his faith, but that all his spiritual children should profit by his example. Note: (1) Isaac was the only child of his marriage; (2) he was the child of promise and by grace; (3) he was the heir, not only of Abraham but of all God's promises to Abraham. Yet Abraham was told to offer him. It was God's command. What a trial of faith! Yet, he believed, though he would not see how, that God would keep his promises, and that in “Isaac his seed should be called,” even though God raised him from the dead. Hence in faith he obeyed, and his faith was gloriously rewarded. The lesson for us is implicit obedience to God's command and trust in his promises. Nothing less is a demonstration of faith. **19. Received him in a figure.** As one who in his mind had been sacrificed. It was from the altar of sacrifice that he received him back.

20–22. By faith Isaac blessed, etc. See [Gen. 27:26–40; 28:2, 3](#). In the blessing there are prophecies of their future history. **21. By faith Jacob, when he was dying.** See [Gen. 48:8–22](#). In his blessing he foresaw that both Ephraim and Manasseh would be tribes of Israel, and that the younger would be the ancestor of the greater tribe. **Leaning upon the top of his**

staff (Gen. 47:31). The Hebrew word as originally written may mean either staff or bed, that on which one rests. In our English version of Genesis “bed” has been preferred. The *Septuagint*, followed here, says “staff.” It means that the sick old man raised from his couch and leaned his weight on his staff while conferring the blessing. **22. By faith Joseph.** See Gen. 50:24, 25. By faith he looked forward to the children of Israel going up to Canaan for a home, and charged that his body should be carried up. This charge was faithfully fulfilled. See Josh. 24:32.

23–27. By faith Moses. See Exod. 2:2; Acts 7:20. Through faith in God the parents were led to disobey the king's cruel edict, and to hide the child. **A proper child.** A promising child. **24. Moses ... refused to be called, etc.** He had faith in God's promises, and hence forsook his honored position, for the sake of his people. **25. Choosing rather.** There were honor, wealth and pleasure in the palace, but affliction with the enslaved nation. He chose the latter by faith. **For a season.** The pleasures of sin are transient. **26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ.** Any reproach endured through faith in the promises of which Christ was the center and sum, was called the reproach of Christ. This reproach, though men might shrink from it, was really of more value permanently than **the treasures of Egypt**, because he looked forward to the **recompense**, the heavenly blessings. **27. By faith he forsook Egypt.** The Exodus was all an achievement of faith. It was faith that made Moses disdain the king's wrath. **He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.** The unseen God was present with him by faith and his support gave strength to endure all.

28–31. Through faith he kept the passover (Exod. 12:3–30). He kept it because God commanded and he believed all God promised. **The sprinkling of blood.** The blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door posts. He not only believed that this would protect Israel's first born, but his faith went beyond the type to the Lamb of God. **29. By faith they passed through the Red Sea.** See Exod. 14:13–22. In obedience to God's command they marched into the sea and “were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:1, 2). **30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell.** See Josh. 6:8–21. **31. By faith the harlot Rahab.** See Josh. 2:1–22.

32–38. What shall we more say? All these cases are examples of heroic deeds and holy lives of faith. And the Scriptures are full of them; of such examples as **Gideon** (Judges 6:11); **Barak** (Judges 4:1); **Samson** (Judges 13:1); **Jephthae** (Judges 11:1); **of David also** (1 Sam. 16:1); **Samuel** (1 Sam. 1:20); **The prophets.** Many of these were illustrious examples of the power of faith. **33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms.** Some of those named subdued kingdoms, as Barak, Gideon, David. **Obtained promises.** Promises were made to many of the worthies named. **Stopped the mouths of lions.** The case of Daniel is the most remarkable. See Dan. 6:20. **34. Quenched the violence of fire.** See the case of “the Hebrew children” in Dan. 3:19–28. **Escaped the edge of the sword.** See 1 Sam. 18:10, 11. **35. Women received their dead raised to life again.** The widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17–24) and the Shun-

ammite (2 Kings 4:18–37) are examples. **Others were tortured.** This was especially true in the terrible persecutions recorded in the Book of Maccabees. **A better resurrection.** They preferred to suffer in hope of the resurrection to eternal life. **36. Others had trial of, etc.** This was true of many persecutions recorded in Jewish history. **37. They were stoned.** See 1 Kings 21:10–15; 2 Chron. 24:21. **Sawn asunder.** The Talmud says that this was Isaiah's fate. **38. Of whom the world was not worthy.** When it rejects the good it shows its unworthiness. **They wandered in deserts.** To hide from persecutors.

39, 40. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith. By the power of faith they lived holy and heroic lives, but all died without having seen the fulfillment of the promise of a Deliverer. **40. God having provided some better thing for us.** The new and better covenant, the gospel, the realization of the promise made to Abraham. **That they without us should not be made perfect.** That they and we together might be made complete in the city whose builder and maker is God. The full fruition, the being made complete (perfect) belongs to the heavenly state. All these ancient heroes, who died not having received the promise, needed the realization of the promise in Christ to make them perfect; by that promise we also are saved.



Chapter XII

Perseverance and the Christian Race

Summary — *How to Run the Christian Race. Enduring Affliction. The Lord's Chastisement of Children. The Lesson from the Case of Esau. The Terrors of Sinai Contrasted with the Gospel. Paying Heed to the Gospel.*

1–4. So great a cloud of witnesses. The vast cloud of witnesses named in chapter 11, who testify by their lives to the power of faith. **Let us lay aside every weight.** Every hindrance. The figure used is that of the Greek foot races in the games then practiced in every province of the Roman Empire, including Palestine. Before running the runner laid off every weight. **And the sin which doth so easily beset us.** Our besetting sin, whatever it may be. In the case of these Hebrew Christians the context shows that the besetting sin was unbelief. **Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.** Run the Christian race with steadfast perseverance. **2. Looking unto Jesus.** In running, Jesus should be constantly regarded as the example. **Finisher of the faith.** Not *our* faith, but *the* faith in the Greek. The Gospel, which rests upon faith, is meant rather than the individual faith of the saint. Jesus is its author and perfected it. He is the exemplar of all who live by faith. Hence we should look to him. **For the joy that was set before him.** The joy of saving men and of sitting at God's right hand. **Endured the cross.** Not only its pain, but its shame. It was in that age the most ignominious of deaths. **Set down at the right hand, etc.** In the place of heavenly honor. **3. Consider him.** When you become faint and discouraged by persecution, consider what Christ suffered from sinners. **4. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood.** Have not been persecuted unto death.

5–11. Ye have forgotten the exhortation, etc. Surely they must have forgotten, or they would bear their tribulations more cheerfully. **My son, despise not, etc.** This is quoted from [Job 5:17, 18](#). See also [2 Sam. 6:7–10](#). The thought is, Do not murmur at God's reproofs and chastenings. **6. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.** The chastening hand does not show the anger of God but his love. Every child is chastened and reprov'd for its good. **7. If ye endure chastening.** If you are called on to suffer, it shows that God is treating you as his children. **8. If ye be without chastisement.** Instead of that being a fact for congratulation it only shows that God does not regard you as children. You may call yourselves God's children, but you are not true sons. **9. We have had fathers ... which corrected us.** Every judicious father corrects his children in some way. Shall we not then submit cheerfully to the heavenly Father's correction? **Father of spirits.** Our earthly parents are the parents of our bodies; God is the creator of all spirits, and the author of our spiritual life. When we are born of the Spirit our new life is due to God and we are begotten as his children. **10. They chastened us.** For a little while earthly parents corrected as it pleased them, but God ever

watches us that we may be made holy. **11. Now no chastening, etc.** It is never pleasant to endure the chastening, but it afterwards benefits by the holier life it insures. In sorrow we naturally cling closer to God.

12, 13. Lift up the hands. See [Job 4:3](#). The thought is, shake off all weariness, all lameness, and push right on.

14–17. Follow peace with all. Live peaceful lives. **And holiness.** Pure and sinless lives. **Without which no man, etc.** Without a holy life no one shall be in fellowship with God. **To see the Lord** is to realize his presence with us. See [Matt. 5:8](#). **15. Looking diligently.** Being careful that no one lags behind and falls by the way so as not to reach the final reward. **Lest any root of bitterness.** Any bitter opposition, or element of disturbance causing members to sin. **16. Lest there be any fornicator.** Of course such a sinner would not live the life of holiness enjoined. **Or profane person.** A worldly person who profanes holy privileges by placing on them a worldly estimate. **Like Esau.** See [Gen. 25:27–30](#). He illustrates what is meant by a profane person. For a savory meal he bartered away a birthright bestowed by God. So any professing Christian who would sell his heavenly birthright for worldly advantages would be a profane person. **17. When he would have inherited the blessing.** See [Gen. 27:31–34](#). The spiritual blessing that belonged to the birthright was denied to Esau though he wept over the disappointment. **No place of repentance.** No way to correct the mistake and to secure the blessing. It was too late for this, since he had forfeited his birthright. The apostle holds up his case as a warning example.

18–21. For ye are not come unto the mount, etc. Ye should be diligent “for,” etc. Mount Sinai and the inauguration of the law are described. It was a mountain that could be **touched**, a mountain of earth. It burned on that occasion **with fire**. See [Exod. 19:12–19](#). **19. And the sound of a trumpet** ([Exod. 19:16](#)). The trumpet blast preceded the giving of the law. **The voice of words.** The voice of God proclaiming the Ten Commandments. **They ... entreated.** Filled with terror at the awful manifestation they entreated that God speak no more directly to them. ([Exod. 20:19](#).) **20. For they could not endure.** The command and penalty of [Exod. 19:12](#), added to their terror. **21. Moses said.** Even Moses was filled with fearful awe ([Exod. 19:19](#)).

22–24. Ye are come unto Mount Zion. The law was given at Sinai; the Gospel was to go forth from Mount Zion; that is, from Jerusalem. See [Ps. 2:6](#); [Joel 2:32](#); [Rev. 21:2](#). It is used as a type or symbol of the kingdom of heaven. **The heavenly Jerusalem.** This heavenly city is where our Lord dwells and is our eternal home. In coming to Christ we have come into the covenant which gives us the right to a place in that city. **An innumerable company of angels.** The angels of heaven. **23. General assembly and church, etc.** The universal church of Christ. The first born son in Israel inherited the birthright, but all the saints have the birthright and hence are called the first born. They are all enrolled, not on earthly registers, but their names are written in heaven. **To God the Judge of all**, who will inflict judgment

in behalf of the persecuted church. **The spirits of just men made perfect.** To the fellowship of all the sainted dead now perfected above. **24. To Jesus.** To fellowship with Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant as Moses was of the Old. **To the blood of sprinkling.** To Christ's atoning blood by which our hearts are "sprinkled from an evil conscience." **That speaketh better things than that of Abel.** Abel's blood cried for vengeance; Christ's pleads for mercy.

25–29. See that ye refuse not. The whole Old Testament shows that those who refused to listen to God's message delivered by men did not escape. How can those escape then who refuse to listen to God's own Son? **26. Whose voice then shook the earth.** At Sinai ([Exod. 19:18](#)). **But now he hath promised.** See [Haggai 2:6](#), which declares the removal of the heavens and earth at Christ's coming. **27. And this word, Yet once more.** This means, says the apostle, that there is only one more shaking after the time of Haggai. It is not a material, but moral and spiritual event. It began when Christ came and will continue until all that is temporal or erroneous be removed and only the eternal remains. Among the things removed is the covenant of Sinai. **28. Wherefore we, etc.** We Christians have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken and which is eternal. Hence should serve God with **reverence and godly fear** since we are called to so high an estate. **29. For our God is a consuming fire.** Because, while God is very merciful and loving, he will not overlook willful disobedience, but will destroy those who despise his commandments.



Chapter XIII

Closing Admonitions

Summary — *A Life of Love. Purity. Regard for Rulers. Stability. Christ Our High Priest and Example. Benedictions. Closing Salutations.*

1–3. Let brotherly love continue. The love which binds brethren in the church together. **2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.** Hospitality is a duty often emphasized in the New Testament. Here it assumes the form of receiving stranger saints. Often they were driven from their homes by persecution, and the church elsewhere was wont to open its homes to them. **Some have entertained angels unawares.** See [Gen. 18:1–3](#). Also [Matt. 25:35](#). **3. Remember them that are in bonds.** Another manifestation of brotherly love. The prisoners referred to are those imprisoned for Christ's sake. The Christian must enter into full sympathy with all his suffering brethren.

4–6. Marriage is honorable. Let it be held in honor, but licentiousness God will judge, even though men may tolerate it. **5. Let your conversation.** Your life. **Without covetousness.** Without manifesting a stingy or grasping spirit. **For he hath said** ([Josh. 1:5](#)). With such an assurance we may well be content with what we have. **6. So that we may boldly say.** The words which follow are quoted from [Psalm 118:6](#).

7–15. Remember them that had the rule over you. As the past tense is used, the rulers named, it is thought, were dead. At the date of this epistle, James the brother of John, and “James the brother of our Lord,” both so closely connected with the Jerusalem church, had suffered martyrdom. The last named, whose martyrdom is recorded by Josephus, was put to death in a.d. 63. **Whose faith follow.** Imitate it. **8. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, etc.** He is named as the end or object of the lives of the rulers just referred to. With them the unchangeable Christ was the all in all. Since he remains the same, he is as able to help you as he was to help them. **9. Be not carried about, etc.** Suffer no false teachers to delude you. **It is a good thing, etc.** Though more than thirty years had passed since the church was founded the temple service still continued, though the apostle has shown that it was done away in Christ. No doubt some of the Hebrew Christians had continued to observe its ceremonies. There were even teachers who taught “divers strange doctrines” concerning the need of keeping the law. The apostle, however, enjoins that **the heart be established with grace**, instead of resorting to sacrificial meats which had proved profitless to make the conscience perfect. **10. We have an altar.** We have no need of the temple altar for we have an altar, that on which Christ offered himself, to which those who cling to the tabernacle service have no right. Christ's altar implies the abolition of the tabernacle and the old covenant. Those who cling to these show their lack of faith in Christ. **11. The bodies of those beasts.** The sacrifices slain for a sin offering on the day of atonement. This blood was carried



by the high priest before the mercy seat, but the bodies were burned without the camp ([Lev. 16:27](#)), thus representing the penalty of sin. They were held to be accursed. **12. Wherefore Jesus also.** In order to cleanse his people by becoming the complete atonement he was willing, as an accursed thing, a sin offering, to be led **without the gate** and to suffer there. **13. Let us go forth therefore unto him.** Go forth from the unbelieving and rebellious camp which sent him forth to die. Let us follow him. **Bearing his reproach.** The reproach of the cross of Christ. **14. For here have we no continuing city.** The temple itself, and Jerusalem the city of their race, were about to be destroyed. They were all pilgrims seeking a city as their fathers did ([11:13–16](#)). They should then go forth like their fathers. **15. By him.** Through Christ. **Let us offer the sacrifice of praise.** We need no bloody victims, but let us bring the sacrifice of praise continually for our great salvation.

16–21. But. Thanksgiving is not all: there must be good deeds. **Communicate.** Give of our goods. **Such sacrifices.** These givings for God's purposes are sacrifices that please him. **17. Obey them that have the rule over you.** Your elders or bishops. **They watch for your souls.** Give them deference on this account, and because they must give account to the Master of those committed to their trust. **18. Pray for us.** Paul often makes this request. He refers to his uprightness of life perhaps because he had been arrested as an evil doer in Jerusalem. **19. I beseech you the rather** for your prayers that I may be the sooner released and returned to you. Paul had been torn away from Jerusalem, and finally sent to Rome as a prisoner. The language here implies the imprisonment of the writer. **20. The God of peace,** who gives us peace. **That great Shepherd.** Christ, “the Good Shepherd.” **Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.** The blood of Christ on the cross sealed the everlasting covenant of the Gospel of which the resurrection of Christ from the dead was the surety. **21. Make you perfect in every good work.** By supplying what is defective. **Working in you.** See [Phil. 2:13](#). God works in us by his Spirit.

22–25. Suffer the word of exhortation. Though the epistle in part is argumentative, even the argument is used to point the exhortation. **Written ... in a few words.** Few with what might be said on such great themes. **23. Our brother Timothy is set at liberty.** How intimately Timothy was associated with Paul all his epistles show. Timothy too joined him at Rome during his imprisonment. This language implies that Timothy had been arrested and afterwards set free. Of this imprisonment, or just where it occurred, there is no other history. **24. Salute all them, etc.** Salute for me the elders, and saints, at Jerusalem and in Judea. **They of Italy salute you.** The epistle was, therefore, written from Italy, which harmonizes with Paul's long imprisonment there.

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**The Epistle of
James**



Introduction to the General Epistle of James

This epistle stands first in order of seven which have been called “General,” from a very early period, because of the fact that they were not addressed, like those of Paul, to particular churches or individuals, in most cases, but to the churches generally. This is directed to “the Twelve Tribes of the Dispersion,” a dedication which shows that it was designed for the instruction of Jewish Christians scattered abroad among the Gentile countries. It was particularly appropriate that the man who is shown by the Acts of the Apostles and by the Galatian letter to have attained the highest influence in the churches of Judea should show his profound interest in the Christians of the Hebrew race by addressing this letter to the multitudes of kindred who had their homes in foreign lands.

Yet there has been some dispute about the personality of the James who wrote this letter. There are three distinguished disciples which bear that name: James, the brother of John, one of the sons of Zebedee, one of the Twelve; James, the son of Alphæus, also an apostle, called James the Less ([Mark 15:40](#)); and James, called by Paul in Galatians “the brother of our Lord,” the man who appears in Acts, [chapter 15](#), as wielding a pre-eminent influence in the church at Jerusalem. The epistle could not have been written by James, the brother of John, as he was slain by Herod ([Acts 12:2](#)) before its date. The authorship must be ascribed either to James, the son of Alphæus, or to James, “the Lord's brother.”

From the earliest ages the latter has been agreed upon as the writer. To this conclusion all the known facts point. He was a permanent resident of Jerusalem, and pre-eminent in the church; he seems to be the chief figure in “the Council of Jerusalem” described in Acts, [chapter 15](#); he was one of the pillars of the church ([Gal. 2:9](#)); hence he could speak authoritatively to the Jewish Christians scattered abroad. It has, however, been held by many that he is the same as James, the son of Alphæus, and a cousin of Christ, instead of a brother. The argument in favor of this hypothesis is ingenious. (1.) It is held that Mary never bore any children but Jesus, and hence that “the brethren of the Lord” were her nephews. (2.) That Mary, the wife of Clopas ([John 19:25](#)) was sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. (3.) That Alphæus and Clopas are different forms of the same name. (4.) That the brethren of Jesus, “James and Joses and Simon and Judas,” were the cousins of Jesus, and that at least two, James and Judas, were apostles (5.) This is supported by the fact that Jesus on the cross commits the care of his mother to John, which is held to prove that she could have no other sons.

In answer to this theory it may be said that (1.) it is improbable that the wife of Clopas was sister to Mary, a fact which would require two sisters to be of the same name. John names two pairs, Mary and her sister, and Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. The sister was no doubt Salome, the mother of John, named as one of the four women in the other gospels, and whom John omits to name from the same motives which prevented

him from ever naming himself. Hence John was the nephew of Mary, and this in connection with the fact that the brethren of Jesus were not then believers is sufficient explanation of John being assigned the duty of caring for the mother of Jesus. (2.) We are told positively that the brethren of Jesus were not believers, and this, too, in the closing portion of the last year of our Lord's ministry, a fact that clearly shows that none of these could have been of the number of the apostles. (3.) They are never called cousins of Jesus nor is there any proof that the Greek word which designates them as "brethren" is ever used in the sense of cousins in the New Testament. (4.) When these brethren had become believers, after the resurrection, they are distinguished from the Twelve ([Acts 1:14](#); [1 Cor. 9:5](#)), a fact which cannot be explained if at least two of the four were of the Twelve. It is true that in [Gal. 1:19](#) James is spoken of as an apostle, yet neither he nor Paul, the greatest of the apostles, was of the Twelve. These facts seem to me to clearly indicate that "James, the brother of the Lord," the author of this epistle, was not of the Twelve, and was a brother to the Lord Jesus in the sense that he was a child of Mary.

His prominence, however, in the early church may be gathered from the following references: [Acts 12:17](#); [Acts 15:19](#); [Acts 21:18](#); [Gal. 1:19](#); [Gal. 2:9](#); [Gal. 2:12](#). The New Testament is silent concerning his later history, but Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that shortly before the war that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, about a.d. 63, "Ananias, the high priest, assembled the Sanhedrim, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who is called the Christ, whose name was James, and some of his companions * * and delivered them to be stoned" (*Antiq. xx. 9:1*). He was allowed to remain until not long before the overthrow of the Jewish state, and was then removed. Though not requiring the Gentile Christians to obey the law, he continued to teach its observance to the Jewish Christians, and to regard Christianity not so much the overthrow of the old covenant as its fulfillment and perfection. In this respect he did not have a clear vision like Paul but was on this account perhaps the better fitted to lead his own nation to Christ.

The epistle was almost certainly written at Jerusalem, and probably during the last decade of the life of the writer, was addressed to Jewish Christians, is not doctrinal but full of practical instruction in the duties of life. There was some discussion among the Fathers whether it was entitled to a place in the Canon, but those doubts have mainly passed away.

Chapter I

On Temptations

Summary —*Rejoicing in Trial. Seeking Wisdom. Stability Urged. The Source of Temptation. The Fountain of All Blessings. Pure and undefiled Religion.*

1–4. James. See [Introduction](#) concerning the writer. He is called by Paul and by Josephus the brother of Jesus. **Servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.** It seems probable from the title assumed that James was not an apostle. With only a few exceptions the Epistles begin with a reference to the apostleship of the writer. **To the twelve tribes.** The Jews are often so designated. See [Acts 26:7](#). **Scattered abroad.** Rather “of the Dispersion,” a term applied to Jews outside of Judea. **2. Count it all joy.** Instead of murmuring over trials and temptations, rejoice in them. **3. The trying of your faith** by means of persecution and temptation **worketh patience**, rather, enduring fortitude. We are strengthened by trials overcome. **4. Let patience.** Let endurance not be merely passive, but have **her perfect work**; work out its complete results, that nothing may be wanting in your lives.

5–8. If any of you lack wisdom. This may be one of the wants. If so, go to God for it, **that giveth to all men liberally.** His people will hear, and in answer to their requests he giveth liberally, and never upbraideth on account of their requests as men so often do. **6. Let him ask in faith.** This is an essential condition to prevailing prayer. See [Matt. 21:21](#); [Mark 11:23](#). **He that wavereth.** Is undecided, of two minds. **Like a wave of the sea.** Driven hither and thither. **8. A double minded man.** A man of no fixed, decided purpose.

9–11. Let the brother of low degree. In the humble walks of life. **Exalted.** To be a child of God, a brother of Jesus Christ. **10. The rich, in that he is made low.** The one should rejoice in exaltation; the other in humiliation. He is taught that his riches have no power to save, and that his life is as uncertain as that of the grass of the field. **11. For the sun.** When the fierce sun of summer arises the grass in Palestine dies. Thus shall the glory of the rich man fade.

12–15. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation. He that endures and continues faithful shall have the crown. **13. Let no man say ... I am tempted by God.** Some men when they fall try to throw the blame on God, as if God had tempted them. It is impossible that God be tempted of sin, nor does he ever tempt men to sin, but: **14. But every man is tempted** when he suffers his own lusts to lead and entice him. There can be no temptation unless something within us causes a sinful desire. **15. When lust hath conceived.** The course of sin is described as that of a birth. The sinful desire is the conception; the sinful deed the birth; moral and eternal death the final result.

16–18. Do not err. Either about the source of sin or of all good gifts. **17. Every good gift, etc.** All gifts that truly bless us are God's gifts. **Father of lights.** God, the Creator of

every light of the material world, and the source of all moral light. **No variableness, etc.** God is unchangeable, always the same, nor does he cast a **shadow of turning** like the sun. The allusion is to the constantly changing shadows of objects in the sunlight caused by the movement, not of the sun, but of the earth. **18. Of his own will begat he us.** Not in caprice, but our birth as children of God was due to his eternal will. **Kind of first fruits.** The early converts are often called first fruits of the gospel.

19–25. Wherefore ... be swift to hear. Let each saint hear and learn, but be careful not to speak rashly, and especially in anger. **20. For the wrath of man.** An angry man will show forth something very different from God's righteousness. **21. Lay aside all filthiness.** Every impurity of life. **Naughtiness.** "Overflowing" of wickedness in the Revision. Wrath would cause such an overflow. **The engrafted word.** The word of God planted in your hearts. **22. Be ye doers.** He who is only a hearer **deceiveth himself.** See [Matt. 7:21–23](#). **23, 24. If any be a hearer ... not a doer.** The point of the comparison is this: Like a man who looks in the glass and soon forgets the impression, so the impression of the word on such a man is soon forgotten. The word must be impressed by the doing of it. **25. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty.** The gospel, which sets men free. He who looks into it, is impressed by it, and obeys it shall be blessed in the doing.

26, 27. If any ... seemeth to be religious. He who professes religion and yet does not control his tongue is deceived. Unless he has grace enough to rule the unruly member, he has not enough for salvation. **27. Pure religion and undefiled.** Combining pure hearts and pure outward lives. This genuine religion has two elements: (1) Kind and loving deeds, exemplified especially in helping the helpless, such as widows and orphans, and (2) living pure, unsullied lives, unstained by the sins prevalent in this sinful world.

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Chapter II

Faith and Works

Summary — *Respect of Persons. The Royal Law. He Who Keeps the Law Must Offend in Nothing. Faith not a Living Faith if Alone. Its Life Must Be Shown by its Fruits. It is Perfected by Obedience. The Lesson of Abraham's Faith.*

1–4. Have not the faith of our Lord. The Gospel, the Christian profession. **With respect to persons.** God is no respecter of persons ([Acts 10:34](#)), nor should Christians be. God respects character, not dress, or wealth, or earthly rank. **2. Come into your synagogue.** See Revision. The place of worship, whether Jewish or Christian. James, a Jewish Christian of the strictest sort, uses the Jewish term. **With a gold ring.** An indication of wealth in that age, especially in connection with the fine clothing. **A poor man,** as shown by his mean clothing. **3. And have respect.** Show respect not to the character but to the clothes, by giving one a welcome and a good seat, while the other is treated contemptuously, allowed to **stand** or to sit in a very uncomfortable place. Does not this describe the spirit of half the churches of our time? **4. Are ye not then partial?** Show partiality from outward appearance. **Judges of evil thoughts.** Judge between the two men under the influence of evil thoughts.

5–9. Hath not God chosen the poor, etc.? Ye choose out the rich for favor, but God hath chosen in most part the poor to be **rich in faith, etc.** See [1 Cor. 1:16, 17](#). God has made poor men heirs of the eternal inheritance. **6. But ye have despised the poor.** Those whom God accepts you reject. **Do not rich men oppress you?** The oppressors of the poor are usually the rich. They are the money lenders, those who bring suit for debt, and hence draw the poor before the **judgment seats.** Perhaps also there is an allusion to the fact that they were the persecutors. **7. Do not they blaspheme that worthy name, etc.** The name of Christ. There is an allusion either to the fact that they were already called Christians, or that they were baptized in his name. **8. The royal law according to the scripture.** The law of love for one's neighbor, which is the fulfillment of the law. See [Gal. 5:14](#). **9. But if ye have respect to persons.** Such partiality as that described in [verse 3](#) would break this law, and hence would be a sin, and the sinner would be convicted as a transgressor.

10–13. Whosoever shall keep the whole law. If the law is broken by “respect of persons,” the whole law is broken. He who willfully breaks one command is a law breaker and is guilty before the law. **11. He that said, etc.** He that gave one command, gave the other commands. If you break any one of them, you sin against the Divine Lawgiver. **12. So speak ye.** So act as one judged by **the law of liberty.** The Gospel, which is not a law of outward compulsion, but of a new and willing spirit. See [Rom. 8:2, 15](#). **13. He shall have judgment without mercy.** We must show mercy if we expect mercy. Our own spirit determines our manner of judgment. See [Matt. 6:15](#). If we love our neighbor, God will love us.

14–18. What doth it profit. Professions are nothing unless their fruit is deeds. Even faith is of no avail unless it demonstrates its life by works. **15. If a brother.** A practical application is now made of the royal law. **Be naked.** Insufficiently clothed. **16. Depart in peace.** Express to the needy only kind wishes; that he be warmed by receiving good clothing and fed by food being provided. Such good wishes are worthless unless followed up by active help to the sufferer. **17. Even so faith.** Faith that has no power to bring one to obedience and to sway the life is as worthless as good wishes which end in words. **Being alone.** It cannot stand alone and be of any avail. Only when it shows its power in works is it of the slightest value. **18. A man may say.** One may claim works, another faith. They must go hand in hand. One cannot show faith without works. The life lived is the proof of the faith held. If a man lives in obedience to Christ that is proof that he has faith in Christ.

19. Thou believest that there is one God. That is very well, but can that alone save you? Even the demons believe that also. See [Matt. 8:29](#). Evil spirits confessed Christ, but this confession of faith did not save them.

20–24. But wilt thou know, etc. “I will show by proof that the faith that justifies produces works by the case of Abraham, the great father of the faithful.” **Faith without works is dead.** It has no power to make alive unless it has power over the life. **21. Was not Abraham our father.** The father of the Jewish race; also the father of all his children by faith. See [Gal. 3:7–9](#). **Justified by works.** By a faith which showed itself in works. This is the argument of James, that faith is of no avail unless accompanied by works. Of this all Abraham's life was a demonstration. He was told when in Mesopotamia to go forth into the land God would show him, and “he went forth, not knowing whither;” an act of faith ([Heb. 11:8](#)); “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise” ([Heb. 11:9](#)). Each of these acts of faith secured Divine approval, but the supremest trial was when he offered Isaac. See notes on [Heb. 11:17](#). This victory of faith was followed by crowning approval and glorious promises. **22. Seest thou how faith wrought.** Abraham's faith was a working faith. **By works was faith made perfect.** The element of works is essential to make it complete. Without works it is an imperfect, “a dead faith.” It must have energy to avail. Abraham's faith “wrought.” **23. And the scripture was fulfilled.** The scripture quoted is [Gen. 15:6](#). The case of the offering of Isaac was a complete outward demonstration that Abraham believed God, as the Scripture said. “He was called the friend of God.” Honored as no other mortal had been. See [Isa. 41:8](#), and [2 Chron. 20:7](#). The Mohammedans still call Abraham *El Khalil*, “The Friend.” **24. Ye see then, etc.** The case of Abraham proves that the justifying faith is a working faith.

25, 26. Rahab the harlot. See notes on [Heb. 11:31](#). This is one of the long roll of examples of faith shown by works given by Paul. **26. For as the body without the spirit.** The body is a lifeless, dead thing, without the spirit. So lifeless is faith it shows an energy in works.

Note. —Some have thought, among these Luther, that Paul and James were not in agreement on the subject of faith. Those who thus conclude mistake both these inspired



men of God. Paul shows that works without faith will not justify, and hence lays the emphasis on *faith*; James shows that faith without works will not justify, and lays the emphasis on *works*. Neither teaches that faith alone, or works alone will justify. Paul, indeed, shows that faith alone is worthless ([1 Cor. 13:2](#)), and in [Hebrews, chapter 11](#), he emphasizes works as the demonstration of faith. The two writers are in agreement, and all seeming disagreement is due to the fact that they are seeking to correct different errors, and hence look at the matter from different points of view.



Chapter III

The Control of the Tongue

Summary —*Aspiring to Teachership. The Power of the Tongue. Its Untamable Nature. Its Contradictory Uses. Wisdom Shown in Its Proper Control. The Wisdom from Above Described.*

1, 2. Be not many masters. Do not many of you seek to be teachers. The office of public teaching in the church is meant. **Shall receive the greater condemnation.** Those who profess to teach others will be judged more strictly than those of humbler professions. Of those who have much, much is required. See [Matt. 7:1](#). A lesson is to be given on the tongue. He who teaches will be held strictly to account for the manner in which he uses it. **2. For in many things.** All are liable to stumble and make mistakes. These can hardly be excused in the teacher. **Same is a perfect man.** He who controls his tongue gives proof of his ability to maintain entire self control.

3–5. We put bits. The word **bridle** ([verse 2](#)) suggests a figure. The bridle bit controls the whole horse. **4. Behold also the ships.** These are controlled by so small a thing as the helm. **Governor.** Helmsman. James abounds in the sea figures. See [1:6](#). **5. So the tongue.** Though so small it can control the body like a bridle, or the helm of a ship. It is a power. **Boasteth great things.** Claims great powers. **How great a matter ... fire.** As a spark may burn a house, a little thing like the tongue may stir up great trouble.

6–8. The tongue is a fire. It will kindle up anger. A word often causes a war. **A world of iniquity.** It can stir up a world of sinfulness. The tongue moves man and he makes the world a world of sin. **It defileth the whole body.** Leads all the body into sin. **Setteth on fire the course of nature.** Literally, “wheel of nature.” The idea is probably “putteth nature in a blaze,” referring to the wars and commotions due to its influence. **Set on fire of hell.** It is often inspired by hell itself. A bad tongue is the organ of the devil. **7. Every kind of beasts.** “Every nature of beasts,” literally. Four orders are named: **beasts**, or quadrupeds, **birds**, reptiles, in the Greek “creeping things,” and fishes, or “things in the sea.” All of these have been subjected and controlled. **8. But the tongue can no man tame.** Man has never tamed this organ as a whole. Some may have ruled their own, but the organ itself still does its evil work in the world. **It is an unruly evil.** Not only an evil, but unruly. Generally used. **Full of deadly poison.** Often charged with malice, envy, anger, slander, etc.

9–12. Therewith bless we God. Its opposite uses are shown. We use it to pray and to bless God, and, sometimes, the same tongue will be used to curse his creatures. James rebuked evils that he had observed. **10. Out of the same mouth.** These utterly inconsistent things come out of the same mouth. **11. Doth a fountain.** In nature such incongruity is not shown. A fountain does not give out two kinds of waters. **12. Can the fig tree.** Neither does a tree

bear two opposite kinds of fruits. Nor should the mouth bear blessing and cursing, good and evil.

13–16. Who is a wise man? Discreet and well informed? It must be shown in **conversation**, that is, in life, both words and deeds, **meekness of wisdom**. True wisdom will not speak boastfully. **14. Glory not.** If there is bitterness in the heart, let there be no boasting of your goodness. That would be to **lie against the truth**. **15. This wisdom.** Wisdom (not real wisdom but false) which gives rise to envy and strife is not from heaven. It is **earthly**, of the passions, of the devil, not of God. **16. For where, etc.** Where these exist in the heart every evil work will follow.

17, 18. But the wisdom that is from above. The divine wisdom imparted by communion with God is put in contrast with the false, sensual wisdom named in [verse 15](#). It is **first pure**. The other is sensual; this is pure. **Then peaceable.** The other is full of strife, this seeks for peace. **Gentle.** Not too rigid and exacting. **Easy to be entreated.** Not obstinate, but capable of persuasion. **Full of mercy.** Not unforgiving and unkind. **Good fruits.** The other shows evil works; heavenly wisdom is full of good fruits. **Without partiality.** Not a respecter of persons. **Without hypocrisy.** Sincere. **18. The fruit of righteousness.** This wisdom not only bears righteousness as a fruit but sows this fruit as seed to produce peace. **Them that make peace.** These sowers are peacemakers. See [Matt. 5:9](#). Sowing righteousness makes peace, because wrong is the fruitful mother of strife.



Chapter IV

Control of the Passions

Summary — *Strifes from the War of Passions. Fornication with the World. Seeking the Grace of God. Humbling Ourselves Before the Lord. Evil Speaking of Brethren. The Uncertainties of this Life.*

1–3. Whence come wars and fightings? Peace has been spoken at [close of chapter 3](#), but the world is full of strife. Whence is it? James shows it is due to human passions. **Among you?** James was so Jewish, though a Christian, that sometimes he looked beyond the church to his fleshly brethren. He here seems to address them like another Amos, or Jeremiah. **Even of your own lusts.** They are due to insatiate desires. **2. Ye lust, and have not.** This inordinate desire unsatisfied leads to murder, or to hatred and envy, which are murder in embryo. Even then not obtaining they **fight and war** in order to satisfy their greed. Still they are not satisfied. They should have humbly gone to God with their reasonable requests, but the lustful cannot truly pray. **3. Ye ask, and receive not.** Some even have prayed for the things which would satisfy their lusts, but God hears not such prayers.

4, 5. Ye adulteresses. Adulterous spouses of Christ who commit fornication with the world. It is spiritual adultery that is meant. **The friendship of the world.** Since the prince of this world is opposed to Christ and the spirit of the world is also opposed, one cannot love the ways of the world and love God also. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” ([Matt. 6:24](#)). **5. That the scripture saith in vain** The reference is to [Deut., chapter 32](#), where God's love and jealousy of his people are described. **Long unto envying.** Long for our love even to the envy of the worldly objects which have secured it. The Revision suggests the idea, which harmonizes with the thought in [verse 4](#). A freer translation will make it plainer. “The spirit that he (God) hath placed in us desireth us jealously,” that is, desires we should not commit adultery with the world, but be wholly devoted to God, as those espoused to God in Christ, and even envies the world which has secured our love.

6–10. God giveth more grace. To enable us to overcome our love of the world. **Wherefore the scripture saith.** Quoted from [Prov. 3:34](#). The passage is quoted to show that the way to secure grace more abundantly is to be humble before the Lord. **7. Submit yourselves therefore to God.** To secure his grace abundantly. **Resist the devil, etc.** He always flees before stout resistance. See the Temptation of Christ. If not hurled back, he presses the attack. **8. Draw nigh to God.** If we wish God very near to us we must seek to dwell very near to him. Only sin keeps us afar off. **Cleanse your hands.** Of evil doing. **Purify your hearts.** Of evil thoughts. **9. Be afflicted, and mourn.** Mourn over your sins and sincerely repent of them. **10. Humble yourselves.** “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted” ([Matt. 23:12](#)).

11, 12. Speak not evil one of another. The subject of the tongue is resumed. To speak evil is to make harsh, censorious judgments. **Speaketh evil of the law.** The “royal law” requires love of a brother, and when this law is thus violated by a harsh judgment the law itself is condemned. But when a man sets himself up as a judge of the law he is no longer an humble and faithful doer of the law. **12. There is one lawgiver.** The lawgiver is God, the Almighty. Shall man judge him? **Judgeth another?** In disobedience to God who made the law which forbids it.

13–17. Go to now, ye that say. Presumptuous judgments have just been rebuked. Shall we presume on an uncertain future? The folly of laying plans as if we could command life is exposed. **14. What is your life?** Who knows that he will have a to-morrow, since life is like a vanishing vapor? **15. Ye ought to say.** The proper way is to plan everything subject to the Lord's will. **16. Ye rejoice in your boastings.** It was a boastful manner to use such a language as that of [verse 13](#) in stating plans. **17. To him that knoweth to do good.** The connection of thought is probably as follows: “I have warned you that such boasting is wrong, and that the right way is to speak submissively (as in [verse 15](#)). If you know how to do the right and yet do it not the sin is the greater on account of your knowledge.”



Chapter V

Warnings to the Rich

Summary — *The Sins of Rich Men. The Judgments Coming Upon Them. Patience Under Affliction. The Examples of Job and Elijah. Healing the Sick. Effectual Prayer. Restoring Sinners.*

1–6. Go to now. The same expression is used in [4:13](#). There it is a rebuke to those who haste to be rich; here to those who use riches wickedly. **Ye rich men.** James looks beyond the church of his day to be his nation and to the church of after time. **Weep and howl.** Because of coming judgments for your sins. **2. Your riches are corrupted.** Even their riches in which they trusted are “corrupted,” or spoiled. Much of the wealth of that period was in stores of various kinds which time or improper care would destroy. **Your garments are moth-eaten.** The rich gathered great stores of garments, carpets, etc. See [Matt. 22:11, 12](#). These would be liable to be eaten by moths if not used. **3. Your gold and silver are cankered.** Rusted from disuse. These metals do not literally rust, but do tarnish from long disuse. The idea is that they show they have been hoarded, not used. **A witness against you.** The tarnish shows that you have hoarded instead of using. **Shall eat your flesh.** They shall punish you, as though heated by fire and eating into your flesh. This hoarded wealth will curse the possessor. **Ye have heaped ... last days.** Instead of laying up treasure in heaven you have continued to pile up earthly treasure to the last, a matter of extreme folly. What James then thought of as “the last days,” the end of his nation, country and Jerusalem, was close at hand. **4. Behold, the hire of the laborers.** These rich men are censured for two sins; viz., the improper use of wealth, and the sinful acquisition of wealth. The Bible is everywhere the friend and protector of the laborer. To keep back the hire of the laborer is denounced everywhere. See [Lev. 19:13](#); [Deut. 24:14](#); [Jer. 22:13](#); [Mal. 3:5](#); [Job 24:6](#). **The cries of them.** Of the defrauded laborers. God will avenge them. **5. Ye have lived in pleasure.** Have spent your wealth on your own pleasures. **Nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.** The meaning is not entirely clear. Probably it is an allusion to the beasts which are fatted and feasted for slaughter and food. They were feasting and engaging in pleasure when the awful destruction was near. **6. Ye have condemned and killed the just.** The murder of the Just One, Jesus, was the crowning sin of Israel which brought upon them destruction. It was the rich and influential, not the poor, who sought his death. **He doth not resist you.** Compare [Isaiah 53:7](#).

7–9. Be patient, therefore, brethren. James now turns from the rich, wicked Jews, to his suffering brethren. Let them be patient. **Unto the coming of the Lord.** That would bring relief. The primary reference is to the relief from Jewish persecution which followed the Lord’s coming in judgment on the Jewish nation. **Behold, the husbandman.** The tiller of the soil has to sow and wait long in patience for fruit. Be you like him. **Early and latter rain.** The early rain was the November showers which prepared the ground for the seed; the latter



rain, the spring showers needed to bring the harvest to maturity. Compare [Deut. 11:14](#). **8. Be ye also patient.** Wait, like the husbandmen, for your harvest of joy. **The coming.** The relief which the Lord's coming will bring is near. See note on verse 7. **9. Grudge not.** Do not bear grudges against one another. The Lord will condemn this, and the **judge standeth before the door**, for the "coming of the Lord is nigh."

10, 11. Take, my brethren, the prophets. They suffered, were patient, endured to the end and secured the blessing. **11. We count them happy which endured.** We believe of them that all such have had a final reward. **Ye have heard of the patience of Job.** The enduring patience, which refused to distrust God, is meant. **The end of the Lord.** The conclusion in the case of Job wrought by the Lord, and how his endurance was blessed. The blessing that came on him is a demonstration that **the Lord is very pitiful, and full of tender mercy.**

12, 13. Above all things, swear not. This verse is an appropriation of [Matt. 5:33–37](#), the words of Christ. See notes there. Swearing is a besetting sin of the East unto this day. **13. Is any among you afflicted?** Let him not swear, or engage in any improper use of the tongue, but **let him pray.** God is the Helper in such an hour. **Is any merry?** Let his joy be shown, not in wanton speech, but in singing praises. Prayer and thanksgiving are the appropriate expressions for each condition.

14–16. Is any sick among you. In the early church, when miraculous gifts were imparted by the laying on of apostolic hands "as a sign to unbelievers," one of these was the gift of healing. In most early churches founded by the apostles some one of the elders would have this gift. There is no more reason for the descent of this gift to our times than of any other miraculous power. This passage, then, describes what was peculiar to the early church. The sick were anointed by the elders with oil, a symbol of the Spirit, which effected the healing, hands were laid, and prayer offered. See [Mark 6:13](#); also [Isaiah 1:6](#), and [Luke 10:34](#). **15. The prayer of faith.** The prayer for the sick must be offered in faith to be effectual. **If he have committed sins.** Often our sickness is due to sins against our body. The Lord, who raises the sick in answer to prayer, will forgive these. **16. Confess your faults.** This verse springs from the [preceding](#). We all need healing of our sins. Let the brother confess his faults as a demonstration of repentance and let brethren pray for each other. Repentance, confession and prayer are the conditions of the forgiveness of sins committed by church members.

17–20. Elias was a man subject, etc. The [last verse](#) has affirmed the power of the prayer of a righteous man. An example of its power is now given. Elias was a man like ourselves, yet great results followed his prayer. See [1 Kings 17:1](#), and following chapters. **He prayed earnestly that it might not rain.** No mention is made in the Old Testament of this prayer, but it is announced prophetically. He prayed, either before or after, that rain might be withheld until Israel repented. **Three years and six months.** See [Luke 4:25](#). In the Old Testament the time is not exactly stated. "In the third year" the Lord spoke to Elijah about rain, but we are not informed whether the beginning of the "third year" was when rain

ceased to fall, or when he went to Zarephath. It is probable that the latter is meant. **18. And he prayed again.** See [1 Kings 18:42](#). This prayer was on Mt. Carmel after the trial which ended in the overthrow of the priests of Baal, and was followed the same day by rain. **19. If any one of you do err from the truth.** If a brother is led away from the gospel. One might be led into false doctrine, or into false practice. **And one convert him.** Bring him back from his errors and restore him. **20. Let him know.** As an inducement to engage in this work of love let him know how great a work has been done. **Save a soul from death.** Not physical but eternal death. **Hide a multitude of sins.** The sins of those forgiven are said to be covered or hidden. This passage means that all the sins of the restored sinner, though many, shall be blotted out. See [Ps. 32:1](#).

**The First Epistle General of
Peter**

Introduction to the First Epistle General of Peter

Simon Peter, the author of this epistle, was by profession a Galilean fisherman, the son of Jonah, the brother of Andrew, who first brought him to Christ, and associated in business with the sons of Zebedee. When he first appeared his home was at Bethsaida, on the north-west shore of the sea of Galilee, but at a later period “the house of Andrew and Peter” was in Capernaum, a city distant only a mile or two from Bethsaida. Like almost all the early followers of Christ he was a disciple of John the Baptist, by whom he was pointed to the Lamb of God. A little later he was called from his nets, and, along with his brother and the sons of Zebedee, he left all and followed Jesus. Henceforth, during the ministry of the Saviour, he appears in the front ranks of the disciples. Chosen to be an apostle he was one of the three who were drawn more closely to Jesus, who were present when our Lord raised the dead maiden at Capernaum, saw the wonders of the Transfiguration, and were taken into the Garden of Gethsemane to witness its awful and mysterious agony.

Always impetuous, it was Peter who first answered the great question of the Savior at Cæsarea Philippi, who leaped from the boat on the wave to walk to his Master, who so vehemently declared that he of all men would never deny him, who drew his sword to defend him, but who denied him thrice in the palace of the high priest, and then went forth to weep so bitterly over his failure in the moment of trial. He, with John, was the first of the apostles who appeared at the empty tomb, as well as the first of them to whom the risen Lord appeared. Fully forgiven and restored at the sea of Galilee ([John, chapter 21](#)), when the work of founding the church and preaching the Gospel under the Great Commission began, Peter for years was the most prominent of the apostolic band. It was he who came to the front on the day of Pentecost, and his bold, aggressive leadership during the earlier years of the church in Judea is unmistakable. More than once he was seized, threatened, imprisoned, and when his fellow-worker, James, the brother of John, was put to death, Peter would have shared his fate at the hands of Herod, had there not been a divine deliverance.

As years pass the notices of Peter in the New Testament history are less frequent. He was in Jerusalem when Paul came there from Damascus ([Gal. 1:18](#); [Acts 9:26](#)); and also fourteen years later at the council of Jerusalem ([Acts, chapter 15](#); [Gal. 2:9](#)), and Paul met him again at Antioch ([Gal. 2:11](#)), the first time he appears elsewhere than in Judea. After this it is only his epistles which give us hints of his further life and labors, but it is evident from these and the traditions of the early church that as an “apostle of the circumcision” he finally turned from Judea to evangelize his own race in other lands.

This brings us to the questions of the *Persons* addressed in this epistle, the *Object* in writing to them, and the *Place* from whence he wrote. Our limits allow only the briefest answers. (1.) It was directed to “the Sojourners of the Dispersion,” who lived in five provinces of the Roman empire, all of which had been evangelized by the apostle Paul. See [1 Peter](#),

[chapter 1](#). The Dispersion was a term applied to the Jewish race in lands outside of Judea. Hence, not forgetful of his apostleship to the circumcision ([Gal. 2:8](#)) he addressed himself to Jews, but Jewish Christians, “the elect.” (2.) His object was apparently to encourage them to press on courageously under trial and persecution. See [chapter 4:12](#). This encouragement and exhortation is set forth in an impetuous torrent which is thoroughly characteristic of the impetuous Peter. His style is lively, energetic, and pleasing, if somewhat wanting in the logical connection and precision of the great apostle to the Gentiles. An indirect object of Peter in writing was, doubtless, to give his support to the authority of Paul. The churches addressed were founded by Paul, but in them had subsequently appeared Judaizers (see [introduction to Galatians](#)) who had sought to undermine his authority. Peter recognizes the work, and his teaching is an indirect endorsement of Paul. It served to show the Jewish Christians that the two great apostles were in harmony. (3.) One question remains, *where* was the epistle written? [Chapter 5:13](#) shows that Peter was at Babylon at the time. It seems strange that there should be any question in view of the fact that in all the ancient world, the word *Babylon* without any other explanations always mean the great city on the Euphrates, or the territory adjacent, which took its name from the city. True, its former greatness was gone, and it was a Roman province, but it had been the home of tens of thousands of the Circumcision, the class to whom Peter directed his labors, ever since the Captivity. We know that in the latter part of the first century and in the second the Rabbinical schools of Babylon vied in importance with that at Tiberias, and that “the Prince of the Captivity” was a formidable potentate for a subject. It is opposed to all the facts of history to contend that there was not, at the date of this epistle, a great Jewish population on the banks of the Euphrates, and an indefinite passage of Josephus belonging to a period a generation earlier, would never have been used for this purpose had it not been that it is essential to the argument of the Papacy to give Peter a long residence at Rome. It is equally out of the question to assert that Peter in a plain, matter of fact letter, speaks of Rome by a name that was only applied to it later in a book of symbols, with the statement that it is used as a symbol. Babylon had carried Israel into captivity; when pagan Rome did the same thing she became a mystical Babylon; and spiritual Rome also merited the designation by carrying into captivity the church of God. There is no reasonable ground for doubt that Peter extended his labors for his own race to Mesopotamia and from thence wrote this epistle. It was probably written towards the close of Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. There are reasons for thinking that Peter had seen the Ephesian letter, one of the epistles of Paul's imprisonment, and hence this Epistle was probably written as late, at least, as a.d. 63.

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Chapter I

The Gospel the Foreordained Purpose of God

Summary — *The Salutation. The Glorious Hope in Christ. It a Strength in Trial. The Prophets Looking Forward Earnestly to Its Revelation. Even the Angels Desiring to Look into the Mystery. A Godly Life Becometh Those Who Have Such a Hope.*

1, 2. Peter, an apostle. The first letter of Peter opens as do the other apostolic letters. Peter claims no superiority. The New Testament knows nothing of his succession to Christ as the first of the Popes. **To the elect sojourners** (Revision). He does not address Jews generally but Jewish Christians primarily, though in portions of the letter he seems to embrace Gentile Christians also. **Dispersion.** The Jewish race outside of Judea. **In Pontus.** The letter is directed to the churches in five provinces of the Roman empire which Paul had evangelized, all lying in a group south of the Euxine Sea and east of the Caspian. See map of Paul's travels. **2. According to the foreknowledge of God.** Their election and salvation was in accordance with God's predetermined purpose to save men through the gospel, and hence, according to foreknowledge. **In sanctification of the spirit.** The means by which they become elect are pointed out. They were separated from the world by the gospel, the word of the Spirit, a sanctification which signifies "a setting apart to holy uses." They were thus separated **unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.** In obeying this they were "baptized into the death of Christ" (Rom. 6:1-4), and their sins were pardoned. The sanctification in this case precedes obedience and pardon.

3-5. Blessed be the God. The ground of special thanksgiving is that the Father, out of his overflowing mercy, **hath begotten us.** Has caused us to be born again as his children. **Unto a lively hope.** As children we have a glorious hope of eternal life through **the resurrection of Jesus.** **4. To an inheritance.** The hope is not merely of eternal existence, but we become heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. **An inheritance incorruptible.** It can never decay. **Undeiled.** It is sinless and eternal. **5. Who are kept by the power of God.** The inheritance is reserved for those who are kept safe by God's power, through faith, so that they endure to the end.

6-9. Wherein. In this glorious hope you rejoice. **Though now for a season.** This implies that a persecution was in progress, or threatened. **Manifold temptations.** Trials which put faith and patience to the test. **7. That the trial of your faith.** These persecutions try their faith as gold is tried by the fire, and the faith that stands the test, **more precious than gold,** will bear fruit **unto praise and honor and glory** at the appearing. "The present afflictions work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." **8. Whom.** Jesus Christ. **Ye love.** Though not having seen Christ, they knew him by faith. **Ye rejoice.** Because they believe upon him whom they have not seen they are filled with the unspeakable joy of a glorious

hope. **9. The end of your faith.** The object of the gospel, “the faith,” and of their faith was salvation.

10–12. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired. This passage implies that the prophets used words and symbols, at the dictation of the Spirit, of which they did not comprehend the full meaning. They spoke of Christ and salvation, and then diligently inquired what the *Spirit of Christ* in them did signify by these words. **11. When it testified ... the sufferings.** They spoke of the sufferings of Christ (see [Isaiah, chapter 53](#)) but could not understand these predictions any better than the Jews of Christ's time. See [Luke 24:25, 26](#). **12. Unto whom it was revealed.** The prophets were, however, taught that the subject matter of their predictions related to a future time, not to their own. **They did minister the things.** The things which were fulfilled by the gospel **preached ... unto you.** Paul and his companions, who preached under the influence of the Holy Spirit. **Which things the angels desire to look into.** The profound mysteries of the gospel were subjects of earnest inquiry to the angels, an indication that like the prophets they could not understand until the mystery was revealed.

13–16. Gird up the loins of your mind. A figure drawn from the custom of girding the loins when about to start on a journey. So the Christian must prepare himself as on a journey. **Be sober.** Let there be sobriety of spirit. **Hope to the end.** Never let the glow of your hope cease until the great consummation, when Christ comes. **14. As obedient children.** An invariable characteristic of all Christians. The divisions between God's children and the children of this world turns on obedience to God. **Not fashioning yourselves.** The spirit of obedience would cause them to turn away from their former sinful life when in **ignorance** of the gospel. **15. But as he which hath called you.** God the Father, to whom the calling is assigned in the Scriptures. Obedient children will seek to please and to be like their father. *Our Father* is holy, and the duty rests upon us of seeking holy lives. **16. Because it is written.** [Lev. 11:44, and 19:2](#). We must not only submit to God's commands but seek to imitate his holiness.

17–21. If ye call on the Father. In prayer and worship. All call upon him who pray. **Who without respect of persons.** He judges us and all men according to the deeds, not station or race. Hence, those who seek his blessings and promises should show a reverential fear. That is the first reason given for being “holy.” **Of your sojourning.** The whole life is a period of sojourning on the earth. **18. Ye were not redeemed.** Gold or earthly wealth could never have wrought our redemption. **From your vain conversation.** Vain and profitless manner of life. **Handed down from your fathers.** This was true of Jewish Christians, but still more true of the heathen who had been converted. **19. But with the precious blood.** The New Testament writers with one accord refer to Christ as “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” See [John 1:29](#); [Eph. 1:4](#); [5:27](#); [Col. 1:22](#); [Heb. 9:14](#). **20. Who verily was foreordained.** See [John 1:29](#). Christ was the center of God's plans of salvation

from the beginning. **But was manifest.** Though Christ was God's plan from the beginning he was only manifested **in these last times.** In that period, the end of the Jewish age and near the end of the temple and of the Jewish nation. **For you.** Christ was manifested for the sake of his people, who have become his people by faith. **21. That your faith and hope might be in God.** Faith, with Peter as well as Paul, is essential to salvation. The salvation is of God, not of ourselves, and is made ours by faith.

22–25. Seeing ye have purified your souls. The Greek verb rendered “purified,” occurs seven times in the New Testament. In four of these, [John 11:55](#); [Acts 21:24, 26](#); and [24:18](#), it refers to ceremonial purification. In the other three it refers to moral purification; the cleansing of the life from its sins. That seems to be the sense here. It refers not only to the forgiveness of sins but to the pure life that should follow. This purification is obtained **in obeying the truth.** That is, by obedience to the gospel. **Through the Spirit.** The Spirit is inseparable from the gospel. The gospel dispensation is that of the Spirit. See [Acts 15:8, 9](#). **Unto unfeigned love of the brethren.** The Spirit of Christ in our hearts is the spirit of brotherly love. **See that ye love.** How can one profess to follow Christ unless he loves those for whom Christ died? **With a pure heart.** With a sincere heart. **23. Being born again.** At conversion. See [John 3:1–6](#). **Not of corruptible seed.** A birth always implies a moving cause. In this birth the new life is planted by **incorruptible** seed, even **by the word of God.** See also [Acts 10:36](#), and [James 1:18](#). The gospel preached and lodged in the heart, “the power of God to salvation” ([Rom. 1:16](#)) is the power that moves the soul to a new life. **Which liveth.** God's word is living and eternal. It has life in it and hence communicates life. See [Heb. 4:12](#). **24. All flesh is as grass** ([Isa. 40:6](#)). God's word lives forever, but the flesh is as evanescent as the grass. The fleshly life, like the grass, is soon felled by death, but a birth from the living and eternal word is a birth to eternal life. **25. The word of the Lord endureth forever.** Like its author it is eternal and never loses its power. **This is the word.** That word was the gospel, the very gospel preached to them by Paul and his fellow ministers.



Chapter II

The Temple of Living Stones

Summary — *Desiring the Sincere Milk. The Living Stone. The Spiritual Temple. The Stone the Builders Rejected. The Peculiar People. Letting Our Light Shine. Obedience to Authorities. The Glory of Suffering for Righteousness.*

1–3. Wherefore. In view of the salvation and duty of brotherly love pointed out in [chapter 1](#). **Laying aside all malice.** The things to be laid aside are inconsistent with brotherly love. **Malice.** The mental state opposed to love. **Guile.** The mental state opposed to sincerity. **1:22. Hypocrisies.** Guile *exhibited* in word and deed. **Envies.** “Love envieth not” ([1 Cor. 13:4](#)). **Evil speakings.** Speaking evil of others. **2. Newborn babes.** The new birth has been spoken of in [1:23](#). They are babes in Christ. Babes hunger for milk. Let babes in Christ earnestly desire the **sincere milk of the word**. In the Revision “the spiritual, guileless milk.” This word, unadulterated, is the food upon which Christians must feed in order to grow. **3. If so be.** This is the proper food for those who have **tasted** that the Lord is gracious, or been converted. See [Ps. 34:9](#).

4, 5. To whom coming. To Christ the Lord. **A living stone.** Christ is often called a Stone, or Rock, as the foundation whom which we build our spiritual life, and of the church; a “living stone” because he imparts life to all who build upon him, and himself lives eternally. See [1 John 1:1](#); [Rev. 1:18](#); [Acts 4:11](#). **Disallowed.** Rejected by the Jewish nation. **Chosen,** not of men but of God who raised him from the dead. See also [verse 6](#). **5. Ye also, as lively stones.** Christians, born again to eternal life, become living stones also built into the spiritual temple of which Christ is the corner stone. **Spiritual house.** The church. God's spiritual temple of which the temple was a type. **An holy priesthood.** Christ, the High Priest, hath anointed them all as priests in his spiritual house. They need no human priest to stand between them and God. Every Christian can offer up **spiritual sacrifices**. See [Heb. 13:15](#); [Ps. 50:23](#); [Hos. 14:3](#); [Rom. 12:1](#). The sacrifices of the Christian priest are prayer, praise, good deeds, the consecration of our bodies and substance to God's service. **Acceptable to God.** When offered in the name of Christ.

6–8. Behold, I lay in Zion. See [Isa. 28:16](#), and [Rom. 9:33](#). Hence God had foretold that Christ should be a Living Stone. Peter has not quoted the passage in full which declares that the stone is “a tried stone,” “a sure foundation.” **Elect.** Hence, “chosen by God” ([verse 4](#)). **Precious.** Since it is “the chief corner stone” without which the structure could not be built. **He that believeth on him.** Hence this stone is a person, and faith in him is the basis of salvation. **7. Unto you therefore which believe.** The prophecy is now applied. He is **precious** to believers because they enjoy the promise embraced in “he that believeth,” etc. **Unto the disobedient.** Those who do not believe and hence, disobey; to these he is the **stone which**



the builders disallowed, which is spoken of in [Ps. 118:22](#). See also [Matt. 21:42](#), and [Acts 4:11](#). **The head of the corner.** Peter in [Acts 4:11](#), quotes this passage from the Old Testament and applies it with great force. The rejected Savior had become the Head of God's spiritual temple. **8. A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.** He is this to the disobedient. To believers, "precious;" to the disobedient, a stone over which they stumble and fall. **Whereunto.** Unto stumbling over the stone and falling. This is God's appointment to the disobedient. It is the result of their unbelief. The idea is that stumbling is their condition. When they reject Christ they stumble more and more.

9, 10. But ye are a chosen generation. God's chosen race, like ancient Israel. Christians are now the chosen people ([Isa. 43:21](#)). **A royal priesthood.** See [Exod. 19:6](#). The Hebrew passage which Peter refers to means "a kingdom of priests." Either this is its meaning, or that all in it, "anointed ones" like Christ, are in some sense like him, priest-kings. **An holy nation.** Set apart to God. **A peculiar people.** Differing from the world in life. **That ye should show forth.** They differ from the world that their holy lives may shine as a light and honor God. **Out of darkness.** In this and the [next verse](#) Peter surely has in mind Gentile Christians. **10. Which in time past were not a people.** Not the people of God. See [Hosea 2:23](#), which Peter quotes. The prophets in many places foretold the call of the Gentiles. See [Rom. 9:25, 26](#).

11, 12. I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims. They were all, like the fathers ([Heb. 11:13](#)), only pilgrims and sojourners on the earth, seeking for a better home. Hence they should **abstain from fleshly lusts**, which would destroy their prospects of that home. **12. Having your conversation.** Daily life. Let it be such as to refute slanders of their enemies. **Evil doers.** See [Acts 17:6](#). The Jews often accused Christians to heathen rulers of being seditious. Because they rejected the heathen gods, they were accused of being atheists. The best way to answer these charges was to live them down. **By your good works.** Compare [Matt. 5:16](#). **Day of visitation.** The day when God will make all clear and the heathen shall be converted.

13–17. Submit yourselves. Obey human laws. **For the Lord's sake.** Because it is the Lord's will. **Whether the king.** The Roman emperor whom the Greeks styled king. **14. Governors.** The magistrates placed over the provinces of the Roman empire. Rulers are necessary, both to punish the evil and to reward the good. Compare [Rom., chapter 13](#). **15. That with well doing.** It is God's will that thus you may silence the charge that you are seditious persons. **16. As free.** Christians, freed from the bondage of sin and of the law, and having the free spirit of children, must not use their liberty **as a cloke**, an excuse, for wickedness. **Servants.** They are God's servants. **17. Honor all men.** Respect men of every station. **Love the brotherhood.** As Christ loved us. **Fear God.** With reverential fear.

18–20. Servants. Compare [Eph. 6:5](#), and [Col. 3:22](#). The Greek word here is not that of the former passages which means slaves. This may mean hired servants. **Be subject.** That

is the duty of the relation. Nor is a faithful obedience due to good masters only, but **to the froward**. The perverse. **19. Thankworthy**. “Acceptable” in the Revision. If a man suffers wrong for conscience sake, God notes his suffering and approves of his conduct. **20. For what glory is it?** To bear with patience punishment for faults is no glory, but to bear patiently suffering inflicted for right doing is approved before God.

21–25. Hereunto were ye called. It was the experience of the Christian calling in that age to suffer for right doing. Even so Christ our Lord suffered. He is our example. **22. Who did no sin**. He had no fault. **23. When he was reviled**. He resented neither insults nor the sufferings inflicted upon him. **But committed**. He gave our judgment between him and his enemies to God. **24. Who ... bare our sins**. Died for our sins, not his own. He took our burdens. **On the tree**. The wood of the cross. **That we being dead to sins**. “Crucified with him,” penitent, the repentant sinner is baptized into his death, and rising to a new life, **lives unto righteousness**. **By whose stripes**. See [Isa. 53:5,6](#). **25. Ye were as sheep**. Led astray by sin. **Are now returned**. By coming to Christ. **The Shepherd and Bishop**. The good Shepherd who died for the sheep; the Bishop who watcheth over and careth for them.



Chapter III

Various Practical Duties

Summary — *Duties of Women. Of Husbands. Duties of Christians Towards Each Other. Attitude Towards Adversaries. Christian Endurance of Wrong. Christ's Preaching to the Spirits in Prison. Salvation of Those in the Ark. The Antitype is Baptism.*

1–6. Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection, etc. See notes [Eph. 5:21–24](#). Paul teaches the duty of submission, and in [1 Cor. 7:13–15](#) shows that it was not the duty of the believing wife to abandon her unbelieving husband. Peter goes farther here and teaches that the wife show her obedience in order to win her husband. **They also may without the word be won.** That even those who have steeled themselves against the gospel and who refuse to listen to it may be quietly won by the sweet, Christian lives of their wives. **2. While they behold you chaste conversation.** Your pure lives. **Coupled with fear.** The shrinking from doing anything that is wrong. **3. Whose adorning.** While urging those pure and holy lives which will sweetly preach Christ, Peter cannot pass by a foible often seen in the sex. There is a better adorning than that of the body. **Plaiting the hair.** See notes on [1 Tim. 2:9, 10](#). Compare [Ps. 45:13](#). The allusion is to wearing ornaments of gold or silver over the hair, a common adornment of the time. **Jewels of gold.** For the extravagant dress of Roman women of the time, see Farrar's *Early Years of Christianity*, page 5. **4. Let it be the hidden man of the heart.** The important part is to see that the heart is right and the spirit adorned with all the graces of holy life. Seek after inward rather than outward adorning. **In the sight of God.** God sees us all the time, and such adorning is of great worth in his sight. **5. For after this manner.** The holy women whose names are found in sacred history adorned themselves with “a meek and quiet spirit.” **6. As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.** See [Gen. 18:12](#); also [1 Sam. 1:15](#). This designation showed respect and submission. Women should follow the example of Sarah, who might be designated as “the mother of those who are Abraham's children by faith.” **Are not put in fear.** The fear might result from not doing well. They were to be quiet, submissive, loving wives, but were not to be kept from Christian duty by “any fear” which might threaten because of their heathen surroundings.

7. Ye husbands. Duties of Christian husbands are now briefly stated. They are to **dwell with their wives.** The fact that their wives are unconverted is no ground for separation, but if the wife is converted, still stronger is the bond. **According to knowledge.** A knowledge that shows judgment, moderation and gentleness as toward one weaker than himself. **Joint heirs.** Hence “one in Christ Jesus.” The home life is to be regulated according to knowledge. **That your prayers be not hindered.** Mutual prayer is not possible unless there is mutual love and forbearance. Nor can the husband's prayers be acceptable unless he treats his wife aright.



8–12. Be pitiful. Towards all the afflicted. **Be courteous.** Humble minded. See Revision. Not haughty. **9. Hereunto were ye called.** Peter enjoins good deeds for evil, and blessing for reviling, because any other course would be inconsistent with the Christian calling. Called to a heritage of blessing they must live lives of blessing, for “as a man soweth so also shall he reap.” **10. For.** If you desire to inherit blessing, you must abstain from evil. The conditions are stated by the Psalmist, [Ps. 34:13–17](#), from which the [next three verses](#) are quoted. **12. The eyes of the Lord.** He ceases not to regard his righteous servants. **The ears.** He not only sees, but hears when they cry to him. **But his face.** Is turned in displeasure upon evil doers.

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13–17. Who is he that will harm you? If you are zealous for good who can inflict real harm upon you? God is with you. **14. If ye should suffer.** Ye may be called to suffer for Christ. That is the lot of Christians, but instead of calling this an evil, **blessed are ye.** See [Matt. 5:10](#). Great is the reward. It is only sowing in tears to reap in joy. **Fear not with their fear.** Revision. With the fear of the wicked when danger comes, nor be **troubled** because you are persecuted. **15. But sanctify** in your hearts **Christ as Lord.** Revision. Let Christ be honored and revered. Fear not man but the Lord. **Yet with meekness and fear.** To confess Christ as the ground of your hope. The answer to adversaries is to be made, not with arrogance and indignation, but modestly, meekly, reverentially. **16. Having a good conscience.** Before God. This is the element of strength when accused. A life holy and pure is the best answer to false accusers. **17. For it is better, if the will of God is so.** If God wills that we should suffer, for the Father sometimes chasteneth children, it is better to suffer for righteousness, than for evil. See [2 Tim. 3:12](#).

18–22. For Christ also suffered. Even Christ, the Holy One, our example, once suffered on the cross. **Once.** Once only. He suffers no more. **Being put to death in the flesh.** He was put to death by the wounds inflicted on his fleshly body. His natural, earthly life was ended. **Quickened in the spirit.** Put to death in the body his spirit was quickened. Having life in himself, as soon as the body failed through weakness the power of the indestructible life began to show itself. **19, 20. In which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison.** Revision. The facts stated are (1) That Christ, put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, went and preached. (2) This preaching of Christ in the spirit was to spirits. (3) Those spirits were in prison. The Greek word used for prison, denotes a place of custody, not a place of punishment. These spirits ([verse 20](#)) were (4) *aforetime disobedient*. This states why they were held in prison. (5) The time of their disobedience is stated. It was while the **long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.** They had then refused to obey the call to repentance. It is stated in [Gen. 6:3](#), that the long suffering of God waited 120 years. This difficult passage has been given two interpretations. The more common view is that Jesus, after his suffering, during the interval before his resurrection, went without the body in a spirit form, to these antediluvians and preached to them. If this view is correct, it only teaches

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that an offer of salvation was then made to these disobedient ones who had never before heard of Christ before their final judgment. It furnishes no comfort to those that have an opportunity and reject it in this life. It only shows that one opportunity is given to all. The other view is that Christ went “in spirit” in the person of Noah and by him preached to those who were afterwards held in prison on account of their disobedience. The first view seems more in harmony with the context; the second furnishes fewer theological difficulties. **Wherein few, that is, eight souls.** Only eight souls out of a great multitude were saved; these were **saved through water**, since it bore up the ark. The word rendered “through,” means “by means of.” **21. The like figure whereunto.** Literally, “the antitype now saves us, Baptism.” Says Alford, “Water saved them, bearing up the ark; it saves us, becoming to us baptism.” As they entered the Ark, we are “baptized into Christ,” the Savior. See [Gal. 3:27](#). **Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh.** Not as a Jewish ceremonial washing, which was only a purification of the flesh, but it is the **answer of a good conscience**. The Revision says, “the interrogation of a good conscience.” “Inquiry” would be still better. The soul seeking the forgiveness of sins “inquires” What shall I do to remove the sense of unforgiven sins and make my conscience void of offense? The answer is “Repent and be baptized,” etc. See [Acts 2:38](#). He who obeys the word of the Lord has the “inquiry” answered in baptism. **Through the resurrection.** Baptism would be meaningless and vain were it not for the resurrection of Christ. It points directly to the burial and resurrection of the Lord. See [Rom. 6:1–6](#) **22. Who is on the right hand of God.** Christ's exaltation followed his death and resurrection. See [Eph. 1:20–23](#).



Chapter IV

Counsels to Suffering Saints

Summary — *Christ Having Died for Us, We Should Live for Christ. Watchfulness in View of the Speedy End. The Trials of the Saints. Suffering as Christians.*

1–6. Arm yourselves. The saints must be equipped for warfare and suffering. **With the same mind.** The mind that was in Christ when he suffered, a willingness to suffer to do the will of God. **Hath ceased from sin.** The idea seems to be that of [Rom. 6:7](#), “He that is dead is freed from sin.” Suffering with Christ puts an end to (or ceases) our connection with sin. **2. That ye no longer should live.** Hence, because we have “ceased from sin,” we should live, henceforth, **to the will of God.** **3. The time past.** That was enough time for sin. **Have wrought the will of the Gentiles.** Lived the unholy lives common among the heathen. **To have walked.** Peter describes the common sins, sins of the Gentile world, sins in which too many Jews imitated them. The first two are sins of uncleanness. **Excess of wine.** Drunkenness. **Revellings.** See [Rom. 13:13](#), and [Gal. 5:21](#). Riotous merry making is meant. **Banquetings.** Carousings, as in Revision. **4. Wherein they.** The outside world think it strange that you do not engage in these sins longer. Their enjoyment is in them, and they cannot understand how one can enjoy life without them. **Speaking evil of you.** Because you refuse to rush into their riotous sins. **5. Who shall give account.** Those sinners, who not only persist in their unholy lives, but persecute the saints because they will not sin with them. Christ shall judge **living and the dead.** **6. For to this end was the gospel preached even to dead.** This passage has been explained as meaning those spiritually dead. But the dead must be the same as in [verse 5](#), and there they are opposed to the living. Meyer holds that this is an expansion of [3:20, 21](#). There he supposes Christ, in the Spirit, preached to the antediluvians. Here, he holds, that Peter affirms that all the dead who lived before Christ came had the opportunity to hear; hence when the living and dead are judged, none can plead that they had no chance of life. Others hold that the meaning may be freely given as follows: “Whether you die or live Christ is your judge. For this cause the gospel was preached to your brethren who have died,” etc. This view avoids some difficulties but does not seem to harmonize fully with the context. Others hold that Peter means all the dead who have died from the time the gospel began to be preached. These had heard and gone, but would be judged as well as the living. This interpretation has the advantage of giving “the dead” the apparent meaning of that phrase. **That they might be judged.** Without some opportunity to know of the gospel they could not be judged for its rejection. **According to men in the flesh.** These dead, who had heard, and received the gospel, though experiencing the judgment of physical death that rested on all men, were called to **live according to God in the spirit**; that is, live on, an immortal life.

7–11. **The end of all things is at hand.** The end of Jerusalem was not far off, and it does not seem that it was given to Peter to distinguish clearly between that and the end of all things, which truly draweth near. **Watch unto prayer.** Compare [1 Thess. 5:6, 8](#), and [Matt. 24:42](#). **8. Love covereth a multitude of sins.** Compare [Prov. 10:12](#); [1 Cor. 13:7](#). Love is a mantle which seeks to condone sin rather than exaggerate it. **9. Using hospitality.** A duty very needful in that age of persecution when Christians were so often driven from home. See notes on [Rom. 12:13](#); [1 Tim. 3:2](#). **10. Even as each hath received a gift.** All these are to be freely used for others. Spiritual gifts ([1 Cor. 12:4, 28](#)) are primarily meant, but the principle is of general application. **As good stewards.** Those to whom God has given gifts must use them, not as their own, but as God's. **11. If any man speaketh.** Through a gift of the Spirit. He must speak not his own words, but speak as though they were God's oracles, speakers of a divine message. **Ministereth.** Let him act as one of God's ministers and act in his strength. **That God may be glorified.** Since all is of God.

12–14. **The fiery trials.** Persecution. **As though a strange thing.** Christians, with the world against them, must expect to endure such things. **13. Rejoice.** Because thus you are **made partakers of Christ's sufferings.** See notes on [Rom. 8:17](#), and [2 Cor. 1:7](#). **At the revelation of his glory.** All who suffer with him will be glorified. **14. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ.** Because you are a Christian. **Because the spirit of glory.** Spirit is not found in the Greek. The idea is, that the sufferer for Christ is happy because the glory of Christ awaits him, and God's spirit is with him.

15–19. **Let none of you suffer as a murderer.** As an evil doer. **16. If any man suffer as a Christian.** This name was now widely known, and good men suffered only because they were Christians. **17. The time for judgment is come.** it begins at the house of God, the church. In [Matt., chapter 25](#), the righteous are judged first. **If it begin first at us.** If even the righteous are called to judgment, what shall be the fate of the disobedient? **18. And if the righteous.** A passage quoted from [Prov. 11:31](#). The idea is that if sufferings and judgments (chastenings) come upon good people, what hope is there for the wicked? **19. Wherefore let them also that suffer.** Let all who suffer, not for evil doing but for righteousness sake, keep on **in well doing** and commit their souls to the care of the all seeing and faithful God.

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Chapter V

Conclusion

Summary — *A Charge to the Elders. The Young Exhorted. Humility Enjoined. Watchfulness. Salutations from the Brethren at Babylon.*

1–4. The elders which are among you. That Peter means the officers, not the aged persons, is shown by [verse 2](#). **Who am a fellow-elder.** An elder as well as an apostle. He exhorts them as one of themselves. **And a witness.** An eye witness of what Christ suffered and of his resurrection. **A partaker of the glory.** An heir of the glory that shall be revealed when Christ comes. **2. Feed the flock of God.** “Tend” (Revision). The word means more than feed. See [John 21:15–17](#). **Which is among you.** The churches wherever you are. **Taking the oversight.** Acting as bishops ([Acts 20:28](#)). **Not of constraint.** Attend to the duties cheerfully, willingly. **Not for filthy lucre.** Not for sordid love of gain, but with alacrity. **3. Neither as being lords.** Not with an arbitrary, despotic rule. **Over God's heritage.** Rather, “over the charge allotted you” (Revision). **Ensamples to the flock.** Instead of ruling imperiously, rather set an example that others may follow. **4. And when the chief Shepherd.** Christ, to whom all the under shepherds shall give account. **Shall receive the crown of glory.** The eternal reward of faithful duty.

5–7. Likewise, ye younger. Some scholars think that all who are not elders are meant. Among the Greeks “younger” sometimes meant those inferior in position. Perhaps the word enforces this sense as well as those younger in years. **Be subject unto the elder.** “Elders” in the Greek. The duty of submissiveness and humility is the thought of the passage. **Yea, all be subject to one another.** The literal rendering is “Wrap yourselves up in humility one to another.” Mutual deference must be shown, as well as mutual service. **God resisteth the proud, etc.** Quoted from [Prov. 3:34](#). **6. Humble yourselves.** Because “God giveth grace to the humble.” **Under the mighty hand.** God exalts as well as casts down. He lifts up the humble, therefore, “Humble yourselves that he may exalt you.” **In due time.** In God's own time; not our time, but God's. **7. Casting.** Simply submitting, doing the Lord's will, and casting all care on him.

8–11. Be sober. Sobriety is necessary to vigilance. **Be vigilant.** Wide awake and watchful. The reason follows. An enemy is ready to spring upon them. **The devil, as a roaring lion.** He goeth about as the lion, seeking for prey. The lion while hunting only roars when it springs. So the devil is stealthy and does not give warning of his approach. **9. Whom resist.** See [James 4:7](#). When the devil is resisted he flees. **Stedfast.** Firm in the faith. **Knowing that the same sufferings, etc.** That your sufferings are not unusual, but that the brethren everywhere suffer as you do. **10. And the God of all grace.** Who bestows all grace. **Who called you.** God is always spoken of as the author of the calling. **A little while.** You may be



called to suffer for a season, but it will soon be over. **Make you perfect.** He will supply every need, leave nothing wanting.

12–14. By Silvanus. Silas, the old companion of Paul. See [Acts, chapter 16](#). It has been supposed that Paul, then a prisoner at Rome, had sent Silvanus to Peter. **Our faithful brother, as I suppose.** This implies that Peter had little personal acquaintance, Silvanus having been with Paul in the work among the Gentiles. **Have written unto you.** He sends this letter “by Silvanus.” **This is the true grace of God.** The gospel which had been preached to them. **13. She that is in Babylon.** See Revision. The word church is not in the Greek. Peter probably referred to his wife. The salutations are from individuals. **Babylon.** See remarks in [Introduction](#). Alford says, “There is no reason whatever for regarding this any place but the Chaldean capital.” **So doth Mark, my son.** Most likely John Mark, the author of the second gospel. See [Acts 12:12; 13:5; 15:37; Col. 4:10](#). **14. Salute one another with a kiss of love.** See notes on [Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20](#).



**The Second Epistle General of
Peter**



Introduction to the Second Epistle of Peter

The Second Epistle of Peter is placed by Eusebius among the writings whose genuineness had been called in question by many, and it is not to be denied that there were differences in the early church concerning its right to a place in the Canon. Yet it seems to have been quoted by several of the Fathers in the second century, and in the third the great Origen went so far as to write a commentary upon it. It was finally received by all the churches except the Syrian, in whose translation of the New Testament it was not embraced. Among the modern critics some have rejected it upon various grounds, but others not less able, such as Olshausen, Alford, Bruckner, and Schaff have pronounced it genuine. Upon the whole it seems probable that it was written by him whose name appears in the salutation, but written some time later than the first, near the close of his life, and specially directed against certain heresies which were beginning to appear. If there is some indefiniteness concerning the authorship, there is still more concerning the time and place where it was written. It contains no data for forming a conclusion.



Chapter I

Making the Calling and Election Sure

Summary — *Greetings. Adding to Faith the Christian Graces. Not Followed Fables. The Transfiguration.*

1–4. Simon Peter. To his first epistle he only prefixed the name given him by the Lord. Here he calls himself by both names, as found in [Luke 5:8](#); [John 13:6](#); [20:2](#); [Acts 10:5](#), and many other places. **A servant.** Of Jesus as the Lord. **And apostle.** Of Jesus as the Messiah. **To them that have obtained like precious faith.** Who are also saints enjoying the precious promises. **2. Grace and peace.** The usual apostolic benediction. These come **through the knowledge, etc.** Those who have learned to know God and his Son have eternal life ([John 17:3](#)). This knowledge is one that comes from fellowship with Christ. **3. Seeing that his divine power.** It has granted us all things needful to live godly lives. **Through the knowledge of him.** These all come through the knowledge of God. **By his own glory and virtue** (Revision). God's power is manifested in his glory and virtue. It is his moral excellency and glory that move upon men, not physical power. **4. Whereby.** By his glory and virtue. **Exceeding great and precious promises.** The splendid promises of the gospel. **That through these.** The offers of the gospel. **Partakers of the divine nature.** One of the promises was communion with God and fellowship with Christ. See [John 14:23](#). **Having escaped.** All who come to Christ and are in him have escaped from sin and corruption.

5–8. Yea, and for this very cause. Because God has called you with precious promises. What God has done calls on us to do our part. **All diligence.** No exertion must be spared. There must be the fullest co-operation with God. **In your faith supply virtue.** The Common Version is wrong. Faith is the basis of the Christian life and all are expected to possess it, but out of it must grow other excellencies. **Virtue.** Moral courage, the natural fruit of a trusting faith in God. **Knowledge.** The moral heroism must be guided by knowledge or it will run into “a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” **6. Temperance.** Self control. **Patience.** Unflinching, patient endurance. **Godliness.** A reverence for things divine shown by growing more and more into the divine likeness. **7. Brotherly kindness.** An active good will towards the saints. **Love.** The heart element which gives brotherly kindness its power and sweetness. **8. For if these things be in you.** If these qualities abound they will be fruitful, showing that they have knowledge of Christ in reality.

9–11. He that lacketh these things. The qualities named in [verses 5–7](#). **Is blind.** Shows that he has a defective moral vision. **Cannot see afar off.** Is short sighted; does not see what his future good requires. **Hath forgotten.** If he could remember how he was cleansed from his own sinful state, he would show greater diligence lest he should again fall into sin. **10. Wherefore ... the more diligence.** Diligence to the end is needful in order to salvation.



Calling and election. The calling is first in order; the election comes when we accept the call. **Sure.** Our own efforts are needed to make them sure. **For if ye do these things.** Those named above. Thus we will make the “calling and election sure.” For then we **shall never fall.** **11. An abundant entrance.** We will be richly prepared for entrance. **Into the eternal kingdom.** The heavenly kingdom.

12–15. Wherefore. The language that follows anticipates his speedy decease ([verse 15](#)). **13. I think it meet.** Right. **As long as I am in this tabernacle.** In the body, the present home of his spirit. **14. Knowing that shortly I must put off, etc.** Must die very soon. **Even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.** Christ had predicted his death as a martyr ([John 21:18, 19](#)). It is to this prediction that Peter refers. **15. I will give diligence** (Revision). He will so diligently admonish them that after his death they will remember his words.

16–18. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables. There was no mistake or doubt about the gospel, no such fables as the myths of the Gentiles. **When we made known unto you.** Preached the coming into the world and the divine power of Christ. **But were eye witnesses.** Since the apostles were personal witnesses of Christ's glory, they knew whereof they spoke. **17. For he received from God the Father honor and glory.** He cites one scene that had witnesses where the divine glory rested upon Christ. The glory of the Transfiguration is the prophecy of the glory which will be revealed when Christ comes. **There came such a voice.** God honored the Son by the Divine declaration. See [Matt. 17:1–6](#). **18. And this voice we ourselves heard.** Peter, and James and John, his companions on the holy mount. James was now dead, but John was still alive.

19–21. We have also a more sure word of prophecy. Prophecy was a sure word, but when fulfilled in Christ and the gospel it seemed more sure. No class of evidence had more power with Jews than to show them that Jesus was the Christ of whom the prophets spoke. **Whereunto.** To prophecy. **Take heed.** Heed its predictions and statements concerning Christ. **As unto a lamp.** It was a lamp shining in the darkness of the past and giving some light before the day star arose. **The day dawn.** The full light of the New Testament. **The day star.** Christ. See [Rev. 22:16](#). **20. Knowing this first.** This is a reason for giving heed to the word of prophecy. **That no prophecy ... is of any private interpretation.** Is not an interpretation of the knowledge and feelings of the prophet, but of the will of God. The [next verse](#) shows that this is the meaning. **21. For no prophecy.** No scriptural prophecy is due to the will of man, but all came from men speaking from God when moved by the Holy Spirit. Prophecy is God's word, not the words of man.



Chapter II

Warnings Against False Teachers

Summary —*False Prophets and False Teachers. The Judgment on the Fallen Angels. Judgment on the Antediluvians. The Perverseness of Wicked Men. The Example of Balaam, the Son of Bosor.*

1–3. There arose false prophets among the people. In [1:19](#) the true prophets are referred to. Here the false prophets are spoken of in contrast. By “the people” Israel is meant. The term “false prophet” occurs several times in the Old Testament. For example, see [Jer. 6:13](#). Christ foretells the rise of false prophets ([Matt. 24:24](#)). **There shall be false teachers.** Teachers of false doctrines. Paul often warns against such teachers. See [Acts 20:30](#). **Damnable heresies.** “Destructive heresies” in the Revision. Party divisions caused by false teaching. A heresy is a schism, or that which tends to produce schism. **Denying the Lord that bought them.** This is the culmination of false teaching in the church and has been fulfilled by those professedly Christian teachers who reject the divinity of Christ and the atoning power of his blood. **Swift destruction.** Sudden destruction. **2. Many shall follow their pernicious ways.** “Lascivious doings” in the Revision. Immoral life is the result of false doctrine, and thus a reproach is brought upon the truth. **3. And in covetousness.** By their “feigned words,” crafty speeches, the false teachers shall use their followers as a source of gain.

4–11. For if God spared not the angels that sinned. In order to show that judgments on these wicked teachers are sure, Peter cites examples. Even angels when they sinned were subjected to punishment. **But cast them down to hell.** The sinning angels were cast out of heaven. The word rendered “hell” is not *Gehenna*, but *Tartarus*, a Greek term used for the place of future punishment. **Delivered them into chains of darkness.** “Pits” in the Revision; possibly dungeons of darkness gives the idea. Compare [Jude 6](#). Both passages point to a time when angels sinned, fell, and thus became angels of darkness. **5. And spared not the old world.** The case of the antediluvians furnishes the second example of God's swift justice. **But preserved Noah with seven others.** God did not then forget the righteous. **A preacher of righteousness.** By example as well as by word. See [Gen. 7:1–7](#), and [1 Pet. 3:20](#). **6. Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes.** The third example of judgment on sin. See [Gen. 19:29](#). **7. And delivered righteous Lot.** The saving of the righteous is as marked as the punishment of the wicked. See [Gen. 19:1](#), [7](#). **Vexed, etc.** See [Gen. 19:5](#). **8. For that righteous man, etc.** Lot, seeing and hearing the wickedness around him, was sore distressed. **9. The Lord knoweth, etc.** These examples show that the Lord knows how to deliver the righteous from every species of trial, and to hold the wicked in reserve for judgment. **10. Chiefly.** Those next named will receive the greater punishment. **Who go after the flesh.** Follow its dictates and live impure lives. **Despise government.** Refuse to submit to authority.

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Not afraid to speak evil of dignities. A characteristic of this class is their presumption and a want of reverence for what is high and holy. **11. Whereas angels.** The angels, superior in might and power, do not show such presumption, or disrespect to any lofty power. Compare [Jude 9](#). There is so striking a parallel between a [part of this chapter and a part of Jude](#) that it is thought that either Peter or Jude had the epistle of the other before him. [Jude](#) shows us that even Michael did not rail against Satan.

12–16. But these, as natural brute beasts. As if utterly irrational. The brute beasts were destined to the slaughter for man's uses. So these men blindly rush to destruction. **Speak evil of the things that they understand not.** How often the scoffer fulfills this description! **13. Shall receive the reward of unrighteousness.** Their destruction is the legitimate reward of their own wrong doing. **Count it pleasure to riot in the day time.** Literally “in the day.” I believe that the idea is that, like dumb brutes forgetful of coming destruction, they take pleasure in carousal for a day, regardless of the morrow. **Spots and blemishes.** Marring the brightness and beauty of the church. **Revelling in their love feasts** (Revision). Converting even these into scenes of revel. **14. Having eyes full of adultery.** Looking around with a lustful appetite. **15. Having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor.** See [Numbers, chapter 31](#). Balaam sold himself out to an evil cause for the sake of gain. **16. But was rebuked.** By the voice that was put into the mouth of the brute he rode.

17–19. These are springs without water. They promise much but disappoint. **Mists driven by a storm.** The thought is the same. These mists promise rain, but it fails to descend. **For whom.** For these apostates the “blackness of darkness is reserved.” **18. For.** This shows how they promise great things and disappoint. They offer **great swelling words**, and entice those who are about to be delivered from error. **19. Promising liberty.** Liberty from all restraint, complete freedom to serve their own wills, such liberty as those who rail against God's law are wont to offer. **Servants of corruption.** Those who offer liberty are themselves slaves, serving their own passions and lusts. He who is swayed by appetite or habit cannot be free.

20–22. For if, after they have escaped the pollution of the world. If one who has been converted is enticed back again into his sins, his state is worse than before. That this is possible is taught in many places. **21. For it had been better, etc.** To other sins there is then added the sin of rejecting the way of righteousness after an experimental knowledge of it. **22. For it is happened.** Their relapse is described in the proverbs. See [Prov. 1:1; 26:11](#). Such a repulsive course can be compared only with the most disgusting habits of unclean animals.



Chapter III

The End of All Things

Summary — *The Purpose of the Second Epistle. The Sayings of Scoffers. God's Apparent Delay to Give Opportunity for Repentance. The Day of the Lord. The New Heavens and New Earth. The Blameless Lives We Ought to Live. Paul's Writings. Final Admonitions.*

1–4. This second epistle. This language implies a former letter written to the same persons to whom this is addressed. **I stir up your pure minds.** In both letters his object was mainly to exhort them to holy lives. **By way of remembrance.** By reminding you of the claims of Christ as shown by prophets and apostles. **2. That ye be mindful of the words.** Both of what was spoken by the prophets in the Old Testament, and of what the apostles have now spoken. **Us the apostles.** The Twelve, and Paul, who is alluded to in [verse 15](#). **3. Knowing this first.** The apostles and prophets have reminded them that there will be scoffers **in the last days.** Under the last dispensation. **4. Where is the promise of his coming?** This question is asked by the scoffers, as though the coming of Christ was so long delayed that all hope had ended. They take advantage of the disappointment to try to destroy faith. **All things continue.** The scoffers assert that the regular order of nature continues right on as it was from the beginning. They forget the deluge.

5–7. For this they willingly are ignorant of. Their ignorance which causes them to speak thus is wilful. They obstinately forget all the lessons taught by the deluge. There the fixed order was interrupted. **That there were heavens.** This alludes to the beginning of creation. See [Gen. 1:1, 2](#). **By the word of God.** See [Gen. 1:6, 9](#). **And the earth.** The Revision translated, “compacted out of water.” That is, water is a principal element in its formation, a fact seen in three-fourths of its surface being sea, and water being found in the depths of the earth everywhere, and being found largely in earthly combinations. **6. Whereby.** By means of the waters of heaven and earth; “the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened,” the old world was overflowed and perished. **7. By the same word.** The heavens and earth of old were formed by the word of God, but the same word, which has always been sure, declares that they are reserved for fire. See [Ps. 50:3; 97:3; Isa. 66:15, 24; Dan. 7:9; Mal. 4:1](#). **Against the day of judgment.** This destruction by fire will be when the Lord is revealed in judgment and when perdition comes on ungodly men.

8–13. But, beloved, be not ignorant. Delay was the objection of the scoffers, but time is no element in the counsels of God. He has eternity in which to work out his purposes. He can as well take a thousand years as a day. If he seems to us short lived creatures to delay it for wise purposes. See [Ps. 90:4](#). **9. The Lord is not slack.** If the day of the Lord seems delayed it is not due to slackness. It is rather because God is long suffering and is giving time to call the world to repentance. See [1 Tim. 2:4](#). **10. But the day of the Lord will come.** This expres-



sion usually, but not always, refers to the second advent. Such is the meaning here. **As a thief.** When people are not expecting it. Compare [1 Thess. 5:2](#); [Matt. 24:43](#). **The heavens shall pass away.** See [Luke 21:33](#). **The elements shall melt.** The material of which they are composed. **The earth also and the works.** The earth and all man's creations. That the world shall come to an end seems to be written in its very constitution. A slight change in the constitution of the atmosphere, or the decomposition of its water would wrap it in flame. Science finds the elements of final dissolution in the relations of the earth and sun. According to the ratio of increase in two centuries the world will not have resources to feed its population. In a few hundred years the coal resources of the world will fail. These and many other facts point to a necessary and inevitable change. **11. What manner of persons ought ye to be.** Since we have no abiding home on this earth and seek one beyond, we should live in a state of preparation. **12. Looking for.** Looking for, preparing for, and desiring the Lord's coming. Dreadful as that day will be for the impenitent it is a day of relief and of glorious attainment to the saint. **13. We, according to his promise.** See [Isa. 65:17](#); also [66:22](#). The heavens and the earth are not to be blotted out, but changed, purified, and made better for the home of the righteous.

14–18. Wherefore, beloved. Now follows an earnest exhortation to holiness in view of the coming of the Lord. **15. Account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation.** That God's long suffering is designed to promote salvation. **Even as our beloved brother Paul ... hath written to you.** We cannot tell what epistles of Paul are alluded to. We have at least three which were written to the same churches Peter was addressing. See [1 Pet. 1:1, 2](#). **16. As also in all his epistles.** Peter knew of many epistles, then, that Paul had written, and knew also that they contained some very profound argument, which a Jew especially found it difficult to understand (See [Galatian Letter](#)). **The unlearned and unstable.** The ignorant and vacillating **wrest.** Pervert and give meanings that were never meant. **As also the other scriptures.** The other scriptures may mean the Old Testament, or New Testament writings already written. The point to be noted is that already when Peter wrote Paul's epistles were accepted as a part of the Scriptures. **To their own destruction.** This should be a warning to all in our day who twist the Scriptures from their real meaning. **17. Seeing ye know these things before.** That there shall be false teachers; hence beware of them. **18. Grow in grace.** How they may so grow was shown in [1 Peter 2:2](#). **And in the knowledge of our Lord.** The two kinds of growth must keep equal pace. He who grows in the one will grow in the other.

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**The First Epistle General of
John**



Introduction to the First Epistle of John

This Epistle was written by John, the son of Zebedee, the beloved Disciple, an Apostle of Jesus Christ. The outlines of his history and character have been fully given in the [Introduction to the Gospel of John](#) (People's New Testament, Vol. I.) to which I refer the reader. Prominent in the Savior's earthly ministry, the active companion of Peter in the founding of the church in Judea, he was soon overshadowed in the Acts of the Apostles by the towering personalities of Peter and Paul. He is only named four times in the [Acts](#), and his name only occurs once in the Epistles of Paul ([Gal. 2:9](#)) in a passage which probably names the only occasion when he and Paul ever met face to face. The opinion of the early church was that his residence was in Palestine until the time approached for the overthrow of the Jewish state, and probably until he had been released from the sacred charge of the mother of Jesus by her death; that he then removed to Asia Minor to make his home at Ephesus among the great body of Gentile churches which had been robbed of the care of their founder, the great apostle to the Gentiles, by his martyrdom, and that in Ephesus he wrote the Epistles which are ascribed to him in the New Testament.

Like the Gospel by the same writer, the Epistle does not mention the name of its author, and we are indebted for the knowledge of the authorship to the uniform testimony of the early church, as well as to the similarity of thought and expression of the Gospel and the Epistle. I do not think the hypothesis of those destructive German critics who have such a mania for novelties, that the writer of Ephesus was not the Apostle John, but a Presbyter John of the second century, is worthy of serious consideration. Such a figment is incredible in view of the fact that the second century testifies that John the Apostle long lived at Ephesus, and died there, leaving the legacy of his life and writings to the churches. We have still extant the writings of those who affirm that they had been trained by men of God who had been trained under the direction of the aged apostle during his Ephesian residence. It may be added that this epistle is repeatedly quoted in the writings of the Fathers belonging to the second century, and is named, as well as the other two Epistles of John, in the first Canon of the New Testament writings, the Canon Muratori, which belongs to the last half of the second century.

Its date is only a matter of conjecture. It is evident from the various false doctrines which the writer evidently had in view that it belongs to a later period than any other writings of the New Testament save those of John himself. It was probably written when John remained as the only survivor of the apostolic band, after his gospel, and when certain heresies began to assume form. Why it should appear without either the names of the author or of the churches to which it was addressed is uncertain, but it does demonstrate that it is a genuine Epistle, and no part of a forgery, as some German writers have held. A forged Epistle would be ascribed to an apostolic writer in order to gain its acceptance. The examples afforded by

certain forged epistles of the early centuries, the so called Epistle to the Laodiceans for instance, settle this point. The peculiarities of the Epistle, which cannot be discussed in our limited space, will be best seen in the notes on the text.



Chapter I

Fellowship with God

Summary — *The Word of Life. Eternal Life Manifested. God Is Light. Those in Fellowship with Him Must Walk in the Light.*

1–4. That which was from the beginning. Compare [John 1:1](#); see notes there. Compare also [Gen. 1:1](#). [John 1:1](#) shows that the Word, manifested as Christ, was from the beginning. **Which we have heard, ... looked upon, ... handled.** In its incarnate form in the person of Jesus Christ. **The Word of life.** Christ, the revealed Word, when it became flesh and dwelt among men; “in whom also was life” ([John 1:4](#)). **2. The life was manifested.** They had seen the Life manifested in the person of Christ. **And bear witness.** The office of the apostle, having seen and known the Eternal Life as he lived on earth, was to bear witness of him to the world. **3. That ye also may have fellowship.** To declare what they had seen and heard was simply to preach the gospel. This knowledge communicated to others brought those who accepted it into a fellowship of knowledge and hope. Those are in fellowship who are partakers of the same faith, hopes, and privileges. **With us.** All the saints entered into fellowship with the apostles, but the apostles were in **fellowship with the Father.** This grand fellowship, that of the saints with the Father and the Son, is simply a guarantee that no good thing will be withheld from us; that “all things are ours.” There is a fellowship of peace, of concord, of eternal life and glory. **4. These things write we.** This assurance of the divine fellowship is given in order that they may rejoice with the fullness of joy in the glorious hope.

5–7. This then is the message. The message heard from Christ, now declared, is that **God is light.** The source whence all light, whether it be physical, or moral or spiritual, comes; the Enlightener of the universe. The term denotes luminous clearness, the free and benevolent source from whence flow light, intelligence, purity and blessing, absolutely free from alien intermixture, since **in him there is no darkness at all.** Light represents truth, knowledge and holiness. Darkness represents ignorance, error, falsehood and sin. **6. If we say ... and walk in darkness.** To claim a fellowship with him who is Light and to walk in the darkness of error, of ignorance, and of sinfulness are utterly inconsistent. **Do not the truth.** He who obeys not the truth walks in darkness. **7. But if we walk in the light.** We walk in the light by following Christ, the Light of the world. **We have fellowship.** All who are walking in the light have the common life. **The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.** Cleansed by the blood of Christ, and thus made holy, we are fitted for the heavenly communion.

8–10. If we say that we have no sin. To say that we have reached a sinless state in which we no longer need the blood of Christ to cleanse us is a deception. This language is in square

opposition to the claims of the “Perfectionists” of all ages. **9. If we confess our sins.** Instead of affirming that we are sinless we should confess our sins. **Faithful and just.** If we confess our sins the Lord will be *faithful* to his promise of mercy, and *just* in requiring us to have the atonement of Christ, **to forgive us our sins.** **10. If we say that we have not sinned.** God says we have sinned. He declares “There is none righteous; no, not one.” Hence, if we affirm that we are sinless we make God a liar.

Note. —It must be noted that these words concerning sin, found in [verses 8–10](#), are not addressed to Gentile sinners, but a generation which had grown up in the church. Indeed, of all the epistles, this is the only one which can truly be said to have been addressed to a Christian generation. Hence, it would naturally emphasize, not the unconverted sinner's need of pardon, but of the Christian's constant need of a pardoning Savior. It is the Christian who cannot say that he has no sin, and who must find pardon by confessing his sins to Christ. [Acts 2:38](#) shows how the alien sinner may obtain remission; [1 John 1:9](#) shows how the Christian, when he sins, may obtain remission.



Chapter II

The New Life

Summary — *The Advocate with the Father. The Propitiation. The Old and the New Commandment. The Love of the World and the Love of the Father Inconsistent. The Unction of the Holy Spirit. Antichrist. The Anointing Which Teacheth All Things.*

1, 2. My little children. From so aged a teacher as John, now probably more than four score, and at least fifty years in the service of Christ, this fatherly style of address is very appropriate. **That ye sin not.** He writes to exhort them to a pure and holy life, the only life permissible to those born again. **And if any sin.** The word “man” is not found in the Greek. The meaning is, “If any brother, any of you, should be overtaken by sin,” there is a way of forgiveness. They must not sin, but if unhappily one does sin, let him go to Christ, the *Advocate*. **We have an advocate.** Who pleads with the Father not to withdraw his love because we may have been betrayed into sin. **2. He is the propitiation.** The mercy seat of the Tabernacle where God met man was called the propitiation. Christ is our mercy seat, where God meets us in mercy and forgiveness. **And not for ours only.** Christ's offering is for all. “He tasted death for every man.”

3–6. And hereby we do know that we know him. The evidences that we have a saving knowledge of Christ is loyal obedience to his commandments. **4. He that saith, etc.** If one claims to have a saving knowledge of Christ, yet lives in disobedience, his life puts the lie to his words. **5. But whoso keepeth his word, etc.** It is by keeping his commandments that the love of God is made perfect in us. Obedience is the result and proof of love, and also gives love the opportunity to flow over the whole life. Compare [John 14:21](#). **Hereby.** By our loyal obedience. **6. He that saith he abideth in him.** Who so abideth in Christ, and lives by the life Christ imparts, must show that life by a life like that of Christ. See [John 15:4](#).

7–11. I write no new commandment. He writes in substance what was commanded from the beginning when he bids them walk as Christ walks. **The beginning.** Their first hearing of the gospel. **The old commandment is the word.** The Gospel. Its substance is condensed by Christ into the words: “Follow me.” **8. Again, a new commandment.** Yet this commandment, the substance of which is brotherly love, is in one sense new (see [John 13:34](#)), because it was first taught them by Christ. **Which thing is true.** Its truth is shown in the life of Christ and in your life. **Because the darkness is past.** The truth of the new commandment is shown because you have come out of the darkness and are walking in the light that shineth. He that keeps the new commandment walks in the light. **9. He that saith he is the light.** If one hates his brother he demonstrates that he is in darkness. **10. He that loveth, etc.** On the other hand, brotherly love shows that one abides in the light. **None occasion of stumbling.** Because he walks in the light and can see where he walks. **11. But he**

that hateth, etc. He who hates is not following Christ, the Light, and hence walks in the darkness, hence is **blinded**. He cannot see the dangers that beset him on account of the darkness.

12–14. I write unto you, little children. John calls all the saints “little children.” Then he divides them into three classes, “fathers,” “young men,” and “little children” ([verse 13](#)), but the Greek word rendered “little children” in [verse 13](#), is a different one from that of [verses 1 and 12](#). **13. I write unto you, fathers.** These father **have known him**. Not known Christ in the flesh but have walked with him long and realized his presence. **Young men.** The special excellence of these Christian young men is that they have overcome the temptations of the evil one. **Little children.** These have known the Father, and can say, “Our Father who art in heaven.” **14. I have written.** This verse, imitating the Hebrew parallelism, repeats [verses 12 and 13](#) with slight variations.

15–17. Love not the world. An exhortation to all three classes just named. The love of the world and of God are not reconcilable. See notes on [James 4:4](#). By “the world” is meant the ways of the world, its passions, pleasures and pursuits. **16. For all that is in the world.** This sinful world is comprehended under three heads. **The lust of the flesh.** The desires which spring from the appetites and passions. **The lust of the eyes.** The desires that are aroused by appeals made to our eyes. **The pride of life.** The vain glory of the world; its foolish display. Sensuality, avarice and pride, nearly, but not quite, illustrate what is meant. **17. And the world passeth away.** All things are transient, but he who does the will of God builds on eternal foundations.

18–25. Little children, it is the last time. We are in the last dispensation. **Ye have heard that antichrist shall come.** False Christs and those opposed to Christ. See [Matt. 24:4](#). Anti-Christ is Anti-Christianity. **Whereby we know that it is the last time.** Their appearance is a part of the series of events which leads to the final consummation. **19. They went out from us.** This implies that these antichrists were apostates. The worst men are often those who were once outwardly religious and have fallen away. **If they had been of us.** Had they been true and genuine Christians they could hardly have fallen into such a state of enmity. Their going away and bitter opposition show that they were not real converts. **20. But ye have an unction.** Ye are anointed with the Holy Spirit. Christian means an anointed one; Anti-Christ would mean against the Anointed. Hence John reminds them that they have been anointed by the Holy One. **Know all things.** All things needful to guard against these opposers and seducing teachers. It is the privilege of those who have this anointing to know Christ experimentally ([John 14:22, 23](#)). **21. I have not written, etc.** John writes to them as those who know the truth, and know how to discern between the truth and lies. **22. Who is a liar, etc.?** Hence they will know how to reject these antichrists who lyingly deny Jesus Christ. **23. Whosoever denieth the Son.** All who deny the Father and the Son are antichrist; so also those who reject the Son cannot have the Father. **24. Let that therefore abide in**

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you. The truth concerning the Father and the Son which Anti-Christ denies. **Ye shall continue.** He who remains steadfast in this faith will continue **in the Son, etc. 25. And this is the promise.** This promise is made to all who abide in the Son and in the Father.

26–29. These things have I written, etc. All these words about Anti-Christ; all from [verse 18 to the end of the chapter](#) is to put them on their guard against false teachers. **27. But the anointing which ye have received.** See [verse 20](#). This anointing is spoken of because it furnishes them a means of guarding against the false teachers and seducers. The passage does not teach a continuous revelation, or that we are to be led by the inner light, but that God has given us means of knowing whether men speak the truth. **Ye need not that any man should teach you.** There is another fountain of knowledge so that ye need not the aid of these opposing teachers. **As the same anointing teacheth you all things.** The Holy Spirit bestowed upon you. It was the promise of Christ that the Spirit should guide you into all truth ([John 16:13](#)). The Holy Spirit was thus imparted to the apostles and through them spiritual gifts were imparted everywhere in the early church. Among these gifts were wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, and discerning of spirits. These extraordinary gifts continued until the Holy Spirit had prepared the New Testament to guide the church ([1 Cor. 13:8](#)). Now we have the Word of God, which the Holy Spirit has given us, and the presence of the Spirit with us to fit us for understanding. The word and the unction still “teach us all things.” **28. Abide in him.** By continuing in the truth taught of God. **29. If ye know that he is righteous.** A life of righteousness shows that we have the life of Christ, and hence is proof that we have been born of him.



Chapter III

Children Born of God

Summary — *The Marvellous Love of the Father. Sons of God Should Be Sinless. Christ Manifested to Remove Sin. Love the Proof that We Abide in God. The Spirit a Proof that We Abide in God.*

1–3. Behold, what manner of love, etc. The [last verse of chapter 2](#) speaks of the saints as born of God. That thought suggests the wonderful love in allowing us to be born again and thus to become God's children. **Sons of God.** What greater glory than to be acknowledged as sons of the King of Kings! **Therefore.** If the world does not know the Father it will not know his children. **2. Now are we, etc.** Already we have the great privilege of being sons, **and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.** Our future glory is not yet manifest. Even we ourselves cannot understand it. **But we know.** One glorious revelation has been made. At the coming of Christ we shall be **like him.** Then we shall be like him in body. See [Phil. 3:21](#). We shall also be found morally in his image. **For we shall see him as he is.** To look upon him has power to change us into his glory. See [2 Cor. 3:18](#). **3. Every man that hath this hope.** To have a hope of being like Christ leads us to try to be like Christ; hence, to be pure as he is pure.

4–10. Whosoever committeth sin, etc. The very act of sinning is a breaking of law. “Sin is lawlessness” (Revision). **5. Was manifested to take away our sins.** Christ came, not only to take away our sins by their remission, but to take away our disposition to sin. **6. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.** One ceaseth to abide in him when he engages in sinning. See note at the end of the Epistle. **Hath not seen him, etc.** “Whosoever sinneth,” that is, sins habitually, thereby shows that he hath not experimental insight and knowledge of Christ. There is no fellowship with the Sinless One. **7. Let no man deceive you.** Do not be deluded into the belief that any one can be righteous unless he practices righteousness. **8. He that committeth sin is of the devil.** A sinful life is a proof of the devil's power. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and it is his work to destroy sin in all his disciples. **9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.** The thought is that he does not live a life of sin. The spirit born of God, the new creation, does not sin, and cannot sin and remain God's child, but sometimes the old nature revives and for a moment exerts its power. “It is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me” ([Rom. 7:20](#)). See note at end of the Epistle. **His seed remaineth in him.** The principle of divine life, and hence he cannot live a sinful life. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” This new nature cannot sin. If we sin, it is the old nature revived. Unless at once we repent and flee to him he will depart from us. **10. In this, etc.** Thus is the distinction clear between God's children and those of the devil. God's children are full of love and live holy lives. Those of the devil are the opposite.

11, 12. This is the message. God's charge has always been that we should love each other. **12. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one.** Cain, who hated and slew his brother, is an extreme type of children of the devil. This hater and murderer is condemned far more severely in the Scriptures than the disobedient Adam.

13–18. We know that we have passed from death unto life, etc. If our hearts are filled with brotherly love this shows that we are God's children; and the opposite is also true. **15. Whosoever hateth ... is a murderer.** Has the germs from which murder springs lurking in his heart. Hatred led Cain to murder; so it does many others who sin likewise. **No murderer.** It is impossible for a man to have the spirit of murder in him and yet have eternal life. **16. Hereby perceive we the love.** The love of God in Christ is meant. His love is shown on the cross. Christ is love. If we love as he loved, we must be willing even to die for each other. **17. But whoso, etc.** If this be true, what shall be said of one who refuses to succor his suffering brother with all his goods? **18. Let us love not in word.** Our love must not show itself in empty professions.

19–22. Hereby we know, etc. Because our love is active and practical. **Assure our hearts.** Have a good conscience. **20. For if our heart condemn us.** If we have a troubled conscience because we have not kept the law of love, God, who is greater and whose condemnation is a far more serious affair, **knoweth all things** and seeth our failure in duty. **21. If our heart condemn us not, etc.** Then we have a conscience void of offense before God and are assured that he will hear us. **22. And whatsoever we ask.** We can then believe that he will hear our prayers because we are keeping his commandments.

23, 24. And this is his commandment. The commandments may be summed up in one, with two parts, viz.: Faith in Jesus Christ, and love of the brethren. **24. He that keepeth his commandments.** By keeping them we dwell in him and he in us. See [John 14:23](#). **We know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit.** The Spirit that dwells in us is manifest by its fruits. If we bear the fruits of the Spirit in our lives it is proof that Christ dwells in us. If we are led by the Spirit we are the sons of God ([Rom. 8:14](#)).



Chapter IV

Trying the Spirits

Summary — *How to Distinguish the Spirits of Truth and Error. Love a Proof that We Are Born of God. God's Great Love for Us. How We Secure the Indwelling of God. How Love is Made Perfect.*

1–6. Believe not every spirit. The last chapter has closed concerning the Spirit, but some are moved by other spirits than that of Christ. **Try the spirits.** Test the spirit that moves teachers and see whether it be of God. [Verse 2](#) tells how to test. **Because many false prophets.** There were many false teachers in that age as well as in ours, and some claimed to be inspired. **2. Every spirit.** He who confesses from the heart that Christ has come in the flesh shows that he has the Spirit of God. **In the flesh.** One of the heresies was that Christ had come but that there had been no incarnation. **3. Every spirit that confesseth not.** If Christ is denied, it is not God's Spirit, which always speaks truth, but that of antichrist. See notes on 2:18, 19. **4. Ye ... have overcome them.** The saints had overcome these false prophets, because they were of God, and the Spirit in them was mightier than the evil spirit, that of the prince of the world, which was in the false prophets. **5. They are of the world.** The false teachers. They are not of God. The world hears them because they are of its spirit and speak of it. **6. We are of God.** Hence speaks God's message, and those that know God accept the message. **Hereby know we, etc.** By the principles given in [verses 2–5](#) we distinguish between the spirit of truth (the Holy Spirit) and that of error.

7–11. Love one another. He that is born of God must love because the Father is love; hence love shows that we are of him and know him. On the other hand (**8**) he who knows not God does not love. **9. In this was manifested the love of God.** Christ is the supremest manifestation. See notes on [John 3:16](#). **10. Herein is love.** Love manifested. The heights of love are shown, not only in sending the Son, but sending him to be a **propitiation for our sins**; to become a sin offering for us, and to die for us. See notes on 2:2. **11. Beloved.** If we are of God, and God so loves us, we must love one another.

12–16. No man hath seen God. He is invisible to mortal eyes, yet we may have a sense of his presence in us. If we love each other he dwells in us. **His love is perfected.** It is made complete by our loving each other. It is incomplete unless his love for us is supplemented by brotherly love. This love in us is the proof that God is in us. **13. Hereby know we, etc.** We know that God dwells in us by the Spirit given us. But we know we have the Spirit by its fruits. The first and greatest of these is love. See [Gal. 5:22](#). **14. We have seen and do testify.** See [John 15:27](#). This is John's personal testimony as an apostle. **15. Whosoever shall confess, etc.** In [verse 2](#) confession of Jesus Christ in word and life is declared proof of the indwelling Spirit; here it is proof of God dwelling in us, which means the same thing. **16.**

We know and have believed (Revision). The love of God is a matter of knowledge and was a matter of faith. Love binds us to God.

17-21. Herein is our love made perfect. When love is perfected in us we will have no fear of the judgment day. Those who love God supremely will not be terrified at his presence. **Because as he is, so are we, etc.** The great ground of boldness is that we are as Christ; purified like him, made sinless like him, filled with love like him and appear at judgment in his likeness. This transformation begins when we are converted, hence, **in this world.** **18. There is no fear in love.** There may be reverential fear, but there is no terror. Fear of God gives way to love. **Fear hath torment.** Because it fills us with forebodings. **19. We love him.** His wonderful love in Christ fills every redeemed soul with love. **20. If a man say.** Yet no one can claim to love God who hates his brother. We cannot love the unseen God when we hate the brother who is in God's image. **21. This commandment.** It is God's will that he who loves the Father should love the children also.



Chapter V

Conclusion

Summary — *How We Show that We Love God. Overcoming the World. The Three Witnesses. The Witness in Ourselves. Prayer. Praying for a Brother Who Sins Not unto Death.*

1–5. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ. This belief, accepted in the heart, confessed with the mouth, and perfected by the obedience of faith ([Rom. 1:5](#); [James 2:22](#)) makes one a child of God. **2. By this we know, etc.** But all born of God must love God's children. The proof that we have this love is that we so love God as to obey his commandments, one of which is to love our neighbor as ourselves. **3. This is the love of God.** Its outward manifestation is in obedience. See [John 14:23](#). We may test our love thus. **4. Whatsoever is born of God.** All who are born again, and have the new life, **overcome the world**, in the sense that they do not love it and obey its dictates. **This is the victory.** The source of victorious power. As faith gains in strength the world loses its power. **5. Who is he that overcometh?** Only the men of faith; those who believe upon Jesus Christ.

6–10. This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ. The subject of faith in Christ calls out a statement concerning some of the constantly testifying witnesses of Christ. The water and the blood refer primarily to the baptism that revealed him at the beginning of his earthly ministry and the blood which he shed at its close. John came baptizing in order that Christ should be made manifest ([John 1:31](#)). It was while in the waters of the Jordan that Christ was manifested and anointed. On the cross flowed the water and the blood ([John 19:34](#)). Two rites, both monumental institutions, hence both of them witnesses, testify of him. We are baptized into his death ([Rom. 6:1–3](#)); the Lord's Supper points to his shed blood. **Not by water only, but by water and blood.** The revelation of Christ in water at the baptism does not stand alone; Calvary came also with its shedding of blood. **It is the Spirit that beareth witness.** Witness is usually borne in words. The Spirit which descended on the apostles on Pentecost bore witness with mighty power that the crucified Jesus was Lord and Christ ([Acts 2:4](#); [4:31](#); [5:32](#)). **7. There are three that bear record in heaven.** This verse is not found in the Revision or in any ancient MS. It is no doubt an interpolation. **8. There are three that bear witness.** In notes on verse 6 I have shown how these three bear witness. **These three agree in one.** They bear testimony to the same end. **9. If we receive the witness of men.** We do receive human testimony. We have human testimony of many and unimpeachable witnesses to the facts of the life of Christ, but we have also the greater witness of God. We have the Father's testimony on record, and we have it constantly repeated in his transforming grace. Every one born again to a new life is a new demonstration. **10. He that believeth on the Son.** He hath the witness in his changed heart and life. **He that believeth not God.** He makes God a liar by rejecting the witness God gives to the Son.

11–13. This is the witness (Revision). God gives us eternal life through this Son. We know that we have it because we know that we have a new life. **12. He that hath the Son hath life.** We lay hold of the Son by faith in him and thus come to life. **13. These things have I written.** He writes that they may understand how they may know that they have eternal life. Tests have been given. For example, see [5:1](#), [2](#); [4:13](#), etc. **That ye may believe.** Put the fullest trust in the name of Christ.

14–17. And this is the confidence. We may be assured our prayers will be granted, if we ask **according to his will.** There is this condition. **15. If we know that he hear us.** Hear us with open ears. Then we may know that we have what we ask. It will be granted. **16. If a man see his brother sin.** Then a brother can be overtaken by sin. **Not unto death.** There is a sin not unto death, and one unto death. The sin described in [Heb. 6:4–6](#) is evidently unto death; that described in [Gal. 6:1](#) is one not unto death. In the latter case the sinners can be restored, and we may pray for them with the assurance that they will be. This implies both work and prayer. **17. All unrighteousness.** All wrong doing is sin, but the condition of soul that sets it against righteousness and against Christ as steel is a sin unto death. Such a soul repels Christ the life.

18–21. Whosoever is born of God sinneth not. Does not live a life of sin. He will not sin unto death, though he may be overtaken in a fault. See note at end of chapter. **That wicked one toucheth him not.** Cannot lay hands on him so as to hold him. **19. We know that we are of God.** The church is God's temple in which he dwells, and around it the world of wickedness. **20. And we know that the Son of God is come.** Not only by testimony from men but by God's witness. We have life in Christ, and Christ dwells in us. **This is the true God and eternal life.** In Christ the true God is revealed to us and in him we have eternal life. **21. Keep yourselves from idols.** Flee from idolatry, the besetting sin of that age. So too we need to flee from the idols of our age. Whatever takes our worship from God is an idol.

Note. —Sin in the First Epistle of John. A comparison of passages will show that an extreme and false doctrine might be reached by pressing one class to the exclusion of another class. I give a list:

I. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, [1:8](#). If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins, [1:9](#). If we say we have not sinned we make him a liar, [1:10](#). If any man sin (man is not in the Greek), we have an Advocate with the Father, [2:1](#). I write these things that you may sin not, [2:1](#). If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, [5:16](#). There is a sin not unto death, [5:17](#).

These passages all refer to Christians; they teach their liability to sin; show how they may obtain pardon, and show how also they should labor to save an erring brother. One the other hand there is another class which teaches that the Christian is freed from sin.



II. The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses from all sin, 1:7. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not, 3:6. He cannot sin because he is begotten of God, 3:9. Whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not, 5:18.

If this second class of passages was alone considered they would teach apparently the absolute holiness of the saint. The two classes are to be interpreted in the light of each other. They teach that the germ of sin, dormant, perhaps, remains in us as long as we are in the flesh. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." We "may be overtaken in a fault," the dormant germ waken, and we be betrayed into sin for the moment. The sin is due to the temporary revival of the old nature. The new nature, the spiritual being born of the new birth, is not disposed to sin, and will be destroyed if the sin is wilful and continued. One born of God cannot engage in willful sin. Nor can he who abides in Christ. He who becomes a wilful sinner does not abide in Christ, nor remain a child of God.

**The Second Epistle General of
John**



Introduction to the Second Epistle of John

There has always been a difference of opinion and discussion concerning the Second and Third Epistles ascribed to John, the apostle. Neither the ancient church nor the modern critics have been entirely agreed concerning the writer, the persons addressed, or even concerning their title to a place in the Canon. The limited space to which I am confined will not allow me to enter at length into these controversies, further than to say that every hypothesis which refers to the authorship to any one else than John, the apostle, rests upon filmy foundations. The conjecture that they were written by a "Presbyter John," who was a contemporary of the apostle, and also lived at Ephesus, is based upon a fragment preserved from Papias, a Father in the second century, who mentions what he had learned from "the elders," or ancients, and among them names "the Elder John," who was a personal disciple of Christ. Since in the very same sentence he names seven apostles and calls them not apostles, but "elders," or "ancients," those are hard pressed who assume that he meant by the "Elder John," some other personal disciple of Christ than the son of Zebedee. There is no evidence that any "John the elder" lived in the apostolic age, a separate life from John the apostle. In addition, the language, doctrine and style of the two epistles point to the author of the fourth gospel, and especially to the writer of the First Epistle of John.



Chapter I

The Epistle

Summary — *The Address to an Elect Woman and Her Family. The Commandment of Love. Antichrists. Godspeed Not To Be Given to These Opposers. Greetings.*

1–3. The elder. John, unlike Peter and Paul, nowhere in his writings speaks of himself as an apostle. Peter also speaks of himself as an elder. John probably uses the term here, not officially, but in reference to his great age, as the only survivor of the apostles, and perhaps then the only personal disciple of the Lord living. **Unto the elect lady.** The term is *Kyria* in the Greek, a term which we know to have been a female proper name. Hence many of the best commentators from the time of Athanasius have held that this is the name of the sister. If not a proper name *Kyria* would be the feminine form of *Kurios* (Lord), the term applied to Christ, a worldly title unaccountable in the church, which does not recognize artificial distinctions of rank. To avoid this difficulty some have held that by “*Kyria*” the church is meant. It is better to regard the term a proper name. **Whom.** That is, the mother and her children. **2. For the truth's sake.** Those who love in truth, love for the truth's sake. **3. Grace be with you.** The usual benediction of the saints. **The Lord Jesus Christ.** The Revision omits Lord, a word which occurs nowhere else in John's Epistles.

4–6. I rejoiced greatly. Because he had found her children walking in the truth, by keeping the commandment of the Father. The commandment referred to, the one which sums up all, is love. **5. And now I beseech thee, lady.** *Kyria* in Greek. If lady at all it would mean “your ladyship.” **Not as though I wrote a new commandment.** Love embraces all. Compare [1 John 2:7](#). See notes there. **6. And this is love, etc.** Keeping the commandments is the demonstration of love. Compare [1 John 5:3](#), and [John 14:15, 14:23](#).

7–11. For many deceivers are entered into the world. See notes on [1 John 2:18](#); [2:22–24](#), and [4:1](#). **Antichrist.** Opposed to Christ. **8. Look to yourselves.** Let not these deceivers lead you astray. **The full reward.** Belonging to all saints who continue to abide in Christ. **9. Whosoever transgresseth.** He that lives a life of transgression cannot abide in Christ. **Abideth in the doctrine.** The teaching, the Gospel. **10. If there come ... and bring not this doctrine.** That of Christ. If he be a deceiver, an opposer of Christ, one who denies that “Jesus Christ came in the flesh.” **Receive him not into your house.** Do not recognize him as a brother and extend to him a brotherly welcome. He is not to be fellowshipped. **Neither bid him God speed.** Give him no encouragement in his work of destruction. To give him greetings is to wish for his success. **11. For he that biddeth, etc.** He that gives him these prayerful greetings and encouragement becomes a partaker, to that extent, in his evil deeds.

12, 13. Having many things. Though many more things occurred that he wished to write about, he hopes soon to see her and speak face to face. **13. The children of thy elect**

sister. It is usually supposed that this refers to a sister in the flesh, also one of the elect, whose children, probably grown up and Christians, were at that time with John.

**The Third Epistle General of
John**



Introduction to the Third Epistle of John

That this third epistle was written by the author of the second, is agreed. The writer is "The Elder;" the closing verses are almost a verbatim copy of those of the second. All that has been said concerning the authorship of the second, therefore, applies to the third. The only hypothesis which is more than baseless conjecture is that which ascribes it to John the apostle, in his extreme old age, during his residence at Ephesus. Like the second this is addressed to an individual of whose personality we are uncertain, as the name Gaius, or Caius, occurs several times in the New Testament.



Chapter I

The Epistle

Summary —*Gaius Commended. His Hospitality. His Treatment of Visiting Brethren. The Wicked Conduct of Diotrephes. The Good Report of Demetrius. Benediction.*

1–4. The elder. See notes on **II John 1:1**. **The well beloved Gaius.** This name is mentioned in **Acts 19:29; 20:4; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14**. The hospitality of the Corinthian Gaius named in **Rom. 16:23** agrees well with what John says of him whom he addresses. **2. Even as thy soul prospereth.** He wishes Gaius all good things, but most of all prosperity of soul. **3. For I rejoiced greatly.** Certain brethren had been where Gaius lived, had enjoyed his hospitality and had spoken well of him to John on their return. **4. I have no greater joy.** That which gave him the greatest joy was to know that the saints walked in the truth. **My children.** The aged John was wont to call the saints his children. See **1 John 2:1, 12, 18, 28; 4:4; 5:21**.

5–8. Thou doest a faithful work. In his kindness to brethren and strangers. In those early ages hospitality to the saints sent on evangelistic missions, and especially to persecuted saints driven from home, was a very important duty. **6. Which have borne testimony to thy love.** These traveling brethren reported to the Church how Gaius had aided them. **Thou shalt do well.** A polite exhortation to continue such hospitality in the future. The hospitality was wont to be shown not only by opening the home to these saints, but by helping them on their journey. **7. Because.** The persons named were engaged in the work of Christ (**his name's sake**). **Taking nothing.** They could not ask aid of the Gentiles. The Greek form does not imply that the Gentiles had tendered presents which had been rejected (*Winer's Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, page 388, note 1).

9–12. I wrote somewhat unto the church. Of which Gaius was a member. The letter referred to is not extant. **But Diotrephes.** This man is not elsewhere named. He was evidently an ambitious and unscrupulous church official, who rebelled against the apostle's authority (**receiveth us not**), and who refused to heed the letter. The letter may have been sent by those whom Gaius entertained. **10. Wherefore, if I come.** It may be necessary for him to come. If he does, he will arraign Diotrephes for his deeds. **Prating against us.** Excusing himself by maligning John. **Neither doth he himself receive the brethren.** The messengers John sent. **He forbiddeth.** Seeks to prevent any of the church from hearing or extending hospitality to these messengers. **Casting them out of the church.** Seeks to have them denied Christian fellowship. **11. Follow not that which is evil.** The wicked example of one like Diotrephes. **12. Demetrius hath the witness of all.** Of this Demetrius we know nothing more. Perhaps he was a member of the same church as Diotrephes, whose example is contrasted.



13, 14. I had many things to write. These verses correspond with the [12th and 13th of the Second Epistle](#). See notes there. **14. The friends.** An uncommon title in the New Testament, where it is almost supplanted by the dearer title of “brethren” or the holier one of “saints.”

**The General Epistle of
Jude**



Introduction to the Epistle of Jude

The author of this epistle introduces himself as “Jude the brother of James.” Among the apostles there was a “Judas (Jude) James,” the word son or brother being unexpressed, and some have concluded that the “Judas, not Iscariot,” of the twelve is the writer of this letter. It is more likely, however, that he was the brother of the James of Jerusalem, who became so prominent in the history of the Palestine church, and whom Paul speaks of as a “pillar.” In the last fifteen years before the overthrow of Jerusalem he became the most influential personage among the Jewish Christians, and it was only natural that Jude, if his brother, should refer to that relationship in order to secure a more favorable hearing. That James was “the Lord's brother” ([Ga. 1:19](#)), but among the brethren of the Lord there was a Jude also, whom we have every reason to believe to be the writer of this epistle. For a fuller discussion of the question, see the [Introduction to the Epistle of James](#). There reasons will be found for the conclusion that James was not an apostle, and it would follow also that Jude was not of the twelve. Since the authors of the second and third gospels and of Acts were not apostles, it need not be thought strange that two of the epistles were by other holy men.

Another question of some interest arises from a comparison of Jude with Second Peter. The reader will find that [Jude 3–18](#) is almost identical with [2 Peter 1:5 and 2:1–18](#). One or the other writer certainly had before him the work of the other. Critics are divided concerning which was the earlier writer, and reasons can be given for assigning the priority to each. It seems to me probable that the “Speaker's Commentary” is right in deciding in favor of Peter, and that Jude was written at a date not much later. It is probable that he found a part of Peter's epistle expressed his ideas so well that he modified it somewhat and inserted it in his letter. It is more likely that he would thus honor an apostolic letter of the renowned Peter than that Peter would borrow from him. On this hypothesis this epistle was written between a.d. 65 and 70, or shortly before the siege of Jerusalem. We have no data for determining where it is written, but there seems to be no doubt that, like the epistles of Peter and of James, it was primarily addressed to Jewish Christians. It contains a salutation with reasons for writing ([verse 4](#)); then three examples of the punitive justice of God; following this is a particular account of the wicked ways of certain false teachers against which he would warn them; after this comes a concluding portion in which disciples are warned and exhorted, and the whole closes with one of the sublimest doxologies of the Bible.

Chapter I

The Epistle

1, 2. Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ. See [Introduction](#) for his identification. Had he been an apostle, he would hardly have omitted to state it. See Salutations of the Epistles of Paul and Peter. **Brother of James.** James, “the brother of the Lord,” the James of Jerusalem. The brethren of Jesus were James and Joses, and Jude and Simon ([Matt. 13:55](#)). **Called.** Those invited who have accepted are styled the called.

3, 4. When I gave all diligence. His thought was that when he proposed to write diligently and carefully some need impelled him to write at once, more briefly perhaps than he had purposed. **Earnestly contend for the faith which was once, etc.** He exhorts to contend for the faith delivered once for all, the faith without innovation, the gospel of the apostles in distinction from the adulterations of false teachers. The doctrine of a progressive revelation after the apostles is not found in the New Testament. **4. For there are certain men.** Men who have crept in without their character being understood. **Who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.** Whose coming was predicted and whose lives were placed under condemnation. See [verse 14 and also verse 17](#). **To this condemnation.** This condemnation which comes on all the ungodly. **Turning the grace of our God.** Of the gospel. Instead of self-restraint they live lascivious lives. The warrant for this was found in “the freedom of the children of God.” From the very times of the apostles there have been Antinomians who have held that what was sin to others might be permitted to the sanctified. They asserted that the Spirit was not defiled by the sins of the body. **Denying our only Lord Jesus Christ.** “Lord God” is not found in the best manuscript. Their denial of Christ was a denial that he had come in the flesh. These sectaries held that the flesh was wholly sinful.

5–7. I will therefore put you in remembrance. Of how God speaks judgments on sinners. **How that the Lord, etc.** Having saved the people out of Egypt, the people were destroyed for their sins in the wilderness. See [Num. 14:29](#). **6. And the angels which kept not their first estate.** See note on [2 Pet. 2:4](#). These angels, then, had fallen. Created holy, they had sinned and become wicked angels, or evil spirits. **Left their own habitation.** Their own proper home. Some see a reference to [Gen. 6:2](#). **He hath reserved.** God hath imprisoned them and kept them for judgment. **7. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha.** See notes on [2 Pet. 2:6, 10](#); also [Gen. 19:24](#). For their lasciviousness terrible destruction came upon them. **Set forth for an example.** Utterly destroyed by fire they are an example that points to the eternal fire.

8–10. Likewise also these filthy dreamers. These men who are agitated by impure dreams. **Despise dominion.** See notes on [2 Pet. 2:10](#). **9. Yet Michael the archangel.** Michael is brought forward as a contrast with those who speak evil of dignities. He is called by Daniel



“the Great Prince,” and here the archangel, or head angel. Yet in addressing the devil, a fallen angel, he did not rail at him, but only said, “The Lord rebuke thee.” The reference is not to a statement of the Bible, but to a Jewish tradition which held that the burial place of Moses was placed under the charge of Michael. **10. But these speak evil of those things which they know not.** Of spiritual and unseen things. **But what they know naturally.** By the natural senses. In these things they corrupt themselves.

11–13. Woe unto them! The denunciation of woes, common in the Lord's ministry, is only found here in all the rest of the New Testament. **Gone in the way of Cain.** Living selfish lives, full of hate. **After the error of Balaam.** Like Balaam trying to make a gain of godliness. See notes on [2 Pet. 2:15](#). **Perished in the gainsaying of Core.** Like Balaam they are false prophets. Like Korah, who profanely thrust himself into the priesthood and perished, they intrude irreverently into holy places. **12. These are spots in your feasts of charity.** See notes on [2 Pet. 2:13](#). They engaged in revelings at the *Agape*, the love feasts. **Clouds they are without water.** Rainless clouds. See notes on [2 Pet. 2:17](#). **Trees ... without fruit.** Fruitless, barren. **Twice dead.** Doubly dead, hence, no hope of fruit. **13. Raging waves of the sea.** Roaring and foaming like the sea waves. **Wandering stars.** Stars not fixed in their places, but shooting like meteors, and then going out. “Shooting stars” is not far from the idea. **To whom is reserved, etc.** As the shooting stars go out in darkness, so these will pass into eternal darkness.

14, 15. And Enoch also. This prophecy of the holiest man of the antediluvian world might have been preserved by tradition. It is found in the Book of Enoch, a work long lost, but recovered in modern times in Abyssinia, supposed to have been composed the century before Christ. Wherever Jude met it, he was familiar with the prophecy. **The seventh from Adam.** To the Jew there was a sacredness in seven. **Prophesied of these.** These blasphemers. The prophecy is quoted. **15. To execute judgment upon all.** For a general judgment. **To convince.** To convict all ungodly men of their ungodly deeds.

16–19. These are murmurers. They murmur at God's providence and complain of his laws. **Having men's persons in admiration.** Being respecters of persons for the sake of self-interest. **17. Remember ye the words ... spoken before of the apostles.** The language implies that Jude was not an apostle. **18. How that they told you there would be mockers.** See [2 Pet. 3:3](#); [1 Tim. 4:1](#); [2 Tim. 3:1](#). **Last time.** In the last dispensation. **19. These be they.** Already this is being fulfilled. **Who separate.** Who separate themselves from God and the communion of saints. **Sensual.** Living an animal rather than a spiritual life.

20–23. Building up yourselves. Instead of separating from the faith. **Praying in the Holy Spirit.** See notes on [Eph. 6:18](#). **21. Keep yourselves in the love of God.** By holy lives and prayer. **22. On some have mercy, who are in doubt.** See the Revision. The thought is to be very gentle and pitiful to those disturbed by doubt. **23. And some save, snatching them out of the fire.** By snatching away from sin by the most vigorous effort. By stern

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preaching. **Some have mercy with fear.** Mercifully point out the danger. **Hating even the garment, etc.** All the while abhorring their sins.

24, 25. Now unto him. God. **Who is able.** To work out our full salvation. **Before the presence of his glory.** In his glorious presence. **25. The only God our Savior.** Our Savior “through Jesus Christ.” **Be glory.** Not only glory forever and ever, but eternal and universal dominion.

**The
Revelation
of John**



Introduction to Revelation

When we open the Book of Revelation we discover, at once, a marked difference between it and any other portion of the New Testament. It is not history like the gospels and Acts, nor practical discussions and instructions like the epistles, but we at once seem to breathe the atmosphere of prophets like Ezekiel and Daniel. As Ezekiel and Daniel were permitted to behold visions which revealed certain great events of the future, in a series of symbolic images, so there passes before the eyes of John a series of wonderful visions of which he makes record, and has left that record to the church for interpretation. The book is a book of prophecy. "God gave to him to show unto his servants the things which should shortly come to pass." In order to any clear understanding of the book we must never lose sight of its object, as stated in the opening sentence. Its object is to reveal the future. Nor is its aim to reveal some limited events of the future, but to show *the things* which must come to pass. In other words, its aim is to unfold the outlines of coming history as far as that history affects the fortunes of the church.

There is, unfortunately, no portion of the New Testament concerning which there has been more disagreement, and which has been less understood. The plan of The People's Testament will not allow me to occupy much space with these discussions, and I will confine myself to certain points which cannot well be passed over without prejudice to the correct understanding of the text. Among these questions are those of the *Author*, the *Date* when the work was written, the *Place* where it was written and the *Principles of Interpretation*.

The Author

I have alluded in the introductions to John's epistles to the theory of certain rationalistic critics that these were written by a "Presbyter John," whom they assume to have lived in the times of John, the apostle. There is no real evidence that such a personage ever lived. That John should speak of himself as an elder is no more strange than that Peter should so describe himself, and the fragment from Papias, which speaks of John the elder, who was a disciple of Christ, is more satisfactorily explained by the hypothesis that he alludes to the apostle, especially in view of the facts that seven apostles are named in the same paragraph, and all are spoken of as "elders," and that Irenæus says that Papias was a disciple of John, the apostle. Yet there has been an effort to show that this mythical John is the John named in the [first verse](#) of Revelation.

Without discussing whether the "Presbyter John" had any separate existence, it is a sufficient answer to this hypothesis to state that there is no book of the New Testament to whose authorship the testimony of history is more definite. Only a few years passed after the death of John, the apostle, until it was quoted and ascribed to him by writers who either knew him in person or who derived their information from those who sat at his feet. Among those early witnesses is Papias, born about a.d. 70, a disciple of John himself ("a hearer" of John, according to Irenæus) of whose writings only fragments have been preserved, but who is known to have quoted Revelation as the work of John. To him may be added Irenæus, born between a.d. 115 and a.d. 125, who tells us that he was long a pupil of Polycarp, of whom he states that Polycarp had learned many things of the aged apostle at whose feet he had long sat. Of course, with such opportunities he could not be ignorant of what John had written, yet he declares explicitly that he is the author of the Apocalypse. Several more fathers of the second century are quoted as giving the same testimony, but it will suffice to add that it is named in the Canon Muratori, the first canon of the New Testament Scriptures, dated about a.d. 170, and all doubts concerning its genuineness seem to belong to later times. Nor is any fact of history better established than that John's last years were spent in that part of Asia with which the Book of Revelation is locally associated.



The Date

Only two dates for the composition are named, (1.) that always assigned to it by the ancient church, near the end of the reign of the Emperor Domitian, which extended from a.d. 81 to a.d. 96, and (2.) that which has been urged by certain modern critics, the latter part of the reign of Nero, about a.d. 65–68. The first date is supported by the historical testimony. It is urged in behalf of the second that there are internal evidences in its favor, but when these are examined they are found to resolve themselves into certain theories of interpretation and were it not for the necessity of these, this date would never have been proposed. Before stating the grounds for assigning the date to the latter part of the reign of Domitian, about a.d. 95,96, I will briefly consider the reasons urged in favor of the date in the reign of Nero. (1.) It is held that the work must have been written while the temple was still standing ([Re 11:1](#)) and that [chap. 11:2](#) and [chap. 20:9](#) prove that the City of Jerusalem was still standing but in a state of siege. It seems strange to me that a Bible student could use this argument. Every New Testament student knows that both the temple and Jerusalem are used elsewhere as symbols of the church, and how much more likely that the terms would be used as symbols in a book which is largely composed of symbols from beginning to end! It seems strange that in a *vision* composed of symbols any one should insist that John on Patmos, a thousand miles distant, literally saw the temple or Jerusalem. Besides, when John in [chap. 11:8](#) speaks of the city as “spiritually called Sodom and Egypt,” he shows that he cannot mean the literal Jerusalem. A holy city is the symbol of the church; a wicked city of an apostate church; a city trodden down by the Gentiles of a church overcome by worldly influence. The language of [chap. 20:9](#) utterly excludes the Jewish capital in the reign of Nero.¹ The theory itself is skeptical in that it convicts John of holding and sanctioning a popular error. (3.) It is also urged that there are certain solecisms in the Greek original which are wanting in John's gospel, and from this it is argued that the Revelation must have been written much earlier than the gospel, before John had fully mastered the language. Upon this point I quote from Prof. Wm. Milligan, of the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, than whom, probably, no man living is a more thorough scholar in New Testament Greek: “The solecisms are not such as proceed from an ignorance of the Greek language, and they would not have been removed by greater familiarity with it. However we attempt to account for them, they are obviously designed, and rather imply a more accurate knowledge of the grammatical forms from which they are intentional departures. At the same time there are passages in the book (as for example chap. 18) which, in their unsurpassed and unsurpassable eloquence, exhibit a command of the Greek tongue, on the part of the writer, that long fa-



¹ The exegetical assumption of modern critics that this passage ([Rev. 11:1](#)) proves the temple at Jerusalem to have been still standing at the time when the Apocalypse was written affords another sign of the deep fall of these critics into a false literalism (Lange on Revelation, page 26).

miliarity with it can best explain, were explanation necessary.”² (4.) It is said that the Jewish imagery belongs to John's earlier rather than his later years. To this it may be replied that no New Testament writer shows a stronger Jewish feeling than is found in John's gospel. It is John, who states, “Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22) that Jesus is “the King of Israel” (John 1:49), and Old Testament thoughts and figures constantly appear in the fourth gospel.

2 Winer (Grammar of the Greek Testament), discussing the solecisms of the Apocalypse says, “In some instances they are the result of design; in others they are to be referred to carelessness on the part of the writer.... In this light they should always be considered, and not ascribed to the ignorance of the writer, or regarded Hebraisms.... But, with all the simplicity and the oriental tone of his language, the author knows well and observes well the rules of the Greek syntax.”—Page 672. It should always, too, be kept in mind that Revelation is written, not as a calm, sedate, elaborate composition, like John's Gospel, but with the fire and ecstasy of a prophet. This accounts for differences of style.

The Real Date

It is thus seen that the argument in favor of the early date is easily answered. On the other hand, the *historical* argument in favor of a later date is convincing to the mind which can be swayed by historical evidence. Commencing with the positive and definite statement of Irenæus there is unbroken agreement for nearly four centuries that the date of the work belongs to the persecution of the reign of Domitian. To properly weigh the statement of Irenæus, elected Bishop of Lyons in a.d. 178, and born in the first quarter of the second century, it is needful to keep in mind that he was a disciple of Polycarp, who suffered martyrdom in a.d. 155. In one of his letters Irenæus speaks to a fellow disciple of how intimate they had been with Polycarp and how often they had heard him tell of John the apostle, and how much they had been told of John by the aged saint who had once been under the instruction of the apostle. Hence it is apparent that Irenæus must have known from Polycarp the leading facts of John's history, and especially the circumstances connected with his exile to Patmos. This witness, whose opportunity for knowing the facts is unquestioned, declares, "*Revelation was seen no long time since, but almost in our generation, towards the end of the reign of Domitian*" (a.d. 96). With this plain statement agree all the church fathers who speak of the subject, not only of the second century, but for three centuries. "There is no variation in the historical accounts. All statements support the conclusion that St. John was banished to Patmos by Domitian (a.d. 81–96)—some writers placing the exile in the fourteenth of his reign—and all agree that the Visions of which Revelation is the record were received in Patmos."³

One writer in the fourth century makes the blunder of assigning the banishment to the reign of Claudius Cæsar, a blunder which finds no endorsers, a blunder which is supposed to have been a verbal mistake, but it is not until the sixth century that we find the opinion expressed that the banishment belonged to the persecution of the reign of Nero, and up to the twelfth century there are only two writers who endorse this date. They cannot be called witnesses, since the earliest of them was separated from the death of John by a period greater than that which separates us from the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Hence, it is no misstatement of the facts to say that the historical proof, in favor of the later date, is uniform, clear and convincing.

3 The Bible (Speaker's) Commentary. New Testament, Vol. IV, page 432.

Internal Testimony

The historical conclusion is corroborated by convincing internal testimony. I condense from Godet's *Bible Studies*, second series, certain points which bear upon the question of Date: (1.) "The condition of the churches indicated" in the second and third chapters renders the early date improbable. These churches were not founded before a.d. 55–58. Paul wrote to two of these churches, Ephesus and Colosse, in a.d. 62 or 63; Peter wrote to all the churches of that region several years later still; Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, at Ephesus, probably as late as a.d. 67; in these letters there is no hint of John being in that section of the world, or of the spiritual decay revealed in the letters to the angels of the churches of Ephesus, Sardis and Laodicea; yet this theory requires us to believe that not later than a.d. 68 or 69, John found these churches spiritually dead. There is no reasonable doubt but that the second and third chapters of Revelation describe a condition which could only have arisen a generation later than the date of Paul's last intercourse with these churches. (2.) Godet notes the fact that an ecclesiastical organization reveals itself in the seven churches which did not reveal itself until about the close of the first century. In each church there is one man, "the angel of the church," through whom the whole church is addressed. There is no hint of any individual enjoying a distinction like this until about the beginning of the second. (3.) The expression, "The Lord's-day," does not occur in the earlier apostolical writings. They always speak of the "First Day of the week" instead. The term used in a.d. 68 was "the First Day of the week," but the writers of the second century from the beginning use "the Lord's-day." This term, then, points to a period near the beginning of the second century as the date of Revelation. (4.) The expressions in [chap. 2:9](#) and [3:9](#) point to a complete separation between the church and the synagogue. This complete separation did not take place until the epoch of the destruction of Jerusalem. Such language as we find in these two places can only be accounted for by a fact so momentous as the overthrow of the Jewish state, and hence belongs to a later date.

This discussion might be continued, and it is of importance to any correct interpretation that the date should be clearly settled, but I believe that enough has been said to show that all the facts point to "near the end of the reign of Domitian, or about the year a.d. 96." It might be of service to add that the persecution of Nero, as far as known, was local and confined to Rome; that death, instead of banishment, was the favorite method of punishment with him; that it is not probable that he would have *put to death* Paul and Peter and *banished* John; and that there is no evidence that John, as early as a.d. 68, had ever visited the region of the seven churches. On the other hand, the persecution of Domitian was not local; we know also that he sent other Christians into exile; we know also that the later years of John's life were passed at Ephesus, and in the region of which it was the center.

The Place

That the visions of Revelation were seen upon the island of Patmos is a fact that rests upon the testimony of the writer himself. It is the universal testimony of the early church, that John survived the destruction of Jerusalem, that when the storm of war was gathering around that devoted city he, in obedience to the Lord's warning ([Matt. 24:16](#)), fled from the coming desolation, and finally took up his abode in Ephesus, in the midst of the churches of Asia, founded by the apostle Paul. During his long sojourn in this region, which extended until the close of his life, he was banished in the persecution of the latter part of the reign of Domitian. Patmos, the place of exile, is simply a rocky prison house in the sea. It consists of three rocky masses connected by isthmuses, is about thirty miles in circuit, lies in the south part of the Aegean Sea, and one of a group called the Sporades. It is seldom visited as it is reached by no regular lines of ships and has comparatively little intercourse with the mainland. The writer passed between it and the shore of Asia in 1889, and was enabled by comparison with the adjacent islands to form a realistic conception of the prison house of John. Its mountain peaks are bare, there is some grass in the valleys on which a few sheep and cattle are pastured, and there are some fruit trees, but the general appearance is lonely and desolate. Yet it is set in one of the brightest of seas with an almost cloudless sky above, and from its higher points John could sweep his vision over a range of forty miles, embracing the surrounding islands and the mountains of Asia in the distance.

Though the visions were granted while John was an exile on Patmos many have held, it seems to me with too little reason, that the work was actually written in Ephesus. There is nothing in proof of this view but conjecture. It is also opposed to the fact that the first of the seven letters is addressed to "the angel of the church of Ephesus" ([2:1](#)). Had John, at the time of writing, been a resident of Ephesus, this fact cannot be reasonably explained. It is better to accept the plain inference of the narrative, that the visions were not only seen in, but that they were recorded in Patmos.



Systems of Interpretation

There is probably no other portion of the Scriptures concerning the meaning of which the interpreters so widely differ. This has caused some readers to conclude that the work is a tissue of confused and perhaps incoherent utterances, thrown out in prophetic ecstasy, the interpretation of which is a hopeless attempt; and they have supposed that the attempted explanations only illustrated the vagaries and the failures of the commentators. The differences are due to the different systems of interpretation employed. Of these there are three principal ones, all containing some truth, but all also in danger of being pushed to extreme erroneous conclusions, and it is probable that every interpreter, who is not rationalistic, accepts some of the results of all three of these systems. These are: (1.) *The Preterist*. According to this system the successive visions apply to events chiefly in the history of the Jewish nation and of Pagan Rome. These events have occurred long since in the past. Many rationalistic writers insist that all events described must have taken place before the visions were written, and that there is no such thing as *prediction*. Hence these critics are called *Preterists*, but this view is not confined to them. It is held by most Roman Catholic commentators and by some Protestants. (2.) *The Futurists*. These insist that the predictions apply mainly to events yet in the future, and will be fulfilled in the future history of the literal Israel. They assert that Israel will again occupy Palestine, that the temple will be literally rebuilt; that the holy city shall be literally trodden down for 1,260 days by the Gentiles, etc. The *Preterist* system is right in asserting that much of Revelation applies to what is now past, and the *Futurist* is right this far, namely, that a portion applies to what is still future. (3.) *The Historical*. In my opinion this system is more nearly correct, and yet it needs to be modified by the others, and carefully guarded. It holds that a succession of historical events, future when John wrote but now in part in the past, are portrayed by a series of visions. The error must be avoided of supposing that the book is continuously historical from the beginning to the end. If it is borne in mind that there is more than one series of visions; that when one series ends another follows which is *synchronous*, at least in part; that a part of the events portrayed by symbols is not in the past, while another portion is in the future, I think the result of the Historical system will be found to be clear, harmonious, and surprisingly in correspondence with the visions of the prophet. It perhaps cannot be expected that even those who adopt this system will agree in every detail, but we do find that the great expositors of the historical school, embracing the majority of English commentators, are in substantial agreement.

It must always be kept in mind, however, that this book is a book of prophecy, intended to “*shew the things which must shortly come to pass.*” John was a Seer. He recorded what he *saw*. The future was portrayed to him in a series of visions. The pictures which passed before his eyes represented future events. Hence, each is a symbolical representation of what was then *future*, and may now be *past* history. Thus, when the first seal is opened in [chap. 6:1, 2](#), and a warrior is seen with a bow in his hand riding on a white horse in conquest, this

must be interpreted as a sense-image which appropriately represents an event or epoch of history which was future when John was an exile on Patmos. Symbolical pictures follow each other in rapid succession as the seals are opened and the trumpets blown, a correct interpretation of which is to be sought not in literal fulfillment, but in events of which the sense-visions might be appropriate symbols. It will be a help in understanding the text to have an explanation of the meaning of the various symbols employed as they are ordinarily used in prophetic writings; hence I give a

Table of Symbols

In this table I aim to give only the leading Symbols used by John, with their apparent meaning. The definitions have been obtained from Mede, Elliott, Lange, Campbell, Archdeacon Lea, and other sources.

Adultery.—Idolatry or apostasy; especially the latter. As Christ is represented as a bridegroom and the church as a bride, apostasy, or unfaithfulness to him, would be spiritual adultery, and a false church properly represented as a harlot.

Angel.—Any agent or messenger of the divine will. The term may be a symbol of any movement of nations, or in history which carries out the divine purposes.

Ascension to Heaven.—Exaltation in power and glory. Prosperity.

Babylon.—The city which carried Israel into captivity. Hence, a symbol of any power that renders them captive, whether it be Pagan or Papal Rome.

Balances.—A symbol of justice, but when used to denote the weighing out of food, a symbol of scarcity.

Black.—The color of mourning; hence a symbol of calamity and sorrow.

Black Horse.—The horse was not used as a beast of burden by the ancients, but for purposes of war. Hence it is a symbol of war, and a black horse is a symbol of calamitous war.

Blood.—A symbol of the carnage of war.

Beast.—The term rendered *beast* in the Revision means a savage wild beast. Hence it is a symbol of a cruel, tyrannical persecuting power. The term used in [chap. 4](#), rendered beasts in the Common Version, is not the same. Instead of “Four Beasts” that should be rendered “Four Living Creatures.”

Binding.—This symbol means to restrain, to hold; also to deprive of power and render helpless.

Book.—The record of the divine will. To seal a book is to conceal its meaning, since ancient books were rolls and could not be read when sealed. To open seals is to disclose the meaning. To devour a book is to become master of its contents. The book with seven seals is the book of human destiny, an outline of the great events which connect themselves with the church until its final triumph. The opening of its seals is the revelation of future history.

Bow.—The bow, a warlike weapon, when held in the hand is a symbol of war.

Bride.—The spouse of Christ, the Church, the New Jerusalem.

Bridegroom.—Jesus Christ.

Candlestick.—A symbol of a church, which should be a light in the world. The seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches. A symbol of any light-giving agency.

Chain.—A symbol of bondage or affliction. To chain is to render powerless. To bind Satan with a chain is to destroy his power.



Cloud.—An emblem of power and majesty. To ride upon the clouds is to appear in glory and exaltation.

Crown.—The symbol of royal majesty. To enjoy exaltation and honor. To receive the crown of life is to receive the honors of eternal life.

Darkness.—The well known symbol of calamity and affliction.

Day.—“I have given you a day for a year.” One revolution of the earth on its axis is a symbol of its annual revolution in its orbit. “Twelve hundred and sixty days” means as many years.

Death.—A symbol of destruction.

Dragon.—The old pagan Roman Empire. The dragon was originally a symbol of a monarch. In Revelation it means the persecuting monarchy of Rome.

Earth.—The ancient civilized world, which corresponded in John's time with the Roman Empire. Political powers.

Earthquake.—Political and moral revolutions and convulsions of society. The shaking of the established order of things. The subversion of states and fortunes.

Eclipse.—Or the darkening of heavenly bodies, means the obscuration of the glory of kings and potentates of which sun, moon and stars are symbols.

Egypt.—The place of spiritual bondage. A condition of sinfulness. Opposition to Christ.

Euphrates.—The symbol of the Turkish power. To be “bound by the Euphrates” is to be restrained at that river.

Elders.—Probably princes of righteousness.

False Prophets.—A false spiritual power which falsely claims divine authority for its teaching.

Fire.—Fierce destruction. Never the symbol of a blessing, but of a curse.

Fire from Heaven.—Divine destruction; but fire brought down from heaven by the two-horned dragon means excommunication and anathemas of a false spiritual power.

Flood.—Symbol of overpowering. Distress from persecution or any cause.

Forehead.—A mark in the forehead means a public profession.

Fornication.—Idolatry. See *Adultery*.

Grave.—To put in the grave, signifies to consign to oblivion. “Not to suffer dead bodies to be put into the grave,” means that they shall be remembered.

Hail.—Ravages and destruction.

Hand.—A mark in the hand means the manner of life, or practice.

Harlot.—An idolatrous community. The great Harlot is the apostate church. See *Adultery*.

Heavens and the Earth.—The world. The political and religious universe. A new heavens and new earth imply a passing away of the old order of things and the establishment of a new order.

Horse.—Used only for warlike purposes by the ancients and hence a symbol of war. The color of the horse indicates the condition of his rider and the state of the war.

Horns.—“The great horn of the first king;” **Daniel**. A symbol of kings, kingdoms, or power. Seven horns indicate enormous power.

Incense.—The prayers of the saints.

Islands.—European states. In the prophets the “isles of the sea” meant the countries in and beyond the Mediterranean; hence, Europe.

Jerusalem.—The capital of Judea and the seat of the temple becomes a symbol of the church of Christ. The “holy city” is contrasted with the “great city,” Jerusalem with Babylon, or the true with the false church.

Jezebel.—An unholy woman is a symbol of an unholy influence in the church.

Key.—A symbol of power to deliver or imprison, to open heaven or hell, or to shut them; of power to save or destroy.

King.—Supreme power of any kind. A government; a kingdom.

Lamb.—The symbol of a sinless, sacrificial offering. The Lamb of God is Christ slain as a lamb from the foundation of the world.

Lion.—A symbol of kingly power.

Locusts.—The locusts, a devouring pest bred in the deserts of Arabia, are a symbol of devouring Arabian armies. The Arabians under Mohammed.

Manna.—The bread of life. The truth of Christ.

Measuring Rod.—The standard by which the church is measured. The Word.

Mountain.—Some person or power conspicuous among men. Highly elevated. A great prince or government. A burning mountain is a baleful, destructive power.

Moon.—A symbol of powers, rulers and great men which are not supreme. A light which shines by reflecting another light.

Merchants.—A symbol of those who make a gain of godliness and traffic in religious privileges.

Palm.—A symbol of joy or victory.

Pale Horse.—An image of desolating war, and a reign of death.

Red Horse.—An image of cruel, bloody war, distinguished by awful carnage.

River of Life.—Christ is the fountain of life. The abundant, ever flowing life that Christ bestows, is fitly symbolized by a river. The *river*, and *tree*, of life mean essentially the same.

Rod.—The symbol of rule. The rod of iron is a symbol of resistless sway.

Scarlet.—This color, the color of blood, symbolizes bloody cruelty. A scarlet woman is a persecuting church.

Seven.—The perfect number. Completeness.

Stars.—Shining lights in the world. Conspicuous men, whether in the church or the state.

Sun.—As the great light giver, in one sense a symbol of Christ. Also a supreme ruler. The moon and stars indicate great lights of society, but inferior to the sun.

Sword.—A symbol of slaughter. Also of conquest. A sword in the hand indicates by carnal weapons. A sword proceeding from the mouth indicates conquests by the word of God.

Temple of God.—The church of which the tabernacle and temple were types. The temple of God in heaven, open, is the abode of God, heaven itself, the church above.

Throne.—A symbol of authority.

Trumpet.—The blast of a trumpet signifies the forward march of armies, carnal or spiritual. Also the proclamation of war or peace.

Time.—Time, times and half a time is an annual revolution of the earth, a year, two years, a half year, or three and a half years. “Seven times” passed over Nebuchadnezzar, or seven years.

Wine Press.—A symbol of an effusion of blood and of distress.

White.—To be clothed in white is to be innocent, pure, and to be triumphant.

White Horse.—Triumphant and glorious war.

Whore.—Apostate church. See *Adultery*.

Winds.—Symbol of commotion; of mighty movements. The “Four Winds” are four invasions of the Roman Empire.

Witness.—The two witnesses are the two Testaments, for such is the meaning of the latter word.

Woman.—The “woman clothed with the sun” is the pure and faithful church. The Great Harlot is the false, faithless, apostate church. The church is often symbolized by a bride, or a woman bearing children. A pure woman represents a faithful church; an adulterous woman, “a harlot,” a false, apostate church.



The Scope of Revelation

John states that the book is a record of things “which should shortly come to pass.” He saw outlined in his vision events which were at that time in the future, but high were “shortly” to become history. No one would suppose that it was the divine purpose to reveal all the changing history of nations, races and kingdoms for the last eighteen hundred years, and hence, a question necessary to interpretation is: To what countries and series of events do the predictions apply? If we turn to the Old Testament prophets we will be guided to a correct answer. The central thought in all their predictions is the future history of the people of God. All that they utter is related, either directly or indirectly, to the fortunes of Israel, temporal and spiritual, the typical nation, and the spiritual nation, or in other words, to the fortunes of the Jews and of the Church. With this great object before them they predict the fate of the great Gentile nations with whom the Jews came in contact, who influenced their fortunes, or became their oppressors. Hence we have Assyria, Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, etc., made burdens of prophecy.

Exactly the same is true of New Testament prophecy. The prophets speak of the future of Israel and of the Church, and necessarily reveal much concerning the opposing and persecuting nations. It was not in the mind of Christ to give in Revelation the outline of all history, but to outline the fortunes, tribulations and triumphs of the Church. The Church was, in the earlier centuries, almost wholly within the bounds of the vast, persecuting empire of Pagan Rome. Hence this opposing power would come before the prophetic vision, and we will find that the symbolism often refers to the Roman power. Let it be ever present to the mind of the reader that John was the victim of Roman persecution, and an exile on Patmos when he wrote; that he had never been beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire, and that there is no historical authority for supposing that any apostle ever stepped upon soil that a Roman citizen would call foreign. Since this mighty empire affects so closely the interests of the Church, it is in harmony with all we know of prophecy to expect it to be the subject of prophetic vision. That Pagan Rome is, to a greater or less extent, the subject of the predictions is agreed by almost all interpreters, but the agreement is by no means so marked that Papal Rome, the great spiritual despot upon which the mantle of the pagan empire fell, is also an important element in the explanation of the visions. I believe that a close and unbiased study of the text compels the conclusion that a great apostasy, a false church, a persecuting spiritual power, is revealed which mightily influences the fortunes of the Church, and that its characteristics are found strikingly exhibited in certain periods of the history of the Papacy. There arises a great apostasy, a false church that produces for the time a mighty influence upon the saints of Jesus Christ. This is also a subject of prophecy. I am then prepared to affirm that the general scope of the Book of Revelation is similar to that of the Old Testament prophets; that its primary object is to outline the history of the church; that, in subordination to this primary object, it portrays the fortunes of the two



great persecuting powers, Pagan and Papal Rome. The changing fortunes of the Church are portrayed, running like a golden thread through the dark panorama of history, until at last, in God's good time, the battle is fought to the end, the victory won, and the triumphant Church enjoys the fruition of all its sufferings and labors and the glories of the New Jerusalem.

Divisions

In order to an understanding the reader must keep in mind that there is more than one series of visions, and that these overlap each other, revealing different features of the same period. The whole book might be divided as follows:

PART I. Chapters I-IV.—This part embraces the Introduction, the Vision of the Son of Man, the Letters to the Seven Churches, and Vision of the Opened Heaven and the Throne of God.

PART II. Chapters V-XI.—This part opens with a Vision of a Book sealed with Seven Seals in the Hands of Him who sits upon the Throne—the Book of Destiny; the Contents hidden by the seals. The Lamb of God prevails to open the seals; that is, to Reveal the Future. As each is opened a vision appears which presents a Symbol representing a Period of Human history. Six seals are opened in succession, followed by a pause before the opening of the seventh seal. When the seventh seal is opened it is found to embrace Seven Thunders and Seven Trumpets. The trumpets are blown in succession, each followed by Great Events, and when the last is blown the End comes when Christ triumphs over all. The Seven Seals, with the Seven Trumpets, contained under the last seal, reach to the end of time.

PART III. Chapters XII-XVIII.—This part opens with a Vision of a Woman, a symbol of the Church; an Enemy of the Woman which appears with as a Seven-headed and Ten-horned Beast, understood to be a symbol of Pagan Rome; a Two-horned Beast, which I understand to be Papal Rome; there also appears sitting on the Seven-headed Beast a False Woman, a symbol of a False Church. The figures change and these opposing powers under the name of *Babylon* are overthrown.

PART IV. Chapters XIX-XX.—These chapters describe the Great Victory over the opposing powers, the Millennial Period, and the Final Uprising and Defeat of Satan.

PART V. Chapters XXI-XXII.—These chapters describe the Glorious Home of the Redeemed Saints, and embrace Closing Exhortations.

Chapter I

The Vision of the Son of Man

Summary —*Preface. John to the Seven Churches. In the Spirit on the Lord's Day. The Revelation of the Son of Man. The Seven Stars and Seven Candlesticks.*

1–3. The Revelation. *Apocalypse*, or uncovering, so the Greek word means. The curtain of the future is lifted. **Of Jesus Christ.** The revelation is made by Jesus Christ. See [chapter 5](#). **God gave him to shew.** See [chapter 5](#). He who sits on the throne gave to the Son the sealed book of the future to open it. **Shortly come to pass.** The series of events began to unfold in a few years after John wrote, and has rolled on through all the centuries. Lange renders the Greek translated “shortly” by the phrase “in quick succession,” which is nearly its meaning. It implies successive order. **He sent and signified.** The things “which must shortly come to pass.” **By his angel.** Here, and throughout the *Apocalypse* the office of unveiling the different scenes appears to be assigned to a particular angel. See [4:1](#); [21:9](#); [22:1](#); [22:8](#), etc. **To his servant John.** A usual designation of the prophets. See [Isa. 49:5](#); [Amos 3:7](#); [Rev. 19:10](#). **2. Who bare record.** John is meant, who made the record of all he saw and heard. **3. Blessed is he that readeth.** There is a reference to the custom that had already grown up, at the close of the first century, of reading the apostolic writings publicly in the churches. The benediction is pronounced on the public reader; on those that *hear*, and lastly upon those that *keep* the words contained in this prophecy. **The time is at hand.** The period to which the prophecy relates is near.

4–8. John to the seven churches which are in Asia. The churches are named in [verse 11](#). The term “Asia” did not mean in the first century what it does now, but only the Roman province called Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital. All the seven churches are in that province. It is supposed that SEVEN, the perfect and sacred number, were chosen, because the seven were to symbolize the whole Church of Christ. There were in the province of Asia more than seven churches at this time, as we know, Colosse, Miletus ([Acts 20:17](#)) and Hierapolis ([Col. 4:13](#)) being named in the New Testament. **Grace be to you.** The benediction, like that in the apostolic epistles, shows that Revelation is an epistle also, addressed directly to seven churches and through them to all the church. **From him which is.** The I AM. See [Exod. 3:14](#). **From the seven Spirits.** The Holy Spirit. The numeral seven indicates fulness, perfection. It is the sacred number. The sevens are constantly repeated through Revelation. There are seven churches, seven spirits, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven vials, etc. **5. And from Jesus Christ.** Some of the glories of Christ, the third whose grace is invoked, are named. **The faithful witness.** Because all that he says is faithful and true. **The first born of the dead.** See notes on [Col. 1:18](#). Through Christ's resurrection from the dead life and immortality were brought to light for us all. Hence he is called the “first born.” **The**

prince. The rightful ruler of all the rulers of the earth. **Unto him that loveth us.** The tense is present, as in the Revision. His love never ceases. **Washed us.** Rather, as in the Revision, “loosed us.” This was done by the shedding of his blood. **6. And he made us.** Here the Revision must be followed. He made us **to be a kingdom; to be priests unto his God.** His disciples are constituted a kingdom; a kingdom in which each one is a priest. No disciple needeth a priest to offer incense or sacrifice for him, for he can go directly to the Father through Jesus Christ. See notes on [1 Pet. 2:9](#). Christians are called priests, but are never called kings in a correct translation of the New Testament. **7. Behold, he cometh.** Christ. **With clouds.** See [Matt. 24:30](#); [26:64](#); [Acts 1:9, 11](#). The clouds denote the glory and terrors of his coming. **Every eye shall see him.** He will then come to meet all mortals. **They which pierced him.** Israel, the nation which rejected and crucified him is meant. See [Zech. 12:10](#), which is here quoted. **All the tribes of earth shall mourn over him.** In consternation because he is coming to judge the world. **8. I am the Alpha and the Omega.** The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet; hence “the beginning and the end.” All begins with God and he closes the drama of earthly history.

9–11. I John. He here names himself for the third time. The fourth and fifth times are in [21:2](#) and [22:8](#). **Companion in tribulation.** A partaker of the sufferings of the church like you. **Kingdom and patience.** In the kingdom they were called to patient endurance. **Was in the isle that is called Patmos.** For description of this island see [Introduction](#). “It appears to be the certain result of historical evidence that the Apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos during the reign of Domitian (a.d. 81–96) and in the fourteenth year of that reign, and was recalled from Patmos to Ephesus by the Emperor Nerva in a.d. 96.”—*Bible Commentary (Speaker's)* on Revelation. **For the word of God.** Banished on account of preaching the word of God. **10. I was in the Spirit.** Was lifted to that spiritual exaltation in which revelations are given. **On the Lord's day.** The day of the Lord's Resurrection, the first day of the week. In the earlier apostolic writings the day was called “the first day of the week,” but by the close of the century it began to be called “the Lord's day,” as here. Epistles of Barnabas, Ignatius and Dionysius, written near this time, so style it, and the name is of common occurrence from this time onward, and is confined to Sunday. It is not confounded with the “Sabbath day” of many centuries. See Dr. Wm. Smith's *Unabridged Dictionary of the Bible*, article “Lord's Day.” **Heard behind me a great voice.** Heard but did not see the speaker. **11. I am Alpha and Omega.** These words are omitted in the Revision, as not found in the best MS. **What thou seest.** In all the visions of the Book of Revelation. **Write in a book.** The Greek says “in a roll,” which was the form of books in the East at that time. **Unto Ephesus.** The seven churches are now named. For notes on these churches and the cities where they were located, see the [chapters 2](#) and [3](#). Two of the churches named had received epistles from the Apostle Paul.

12–16. I saw seven golden candlesticks. The first things seen when he turned to see whence the voice came were the seven golden candlesticks, which symbolized the churches (verse 20). **13. And in the midst.** It is a beautiful thought that he who said “I will be with you always” is represented as moving in the midst of the church. **Like unto the Son of man.** A term used in [Dan. 7:13](#) and applied by the Savior to Himself, but never applied to him by the New Testament writers except here, [Rev. 14:14](#) and [Acts 7:56](#). **A garment down to the foot.** The long robe of a high priest girt about with the golden girdle of a king. **14. His head and his hair were white.** White is the color of purity and of triumph. The idea here is not age but heavenly glory. **His eyes were as a flame of fire.** Bright, piercing, all seeing, flashing light, and also a consuming fire of the wicked. **15. Feet like unto fine brass.** Shedding forth splendor like burnished brass heated in a furnace. **His voice.** His voice was mighty like the sound of surging waters. **16. In his right hand seven stars.** “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches” (verse 20). **And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.** This two-edged sword is a symbol of the word by which Christ's conquests are won. See [Eph. 6:17](#); [Heb. 4:12](#), and compare [Rev. 19:15](#). **His countenance.** The glory of his countenance is the same that was manifested at the Transfiguration.

17–20. I fell at his feet as dead. Overcome with awe. No sinful man can stand before God and live; hence the impression made by the appearance of the Lord is that of terror. **Fear not.** But when the Lord spoke to the disciple it was with the old love. How often before had Jesus said “Fear not.” **I am the first and the last.** See verse 8. The attributes claimed for Jehovah are also claimed for Christ. **18. He that liveth, and was dead.** Put to death but living. **Have the keys of death and of Hades.** Not only a victor over death, but the very gates of death and Hades are under his control. Hence he can deliver from the dead whom he will. **19. Write.** Not only the vision just seen, but **the things which are**, viz., the description of the state of the churches given in [chapters 2](#) and [3](#); and also **the things which shall be**, viz., the revelation of future history recorded in [chapters 6–20](#). **20. The mystery of the seven stars.** The Lord himself at once explains what the seven stars and seven candlesticks symbolize. The seven candlesticks represent the churches, or organizations appointed to “let their light shine” and become “the light of the world.” **And the seven stars are the angels of the churches.** These were, I think, the evangelists of the churches. See note below.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Appearance of Christ. He was arrayed in a priestly robe and girt with a kingly girdle of gold. Heavenly purity was indicated by the dazzling whiteness of his head and hair, and the splendor that shone from his countenance was like that of the unclouded sun. Every manifestation of the divine glory is accompanied with brilliancy and splendor. “In him is no darkness at all.” The burning bush of Horeb, the glory of Sinai, the Shekinah of the tabernacle, the City of which God and the Lamb are the light, the transfigured Savior of Hermon, the Son of Man of Patmos, and all the visions of the prophets of both covenants, indicate

that whenever the Deity manifests itself, there is a revelation of heavenly splendor. The Son of Man, the Man of Sorrows, the Lamb of God, is also the Bright and Morning Star, and the Sun of Righteousness. It is thus, crowned with majesty, garbed in light, and shining as the sun, that John beholds the Son of Man walking amid the golden candlesticks and holding the seven stars in his hands.

The Seven Stars. I shall not take up space to discuss the various views as to the nature of the angels of the churches. It has been held that they were heavenly angels, were diocesan bishops of the cities, were pastors or elders, or were messengers sent from the churches to visit John in Patmos. The word *angel* means a messenger, and is equally applicable to the messengers of God and those of men. John the Baptist is called in [Mark 1:2](#), *angel*, or messenger, and the term is often applied to human beings. It is certain that it is in this passage. John is told to *write* to these angels, and certainly the letters were not sent to the angels of heaven. Nor does this language suggest the idea of messengers sent to visit John in Patmos. In that case the letters might be sent *by* them to the churches, but would certainly not be written *to* them. It becomes evident, therefore, that the angels were men filling some office in connection with the churches. There is not the slightest evidence that diocesan bishops existed until much later than this age, and hence I do not think that they are meant. The term can hardly apply to an elder, for there seems to have been a plurality of elders in all the churches, and it is not likely that one would be singled out. It is my judgment that the angels were the preachers or evangelists of the churches. As these evangelists not only labored at home, but were often sent out, and were messengers to carry the good tidings, there is a fitness in applying the term to them. We know from the epistles of Paul and from church tradition, that Timothy was long the evangelist at Ephesus, and it is possible that he may have lived and labored until the time of John's banishment. If so, he was the angel to whom the epistle to the church at Ephesus was directed. Then we conclude that the seven stars held in the hand of the Lord, supported and strengthened by him, shining with his light, are the seven preachers of the churches of Asia.



Chapter II

Letters to the Churches:

Summary — *The Letter to the Metropolitan Church of Ephesus. To the Angel of the Martyr Church of Smyrna. To the Angel of the Church at Pergamos, Persecuted by the Heathen. To the Angel of the Church at Thyatira, Defiled by Idolatry.*

The second and third chapters differ from all the rest of Revelation in that they are letters dictated by the Lord to the Seven Churches which have been chosen to represent the entire church of God. The description of their varied conditions and the commendations, rebukes, promises and warnings given them, are a fitting introduction to a book which is designed to reveal the various phases of the church in history, its fortunes, its lapses, its tribulations, persecutions and final triumph. While these Seven Epistles differ in details they will be found to have the same general plan and to have the following features in common: 1. An order to write to the angel of the church. 2. A glorious title of Christ taken from the imagery or language of the visions of [chapter 1](#). 3. A description of the condition of the church, whether good or bad, admonitions and exhortations. 4. A promise to those who persevere and triumph. 5. A closing injunction to “hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” Four epistles are contained in [chapter 2](#), and three in [chapter 3](#). A close examination will show that there is a distinction. In the last four epistles the closing promise is placed *after* the injunction to “hear what the Spirit,” etc.; in the first three epistles the promise is *before* the injunction. The distinction makes two groups of epistles, one of three and the other of four, just as the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls are divided into two groups each, of three and four.

The Church at Ephesus. **1–3. To the angel.** See note on the *Angels of the Churches* at close of chapter 1. **The church of Ephesus.** The city of Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia, and the greatest city. As a great center it was sought by the Apostle Paul, who founded the church and labored there more than three years (see [Acts, chapter 18](#)), and afterwards addressed to it the Epistle to the Ephesians. At a later period he placed Timothy there and addressed two epistles to him. All early church tradition declares that John from about a.d. 70 made this city his home until his death. There is not now standing a single house upon the site of the ancient city, though the ruins are of the most imposing character. The Turkish village of Agasalouk, upon the Smyrna and Aidan R. R., is about two miles distant. **These things saith he, etc.** See [1:13, 16, 20](#). **2. I know thy works.** The manner of life of the church. There was much to commend. **Patience.** Rather, endurance. Perseverance in the face of difficulties. **Hast tried them which say they are apostles.** False teachers, who made false claims. Every age of revolution throws up such false teachers. We often find traces of them in the epistles. [1 John 4:1](#) shows how to test them. The Ephesian church had



put them to the test and rejected them. **3. Hast not fainted.** Though called to bear afflictions for Christ they had not wearied.

4–7. Nevertheless. After these words of promise a stain on the garments of the church is pointed out. **Thou hast left thy first love.** They have not maintained the ardor and devotion of the love of their earlier history. Nothing but the fervent love of the Bride can satisfy the Bridegroom. This change shows that many years must have passed since the last communication of Paul to the Ephesian church. **5. Remember ... from whence thou art fallen.** Note what this exhortation includes: 1. They had been at a height of excellence. 2. They had fallen from that height; there had been a spiritual declension. 3. **Repent.** The comparison and its proof that they were retrograding should bring repentance. 4. **Do the first works.** There must be the first love, and the fruits of that love in a renewal of their first works. Unless this is done Christ **will come.** Not in person, but in providence and judgments. The church with a waning love will be repudiated. **Will remove thy candlestick.** “Thy” refers to the Angel of the church through whom the address is made. To remove the candlestick would be to suffer the church to cease to exist. How signally this has been fulfilled in the case of Ephesus is seen in the fact that not one vestige of the church remains, and of the city itself naught but mouldering ruins. What concerns us, however, is that this warning is addressed *to every church which has lost its first love.* Unless it repents, and does its first works, its candlestick will finally be removed from its place. **6. But this thou hast.** There is another ground of commendation. They hate the **deeds of the Nicolaitanes.** Opinions are not agreed concerning this sect, but it is probable that the followers of a Nicolaus are meant who taught that Christian liberty meant license to commit sensual sins. **7. He that hath an ear.** The call to solemn attention found at the close of each epistle. **To him that overcometh.** The Christian life is a battle and must also be a victory. The Greek word rendered “overcome,” is peculiar to John. It occurs *once* in his Gospel, *six* times in his epistles, and *sixteen* times in Revelation, but only “three” times in all the rest of the New Testament. **To eat of the tree of life.** The symbol of eternal life. The tree is seen in Eden ([Gen. 2:9; 3:22](#)), here, and in the New Jerusalem ([Rev. 22:2](#)). **Paradise of God.** Since the tree of life is found in both, Paradise and the New Jerusalem must mean the same. Paul uses the term as a synonym of the “Third Heaven,” or Heaven itself ([2 Cor. 12:2–4](#)).

The Church at Smyrna. **8–11. The church in Smyrna.** The history of its planting is unknown, but it was probably founded by some of the evangelists under Paul’s supervision. During the second century the church was prominent, and it has never ceased to exist. When I visited the city in 1889, I was told that there were more than 70,000 professing Christians in the place. The city, so old that its beginnings are unknown, is still the second in commercial importance of the Turkish empire. **The first and the last.** See [1:17](#). **9. Thy tribulation.** Affliction. **And thy poverty.** Most of those first enlisted for Christ were poor. See [1 Cor. 1:26–29](#). **But thou art rich.** Rich in faith, hope and fruits. **And I know the blasphemy.** Re-

viling of the Jews against the Lord. **Say they are Jews.** Those who say that they are Jews were of the Jewish race, but were not of the true Israel. "He is not a (true) Jew who is one outwardly," etc. (Rom. 2:28). John denies the right of these Jewish opposers to use the term "Jews" in the sense of God's chosen people. Their synagogue was **the synagogue of Satan.** Such strong language implies a complete separation of the church and synagogue, an event that occurred at the period of the destruction of Jerusalem. See Acts 21:20–26. **10. Fear none, etc.** The church shall suffer, but it need not fear for the reasons about to be given. **The devil shall cast.** He may use the Jews as instruments but he is the real agent. **Shall have tribulation ten days.** Whether the "ten days" of persecution means a short time, or a definite period symbolized by "ten days" is uncertain. A day is often a symbol of a year. Ten persecutions are named by church historians and two persecutions of ten years each. It might refer to one of the latter which should bear very heavily on that church. The Diocletian persecution continued ten years and three months. **Be thou faithful unto death.** Unto martyrdom. **The crown of life.** Not a royal crown but the garland crown of victory over death. See 2 Tim. 4:8. **11. Shall not be hurt of the second death.** Those who win the victory shall live forever. To die the second death is to be sent from the judgment throne into hell. See Rev. 20:14.

The Church at Pergamos. **12–17. Pergamos.** The farthest north of the Seven Churches, a city once the capital of the kingdom of Pergamos, which was great and flourishing when John wrote. It still exists with about 14,000 population, of whom over 3,000 profess to be Christians. **Which hath the sharp sword.** See 1:16. **13. Where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.** In a center of heathen idolatry. Pergamos was a notorious center of idolatry. **Thou holdest fast my name.** Honor and trust in the name of Christ. **Hast not denied my faith.** Still continue firm in the profession of Christ though persecuted. **Wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr.** Some fanciful saint who had suffered martyrdom among them because he was a faithful witness of Christ. **14. But I have a few things against thee.** Much as been to the credit of the church, but there is another side. **Hold the doctrine of Balaam.** Teachers like Balaam who seduce the true Israel into sin. Balaam showed Balak how to lead the children of Israel astray. See Num. 25:2, and 31:16. In the same way there were false teachers at Pergamos who taught that Christians might join the idol feasts and in heathen fornication. **15. So hast thou also them, etc.** For Nicolaitanes. See note on verse 6 above. **16. Repent therefore.** This may save the sinner, whether an alien, or a church member. To repent one must leave off his sins. **I will make war against them.** Those who teach and practice these pernicious doctrines. **With the sword of my mouth.** See 1:16. With all the power of the word of God. **17. I will give to eat of the hidden manna.** The bread of life, the bread from heaven. The living bread is Jesus Christ, unseen in the earth and hence called hidden. **Will give him a white stone.** Among the Greeks a white stone was a symbol of acquittal, as a black stone was of guilt. The white stone implies justification, innocence and

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victory. **A new name written.** All conjectures concerning this new name are idle. It is only given to those who have finally overcome and cannot be known to us here, but implies their new relation to God and the Lamb in their triumphant state.

The Church in Thyatira. **18–23. In Thyatira.** This is the first of the second group of four epistles. Thyatira has been mentioned in [Acts, chapter 16](#) as the home of Lydia, who was converted at Philippi. It is likely that the church began when she and her household returned. The three churches before named were on or near the coast; the others were in the interior. Thyatira was southeast of Pergamos, and northeast of Smyrna. It is still a place of about 17,000 population, of whom nearly 3,000 profess to be Christians. **Like unto a flame of fire.** See [1:14, 15](#). **19. And the last to be more than the first.** See Revision. Instead of retrograding their works grew more excellent. **20. Notwithstanding.** Of the seven churches only two are blameless. **Sufferest that woman Jezebel.** Either a person or a party of which the wicked wife of Ahab was a type. As a woman in Revelation is a symbol of the church, true or false, I believe this symbol is used to designate a faction in the church at Thyatira of an idolatrous spirit. This faction had teachers who claimed the gift of prophecy. They taught the doctrine of Balaam named in [verse 14](#). See note there. See also [verse 24](#). **21. I gave her space (time) to repent.** The long suffering and mercy shown in the delay of judgment are here pointed out. **22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed.** Sickness and a bed are symbols of affliction and punishment. **Them that commit adultery with her.** This is the term applied to idolatrous Israel ([Jer. 3:9; Ezek. 16:32](#)). To practice the idolatrous rites of this faction would be spiritual adultery. **23. I will kill her children.** Her children are the adherents; those who perpetuate the immoral practices. The threat implies that they shall come to certain destruction. **And all the churches shall know, etc.** By reason of the judgments inflicted. Some have strongly urged that by “Jezebel” is meant a Sybil, half heathen, half Christian, claiming prophetic powers, who is known to have lived in Thyatira.

24–29. But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira (Revision). To all who have naught to do with Jezebel. **As many as have not this doctrine.** Jezebel then represents a false doctrine and a faction. **Which know not the deep things of Satan.** Have not learned the mysteries and wisdom of Satan taught by these false teachers. **I will put upon you none other burden.** None other than to avoid the sins of the false faction and teachers. Compare [Acts 15:28, 29](#). **25. Hold fast.** To the gospel as it has been taught to you. **26. Keepeth my works unto the end.** Until death. **I will give power over the nations.** In the coming period when Christ shall rule all kingdoms the saints who have endured shall share his authority. **27. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron.** A scepter of iron means a firm and enduring power. *Rule.* Shall rule as a shepherd is the meaning of the Greek word. The rule will not be a cruel, but a guardian rule. **As the vessels of a potter.** So the nations shall be broken in pieces and all become one under the rule of Christ. **28. I will give him the morning star.**

The Morning Star is one of the titles of Christ. See [Rev. 22:16](#). This, then, means that Christ will give them a fellowship with himself; they shall share his dominion.



Chapter III

The Epistles to the Seven Churches Continued

Summary —*Letter to the Church at Sardis; the Spiritually Dead Church. Letter to the Tried and Faithful Church of Philadelphia. Letter to the Lukewarm Church of Laodicea.*

The Church at Sardis. **1–6. The church in Sardis.** The city of Sardis, once the capital of the great kingdom of Lydia and the home of Croesus, the rich king, lay in the interior nearly a hundred miles east of Smyrna and Ephesus. Though it had lost its former greatness it was still a considerable city in the first century. The church there was planted, no doubt, by some of the companions of Paul. The former city has now ceased to exist, and only extensive ruins remain to testify of its greatness. Like the church at Ephesus, which had lost its first love, the Sardian church which had “a name to live and was dead,” has had its lampstand removed for many centuries. **Hath the seven Spirits of God.** See notes on 1:4; also 1:6. The perfect number *seven* denotes fulness. He hath the fulness of the Spirit whom he sends into the earth to do his work. **Thou hast a name, etc.** Though nominally Christian and living the Christian life, they were really spiritually dead. **2. Be watchful.** Be on the watch. Awake! **Strengthen the things which remain.** What graces and Christian life remain, cherish and strengthen before they disappear entirely. **I have not found thy works perfect.** Complete, filled up to the standard God requires. **3. Remember.** Remember the teaching formerly received, cling to it, and repent of the falling away from it. **I will come on thee as a thief.** Suddenly; in a sudden judgment. **4. But thou hast a few names.** Though the church as a whole is condemned, there were true saints who were commended. **Names.** Persons. **Not defiled their garments.** Not been defiled by sin. **Shall walk with me in white.** In the robes of purity and triumph. **5. Shall be clothed in white raiment.** This is the usual promise to him who overcomes; he shall wear the white raiment of the redeemed; though the names of those who are spiritually dead shall be blotted out of the book of life his name shall not be; and he will be confessed before the Father, that is, acknowledged. **Book of life.** Compare 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Phil. 4:3. The book of life means the roll of those who have become heirs of immortality. **Confess his name.** Compare Matt. 10:32, and Luke 12:8.

The Church at Philadelphia. **7–13. The church in Philadelphia.** This city was in the interior, southeast of Sardis, and had never attained the eminence of most of the other seats of the Seven Churches. That the church itself was poor and wanting in worldly endowments seems to be indicated by [verse 8](#). Yet this church and that of Smyrna alone escape censure. Philadelphia is yet a city of 18,000 inhabitants, though bearing a Turkish name, has five churches and a Christian population of about 3,000. **He that hath the key of David.** See notes on 1:18. The key of the kingdom of God as the Son of David. Hence he only opens and shuts, or determines who shall enter in, or be shut out. **8. I have set before thee an**



open door. Compare Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3. The open door means great opportunities; generally for preaching the gospel. It probably means here, a way opened to convert the Gentiles. **Thou hast a little strength, and didst keep, etc.** Through their strength was not great, they had remained faithful in much opposition. **Hast not denied my name.** The Pagan authorities often tested Christians by commanding them to blaspheme the name of Christ under penalty of death. **9. I will make them of the synagogue of Satan.** See notes on 2:9. The bitter Jewish opposers are thus described. **I will make them to come and worship before thy feet.** Acknowledge that the Lord is with them. It seems also to imply the conversion of these Jewish opposers. **10. Hast kept the word of my patience.** Hast endured and kept my word. **In the hour of temptation.** Of stern and cruel trial. Some great crisis of trial and sorrow which should come on all the world. We may not know just what our Lord referred to, but we can believe that he fulfilled his promise. The Lord's coming is promised in 2:25; in 3:3, and here. In the first instance it is said he will "come;" in the second, "as a thief;" here, that he will come "quickly." **11. That no man take thy crown.** Not the crown of royalty (*Diadema* in the Greek), but the garland crown (*Stephanos*) given as a reward. The crown of the saints is always the latter, a term, which the Greeks did not apply to the royal crown. **12. I will make a pillar.** A term implying strength, permanence and honor. **In the temple.** Not in any material temple, but in the church, either on earth or in heaven. The latter is here meant. The New Jerusalem has no temple in it because it is all temple. **Go no more out.** Always dwell there. **I will write upon.** When one enters the church, the spiritual temple below, three names are recorded in his baptismal formula. When he enters the kingdom above, three names are again written upon him; the name of God, of the heavenly city, and Christ's heavenly name.

The Church at Laodicea. **14–22. The church in Laodicea.** Laodicea was situated in the valley of the Lycus, near Colosse and Hierapolis. All three of these churches are named by Paul in the Colossian letter, and an epistle, now probably lost, was sent to Laodicea. The city of Laodicea was very proud of its wealth in the latter part of the first century, a fact we learn from profane history. The church was probably founded by Epaphras, a companion of Paul. The condemnation of the Lord in this epistle is severe, and its extinction is threatened. The site of the ancient city is uninhabited now, and of course the church has long since cease to exist. **Saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness.** See notes on 1:5; also on 2 Cor. 1:20. **The beginning of the creation.** The Being from which the creation begins, the Word that made all things. **15. I know thy works.** The same statement has been made of all the churches, but in all the others there has been something to praise. **Thou art neither cold nor hot.** Neither acting hostile to Christ, nor zealous for Him. Christ would rather that men should be opposers than formal, apathetic professors. **16. So then because thou art lukewarm.** This lukewarmness was most offensive, and hence the Lord declares that they shall be rejected like nauseous food. The figure indicates loathing. **17. Because thou sayest, I**

am rich. Worldly prosperity had, probably, made the church indifferent. **Knowest not that thou are wretched.** Because rejected by the Lord. **Poor.** Destitute of the true riches. **Blind.** Blinded by the god of this world. **18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold.** “In Christ are all the treasures of wisdom” (Col. 2:3). **White raiment.** That they may have the wedding garments (Matt. 22:11–13). **Anoint thine eyes with eye salve.** The unction of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20). **19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.** See Heb. 12:5, 16. **20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.** The language implies that Christ is near. If they will open the door by repentance he is ready to enter and bless. **If any man hear my voice.** Hear and obey. Then the Lord will enter and they shall partake together of the richness of the feast. **21. Will I grant to sit with me in my throne.** He shall reign with Christ; that is, as a coadjutor of Christ. **As I also overcame.** As the result of his overcoming “God exalted him to be a Prince and a Savior,” and “to sit at the right hand of the Majesty of the heavens.” As he was exalted, so he will exalt all his brethren who win the victory over sin and temptation.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Fate of the Seven Churches. In view of the promises and threats of the Savior to these Seven Churches a concise view of their subsequent history would be helpful. Two of the churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, are praised without the slightest censure. Three, Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea, are severely blamed and threatened with extinction. Two more, Pergamos and Thyatira, are both praised and blamed, and admonished to repent. The two first, Smyrna and Philadelphia, *are now and have been since the first century, the seats of churches and of a large Christian population.* Of Philadelphia the skeptical Gibbon says: “Philadelphia alone has been saved by prophecy or by courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom alone for four score years, and then capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect—a column in a scene of ruins, a pleasing example that the paths of honor and safety may sometimes be the same.”—*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chapter LXIV.* The three churches so severely censured and threatened, Ephesus, Sardis and Laodicea, *ceased to exist many centuries since, and even the cities have long been uninhabited.* The two remaining churches, Pergamos and Thyatira, were never entirely blotted out and a small Christian population is found in both places to this time.

Alleged Opposition to Paul. Renan and some rationalistic critics of Germany have been determined to see in Revelation a strong Judaizing spirit and a bitter opposition to Paul and his work among the Gentiles. Their interpretations illustrate how far astray a man may be led who has a theory to sustain. They insist that the Nicolaitanes, the followers of Balaam, “that woman Jezebel,” and those “who say they are Jews and are not,” are all adherents of Paul. These interpretations are so improbable that they cannot be even considered unless they have some historical basis. That is wanting. Had John been the extreme Judaizer sup-

posed he never would have taken refuge among Gentile churches planted and trained by Paul. Had he sought to revolutionize them traces of his effort would have remained in the writings of the men who had seen, heard and been taught by John. Of this extreme aversion to Paul and his work, Polycarp, Papias and Irenæus knew nothing. It remained unknown to the whole world until discovered by certain modern rationalistic critics. On the other hand, there is not the slightest discord between the teaching of Paul in his epistles and the Book of Revelation.



Chapter IV

The Open Door in Heaven

Summary — *The Voice from Heaven. The Throne and He Who Sat on the Throne. The Twenty-four Elders. The Four Living Forms. Their Cry Night and Day. The Doxology of the Twenty-four Elders.*

It is generally agreed that with this chapter the third section of Revelation begins. Chapters 4 and 5 are preparatory visions. It is not until chapter 6 is reached that the future begins to be uncovered. In these chapters there is revealed through the open door of heaven the Almighty upon the throne in glory surrounded by adoring creatures. The symbolism declares that he holds in his hands the destinies of the world and knowledge of the future. Then it is declared that to the Lion of the tribe of Judah it has been given to open the book of destiny and to reveal the future. To the Son, who appears in a symbolic form, the book is given amid the praises of Elders and living creatures.

It is noteworthy that the two greatest prophets of the Old Testament, those who had the clearest visions of the reign of Christ, were permitted to behold a similar scene as a preparation for their revelations Ezekiel (Ezek. 1) and Isaiah (Isa. 6) are each allowed to behold the glory of God. As the Old Testament prophets, when about to enter upon their work, were inaugurated to the office of making known the future by a vision of the Almighty, so John, the New Testament prophet, the last prophet of the world, was permitted to have a similar vision. Though the visions differ, the most striking symbols are beheld by all three of the prophets. All see and describe the throne of God, with its sublime surroundings; all speak of the One who sits on the throne, though they make no attempt to describe his person; all record his glory; Ezekiel beholds *living creatures* around the throne, full of eyes, with four wings and two hands; Isaiah sees the seraphim with six wings who cry, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. In 1 the *four beasts* are about the throne, full of eyes, with six wings who cry, Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God Almighty. In the case of all the prophets the vision of God is preparatory and indicates that he is about to impart the secrets of his future, hitherto held in his own bosom.

1-3. After this. “After these things,” as in the Revision. After the letters to the churches had been dictated. “The things which must be after this” are yet to be shown. **I looked.** Rather, “I saw in vision.” **A door was opened in heaven.** Heaven standing open so that the throne within could be seen. **The first voice which I heard.** The same voice that he had heard at first. See 1:10. **Come up hither.** Through the opened door. **The things which must come to pass hereafter.** Hence, we know that what John sees in the vision just opening belongs to events still future when he wrote. **2. I was in the spirit.** At once he was lifted to that spiritual exaltation which enabled him to behold the heavenly visions. **A throne.** The

throne of God was revealed and One sat on the throne. **3. He that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius.** We learn from 21:11 the qualities of the jasper meant; a stone of dazzling brilliance, a mountain of light, clear as crystal. The two probably symbolize the splendor, holiness and judgments of God. **Rainbow round about the throne.** The rainbow was a pledge of God's faithfulness to his covenants (Gen. 9:13). God sits upon the throne, splendid, dazzling, terrible, but compassed about by the Covenant of Grace.

4-6. Round about the throne were four and twenty seats. Rather, "thrones." The central throne was encompassed by twenty-four lesser thrones. **Four and twenty elders sitting.** These ancients were (1) twenty-four in number; (2) they were clothed in white, the color of victory and purity; (3) on their heads were golden crowns, not the diadem which means a kingly crown, but the golden crown of honor (*Stephanos*). Critics are not agreed as to the signification of these elders, but most of them think that they symbolize the glorified church of God gathered round the throne. They disagree as to the significance of the number twenty-four. There were twenty-four courses of priests. There were twelve tribes, and twelve apostles. Possibly the number of the latter was doubled to symbolize the entire church, Jew and Gentile. In a note below I will give my own view of the Twenty-four Elders. **5. Lightnings and voices and thunders.** These seem to portray the threatenings and judgments which proceed from the throne. **Seven lamps of fire.** These bright light-giving lamps symbolize the Holy Spirit in the fulness of its manifestation, indicated by the **seven Spirits of God.** See note on 1:4. **6. A sea of glass like unto crystal.** This deep, transparent sea **before the throne** is supposed to symbolize the purity and calmness of the Divine rule. It stands solid, calm and clear. **In the midst of the throne.** The four forms which are next described were to the right and left of the throne and in the midst between these extremes. The throne was in their midst. **Four living creatures.** See Revision. Four "beasts," as in the Common Version, is an incorrect idea. The Greek for "beasts" is different. They are four *Zoa*, "living forms." **Full of eyes.** Their eyes looked backward as well as forward. The description of these wonderful objects is next given. See notes at end of chapter.

7-8. The first creature was like a lion. It looked *like* a lion, but was not a lion. It had other characteristics. **Like a calf.** Had a body similar to that of the ox. **Had the face of a man.** Otherwise its structure differed from that of men. **Like a flying eagle.** It will be seen that four departments of animated nature are represented. That of the wild beasts of prey; that of domestic animals, the human species, and the fowls of the air. Each is represented by what, in the eyes of a Hebrew, would be regarded as its highest type. **8. The four living creatures.** Their common characteristics are now pointed out. All have six wings; they are full of eyes, and they all unite in a ceaseless cry of praise to God. **Full of eyes within.** They were full of eyes before and behind, and when the wings were lifted John saw that they were full of eyes within also. The eyes, sleepless, possibly symbolize never resting, wakeful activity. **They have no rest.** They never rest from praising the Lord.

9–11. And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne. Shall utter such praises as are given in [verse 8](#). Then the twenty-four elders also join in swelling the anthems. It will be noted that these two classes, whatever they signify, are both about the throne, and both engaged in harmonious praise of the Almighty. **10. Cast their crowns before the throne.** There are four elements in this worship: (1) They fall down; (2) they adore; (3) they cast their crowns before the throne, an act of homage which gives Him who sitteth there all the glory of their crowns; (4) they offer ascriptions of praise. **11. Worthy art thou, etc.** The chorus in which they join ascribes all glory to God as his right as the Creator. **Because of thy will they were.** Not as in the Common Version. They do not say that God created all things “for his pleasure,” but that his will was the efficient cause.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

The meaning of the *Twenty-four Elders* and the *Four Living Creatures* has been the subject of much discussion. It has been held by many discreet commentators that the first symbolizes the Redeemed Church, and the latter the Animated Creation, joined around the throne in the praises of the Almighty. It is always with hesitation and a degree of pain that I differ from those whose opinions I have studied with profit, but I am compelled to think that none of the explanations are entirely adequate. I give below my reasons, and what I think the correct view:

The Four Living Creatures. —What is symbolized by these forms? If the reader will turn to [Ezek. 1](#), he will find that the exiled prophet of the old dispensation saw by the river Chebar of Babylon, the same beings that John described in this chapter. While there are minor differences, the great features are the same. Each prophet, [John and Ezekiel](#), sees (1) *four* living creatures; both see (2) four faces, like those of a man, a lion, an ox or calf, and a flying eagle; (3) the living creatures of each prophet are full of eyes; (4) in each case they are winged. There is one minor difference in the wings: [John](#) sees six wings, while [Ezekiel](#) mentions four wings and a pair of hands under the wings, making six members. The seraphim of [Isaiah, chapter 6](#) had six wings. The similar appearance, and the fact that the same Greek term is used to represent them, proves beyond doubt that the “four beasts” of John are the “four living creatures” of Ezekiel. If we therefore can ascertain the significance of the symbols beheld by the Old Testament prophets, we will be able to ascertain what the same symbols mean in Revelation. We are not left in doubt about the identity of the beings described by them. In the [tenth chapter](#) Ezekiel describes certain beings that he beheld the second time; and in [verse 22](#) he says: “And the likeness of their faces was the *same faces* which I saw by the river Chebar, their appearances and *themselves*.” He also says in [verse 15](#), that these are the “living creatures I saw by the river Chebar.” Again, in [verse 20](#) he affirms the same thing, and says: “*I knew that they were the cherubim.*” [Isaiah](#), on the other hand, declares that the figures he saw were seraphim.

Here, then, is solid ground. The four living creatures, or “beasts,” of John are not the four elements, four quarters of the earth, four continents, or four evangelists, but are *cherubim* or seraphim. The forms seen by these prophets are probably symbolical of their nature and work. The information given in the [Scriptures](#) is scanty, but they are always represented as being very near the throne of God. When man sinned, it was cherubim who guarded the way to the tree of life. In the tabernacle cherubim hovered over the mercy seat and were figured upon the curtains. The Almighty is addressed [elsewhere](#) as the One who dwells between the cherubim. The brightness of the glory of the Lord is represented as attending them in [Ezekiel](#); and in the vision of [John](#) they are “in the midst of and around the throne.” In the [fifth chapter](#) the Lamb stands “in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts.” In some way the cherubim are immediately about the throne of God.

The forms seen by Isaiah, Ezekiel and John have a symbolical significance. These angelic intelligences represent the courage of the lion, the patient strength of the ox, the intellect of the man, and the swiftness of the eagle. They are full of eyes, or see all things; their wings are always in motion, or they are distinguished by tireless activity, and the continually cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty;” or, without ceasing they minister to the glory of God. Thus much can be said concerning the “four beasts,” or “cherubim,” without indulging in speculation. Cherubim are present at the fall of man; cherubim also celebrate his redemption and the triumph of the reign of Christ. Whether they also symbolize four forms of earthly creation is a matter left to conjecture.

The Four and Twenty Elders. —What has been said will aid us to determine the meaning of these heavenly elders. It has been usually held that they were men, representative of the redeemed. The number has been troublesome, but they have been supposed to represent the twelve apostles and twelve patriarchs. I think that a careful examination of all the passages in which they occur will show that they are of kindred character to the cherubim (*the four beasts*) and to the angels. 1. They are about the throne—(4:4.) 2. When the cherubim give glory to God, they also worship—(4:10.) 3. Together they sing the new song—(5:9.)* 4. When the angels honour the Lamb, these unite in saying, Amen—(5:14.) 5. When the innumerable multitude of redeemed, clothed in white robes, praise God for salvation, the angels and elders, and four beasts are not with these redeemed ones, but about the throne, and join together in a separate ascription of praise from that offered by men—(7:9–12.) 6. One of the elders informs John concerning those arrayed in white robes, and it is evident that he does not belong to their number—(7:13.) 7. When the final triumph comes, and the seventh trumpet angel proclaims that “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ,” the four and twenty elders who were sitting on their seats before the throne fell upon their faces and gave thanks to God—(11:17.) 8. In [chapter 14](#), the Lamb has one hundred and forty and four thousand saints about him, who sing a new song “before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders.” From all these passages, it will be

seen that the elders are grouped, not with the martyrs, or redeemed, or the one hundred and forty and four thousand; not with saved men, but with the angels and the cherubim about the throne of God. This distinction marks their character. They belong to the heavenly intelligences; to the same class as the cherubim and angels. They are princes of heaven. They are twenty-four in number. This number is probably associated with the twenty-four courses of priests engaged in the service of the temple, the institutions of which were “patterns of things in the heavens.” They are of the retinue that surround the throne and serve in the presence of God, and they constantly join in the adoration of the angelic hosts, and are incessantly employed in carrying out God's plans for the salvation of the world.* See the New Song in the Revised Version. The New Song praises the Lamb for redeeming men and making them a kingdom and priests, but the Four Living Creatures and the Twenty-four Elders neither here nor elsewhere offer praises for their own redemption. They do not belong to the redeemed.



Chapter V

The Book with Seven Seals

Summary — *The Book in the Hand of God. John's Grief Because No One Can Open It. The Assurance of the Elder. The Lamb that Had Been Slain. The New Song. The Grand Chorus of Angels, Elders, and Living Creatures.*

1, 2. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book. The book is in the right hand of God. It is not a printed book, such as we have on our shelves. There were no printed books then in existence. It is a manuscript, written upon both sides, and rolled together in the form of a scroll, and sealed with seven seals. We learn, what is recorded in the next chapter, that these seals were so arranged that when they were loosened in succession each one permitted a part of the book to be read. Possibly there were seven leaves to the book, since as each seal was loosed, a leaf of the book was revealed. The parchment was written on each side; the book was full, complete, nothing more to be added to what it contained. This sealed book is the book of the future, sealed to human vision, unknown even to the angels of heaven, and containing the record of “what shall be hereafter,” to the end of time.

3. And no one in the heaven, or on the earth ... was able to open the book. No one (the word *man* does not occur in the Greek) was found able to open the book, for no one can penetrate the future. It is held in the strong right hand of Him who sits on the throne, the omnipotent disposer of the future, who controls the destiny of churches, men, and nations. The sweep of the panorama, that has pictured forth upon its canvas the destiny of the Church and the world, cannot begin until the seals of this book are opened. Had no one been found able to open the seals, the closing book of the Bible would never have been written.

4, 5. And I wept much, because, etc. The exiled apostle is filled with anxiety to penetrate the secrets of futurity, and to know the fortunes of that Church which he loved better than he loved his own life. He was then a prisoner on a rocky isle of the sea. It was a time of persecution. He was separated from the saints, and ardently desires to know the results, in the future, of all the struggles, sufferings and blood of a persecuted people. **5. One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not.** It is one of the twenty-four elders that assures him that the book will be opened; and let it be distinctly noted that such a duty as instructing a prophet in heavenly things was never laid upon a human being under either covenant. Such duties mark the elders as belonging to the angelic realm. **The Lion of the tribe of Judah.** “Judah

is a lion's whelp" (*Gen. 49:9*); see also *Isa. 11:1, 10*. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, **the Root of David**, or descended from David.

6, 7. When John looked to behold the Lion of Judah, the root of David, who should open the book, he beheld the only being in the universe who could take it from the hand of God. There is none other to whom the future is revealed. He only, to whom all power in heaven and earth has been given, can control the events of earth. He only can hold in his hand the book of destiny, open its leaves, and reveal its record to men. John looked to see this mighty one who was deemed worthy to exercise the prerogative of God. But he appears in symbolic form, as a Lamb of God slain for sins; a sacrificial Lamb bearing wounds, the marks of having been slain. The Lion had become a Lamb. The Lamb became a Lion, a conqueror, and "prevailed" so as to be able to hold and open the book, or to hold the reins of all power by submitting unto death. **Seven horns, and seven eyes.** This symbolic Lamb had *seven horns*, the perfect number joined to the well-known symbol of power; the seven horns denoting omnipotence; also the Lamb had *seven eyes*, defined by John to symbolize the omniscience of him who hath the Spirit without measure. See note on "the seven Spirits of God" in 1:4.

8. When he took the book. The deliverance to him of the book was a signal for the four living creatures and the elders to fall before the Lamb, as they had fallen before the throne. They recognize in the fact that he has the book "that all power in heaven and earth is given into his hands." Hence, they offer him homage as Divine. **Having every one of them harps.** For praise. The grammatical construction seems to include both living creatures and elders. **Golden vials full of odors.** These symbolize the prayers of the saints. The imagery represents these heavenly assistants presenting these in heaven in behalf of the saints on earth. The comforting thought is that these prayers are not lost, but are presented at the throne of God and before the Lamb.

9–14. They sung a new song. To the music of their harps. A song that could not be sung until the Lamb had taken the book. **Didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, etc.** See the Revised Version. The Common Version is incorrect, as is now admitted by all scholars. The song does not sing of what Christ has done for those who are singing, but of what he has done for men. The singers are not of those redeemed. **10. Hast made them.** Not "us," as in the Common Version. **Kings and priests.** A kingdom and priests. See note on 1:6. **And they (not we) shall reign on the earth.** As coadjutors of Christ. See note on 2:10. **11. And I beheld ... many angels.** The countless multitudes of angels also unite in the praises of the Lamb. **13. And every creature.** All animated creation gives glory to the Lamb. **14. And the four living creatures said, Amen.** They, then, though they may be in sympathy with, are different from the animated creation. Four orders join in these honors to the Lamb: (1) The Living Creatures; the Cherubim; (2) the Twenty-four Elders; (3) the Angels; (4) all Animate Creation.

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ADDITIONAL NOTE

The Doxologies. —The action of this chapter is wonderfully dramatic. The Being upon the throne with the sealed book in his right hand; the proclamation of the strong angel calling for some one who was worthy to open the book; the declaration that no created being of the universe could open it; the apostle weeping, in his anxiety to know concerning the future, and from disappointment that no one could open the book; the assurance of the elder that the Lion of the tribe of Judah had prevailed to open it; the appearance of the slain Lamb who prevails as the Lion, and his taking the book out of the right hand of God, are all calculated to fix the attention with breathless interest, and to strike the imagination with startling power. And the picture grows still grander as the heavenly tenants sing their doxologies in praise of the victory of the Lamb. First, the four living creatures and the elders sing a new song; then a countless number of angels, about the throne, the living creatures and the elders join in the chorus. These praises ring through the heavens, and the reverberations reach from heaven to earth, and every creature “in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea” join in the ascription of praise to the Lamb. To these praises the cherubim respond, Amen! and the elders fall down and worship Him that liveth forever and ever.



Chapter VI

The Opening of the Seals

Summary — *The Warrior on the White Horse. The Warrior with the Great Sword. The Black Horse and He that Had the Balances. The Pale Horse, Death and Hades. The Fifth Seal, the Seal of Persecution. The Sixth Seal Opened. A Period of Judgment.*

The wonderful scene in heaven when the Sealed Book is given to the Lamb, pictured in the [last chapter](#), shows the transcendent importance of the Sealed Book itself, of the act of placing it in the hands of the Lamb of God, and of the events which be unfolded as its pages are opened. These seals are opened in succession and with the opening of each seal John sees and records an impressive vision. No system of interpretation which does not make these represent events which follow each other in time is reasonable. The vision following the opening of the first seal must portray a period of events nearest to the times of John, while the seventh seal must relate to the remotest events, and when the last symbol that it contains is reached we must have been carried to the end of time and to the consummation of the history of the church and of the fate of the world. As each seal is opened a symbol is seen which is designed to outline the character of a new epoch.

THE FIRST SEAL.

1, 2. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals. The statement “I saw” means that when the Lamb opened one of the seals John saw the vision which is described in what follows. **As it were the noise of thunder.** A deep, impressive, awe-inspiring sound. **Come and see.** Attend closely to the vision. **2. And I saw, and behold, a white horse.** Let the reader note particularly what John *saw*, and then remember that it is symbolical, and that instead of looking for a literal fulfillment, we are to ask the meaning of the symbols. There are several features of the vision that fix our attention: 1. The horse. 2. His white color. 3. The armed warrior. 4. His crown. 5. His bow. 6. His mission. It is certain that none of these features would have been named if they did not possess a significance. What do each of these symbols mean? I will consider them in order: (1) **The horse.** He was never used by the Jews or Orientals as a beast of burden. The ox and the ass were devoted to that office, and the horse was reserved for war. Whenever the horse is mentioned by the prophets it will be found in connection with war-like employments. That the horse is always associated with war can be seen by consulting [Job 29:25](#); [Ps. 76:6](#); [Prov. 21:31](#); [Jer. 8:6](#); [Ezek. 26:10](#). Hence this symbol points to a period of war, though it alone does not declare whether the conflict is carnal or spiritual, is triumphant or disastrous. (2) **The white color.** As there are three more horses in succession under the three following seals, each of different colors, the color must have a meaning. White must have a different significance from red, or black, or pale. What is indicated by the color of the first horse? White is the color of prosperity, of



happiness, and triumph. Whenever a Roman General was given a triumph his chariot was drawn by milk white horses. In [Rev. chapter 19](#), the Mighty Conqueror who wears many crowns is seen riding on a white horse. Commentators are agreed that the white horse signifies prosperous, victorious wars. (3) **The rider.** His significance is due to his arms, his crown, and the white horse he rides. It is enough to state here that he represents either some conqueror, or a conquering age. (4) **The crown.** “There was a crown given to him.” This crown is not “the diadem” (*diadema*) but the “garland crown” (*stephanos*). The last was the crown given as a reward for victory in battle, for great achievements or for victory in games. The Hero of [chapter 19](#) wears many *diadems*, kingly crowns, but this rider wears the garland crown, the *stephanos*. It is important to note this distinction. (5) **The bow.** He is armed with a usual weapon of war in that age. The bow may simply signify that the rider is a great, warlike figure, or there may be a special significance in the fact that he is armed with a bow instead of a sword or spear.

The Meaning of the First Seal. —In ascertaining the meaning of a series of prophetic symbols, portraying events which follow successively, it is of great importance to interpret the first aright. A wrong start will lead astray along the whole line of interpretation. Before giving my own views I will indicate briefly those of leading commentaries concerning the significance of the *White Horse and His Rider*. “A symbol of Christ’s victorious power.”—*Godet*. “A symbol of the conquering Gospel.”—*Alford*. “The Rider is Christ.”—*Archdeacon Lee in “Speaker’s Commentary.”* “It is our Lord riding prosperously.”—*Dr. Wm. Milligan of Aberdeen*. “Christ is going forth to judgment.”—*Hengstenberg*. “The Rider is Christ.”—*Lange*. “The Roman Empire. The Persian Empire was symbolized by a ram ([Dan. 8:3](#)); the Macedonian Empire by a goat ([Dan. 8:5](#)), and here the Roman Empire by a white horse and his rider.”—*Elliott*. “The prosperous period of the Roman Empire extending from the Emperor Nerva to the end of the Antonines.”—*Barnes*.

The preponderance of interpretation is in favor of the view that the symbol signifies the conquests of Christ, either in person or through the gospel. It is with some hesitation that I dissent from the view that spiritual conflicts and victories are signified. (1) Four horses in succession follow. The latter three cannot refer to spiritual changes. If the first horseman represents a spiritual power the others cannot represent carnal powers. If they refer to events in the secular world, the meaning of the first must also be sought there. (2) It has been urged that the Rider upon the white horse in [chapter 19](#) is the same as that of the first seal. There is nothing common but the white horse. The Rider of [chapter 19](#) is clothed, armed and crowned differently. He wears garments sprinkled with blood, has upon his head many *diadems* (kingly crowns) and out of his mouth proceeds the sword of the Word of God. This warrior holds a bow and wears a garland instead of a diadem. (3) Christ appears often in Revelation, and there is always something symbolical about the manner in which he is represented. In the [fifth chapter](#) he appears under the symbol of a Lamb; and again, in [chapter](#)

14, it is the Lamb who stands in Mt. Zion. In the [fourteenth verse of the same chapter](#), one “like the Son of Man” is seen upon a white cloud, with a sharp sickle in his hand, to indicate that the harvest time has come, when the earth shall be reaped. In [chapter 1](#), the Son of Man is seen, radiant as the sun, with a two-edged sword proceeding out of his mouth. In [chapter 19](#) one sat upon a white horse, who was called Faithful and True, wearing upon his head many crowns, clothed in a vesture sprinkled with blood, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp sword, emblematic of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The sword is constantly used as a symbol of the Word, which is Christ's instrumentality for reducing the world to his sway. The conquering Savior is constantly pictured forth with the sword proceeding out of his mouth, but never appears with a bow.

For these reasons I accept, in part at least, the view of Elliot and Barnes, and believe that a series of events affecting the fortunes of the church but immediately connected with the vast empire which embraced the whole church within its boundaries is signified. The first four seals, all kindred in their imagery, can only be satisfactorily explained by referring them to events in the history of that empire. The *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, by the skeptical Gibbon, is the best commentary on the seals. Nor do I think that the Horsemen are to be sought in individuals, but are representative of great epochs. The First Seal *must refer to the period of prosperity and triumphant war closely following John's exile to Patmos*. As it has an earthly signification, it is probable that we must look for an epoch in the history of the Roman Empire, beginning near the opening of the second century. An age which meets every characteristic wonderfully is the age of prosperity and conquest beginning with the reign of Nerva, embracing that of Trajan, Adrian, and the two Antonines. This glorious period has been called The Age of the Antonines. John was an exile on Patmos in the last year of the reign of Domitian, a.d. 96. In that year the tyrant was slain. The human Nerva succeeded him upon the Roman throne. With his reign begins a new epoch, at once the most brilliant and the most prosperous in Roman history. He was the founder of a new family of Cæsars. He adopted as his son and successor, the war-like Trajan. His incessant wars were uniformly triumphant, and during his reign the Roman Empire reached its greatest dimensions. Vast as were the limits of the empire under Julius and Augustus Cæsar, the empire ruled by Trajan was much more vast. In order to show that it was an age of conquest I quote Gibbon, vol. 1, page 7: “The degenerate Parthians, broken by intestine discord, fled before his arms. He descended the river Tigris in triumph, from the mountains of Armenia to the Persian Gulf. He enjoyed the honor of being the first, as he was the last, of the Roman generals who ever navigated that remote sea. His fleets ravaged the coasts of Arabia; and Trajan vainly flattered himself that he was approaching the confines of India. Every day the astonished senate received the intelligence of new names and new nations that acknowledged his sway. They were informed that the kings of Bosphorus, Colchos, Iberia, Albania, Osrhoene, and even the Parthian monarch himself had accepted their diadems from the hands

of the Emperor, etc.” This age of conquest, when the Empire reached its greatest limits both in Asia and Europe, was also an age of prosperity. Gibbon (Vol. I., page 95) declares that “If a man was called upon to fix the period in history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most prosperous and happy, he would without hesitation name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus.”

We have found that the symbols are strikingly fulfilled in the epoch of Roman history, known as the age of Trajan, or of the Antonines, beginning with the reign of Nerva. 1. It began immediately after John wrote. 2. It was a period of prosperity. 3. It was the period of the mightiest extent of Roman power. 4. It furnished one of the mightiest conquerors of the Roman name. 5. He was entitled to wear the garland of victory. 6. This fulfillment is within the *scope* of prophecy, which embraces the Roman Empire. 7. I might add also that the bow itself may have a special significance. Before this age the emperors were all of Roman stock, and until the death of Nero were of the line of Julius Cæsar. Nerva, the founder of a new line of six Cæsars, was of Greek descent, and is said to have been of Cretan stock. The Cretans were a race of bowmen, the most famous of the ancient world. Some have seen this pointed out in the bow.

THE SECOND SEAL.

3, 4. And there went out another horse that was red. The second living creature said, Come and see, and immediately the first vision is replaced by a second, or a startling character. There appears in the field of view a second horse, no longer white, but as red as blood. Upon the horse sat one with a great sword in his hand, to whom “was given power to take peace from the earth, and to make men that they should slay one another.” The horse is the symbol of war, but the changed color indicates that the conditions of war are entirely changed. It is no longer triumphant war in the dominions of their enemies, while within all is peace, but the land is drenched in blood. During the period of the first seal the fertile provinces of the Roman Empire never saw the face of a hostile soldier, unless borne as a captive from the distant frontiers, where the Roman generals waged triumphant wars in the countries of their enemies. All was peace within. But now a period of internal war is indicated. The “earth” contemplated by John was the Roman earth, or empire. From it peace shall be taken away. Nor is it to be destroyed by foreign invaders. “They are to kill one another.” In as plain language as symbolism can disclose, it is indicated that the next great feature of history is that the land shall be torn by civil war.

The Fulfillment. —The next period is marked in the history of man by the most prolonged and sanguinary civil commotion that history records. “Peace was taken from the earth” for ninety-two years. During this long period of nearly a century, the Roman Empire, that portion of the “earth” which was the seat of civilization and of the Christian religion, was constantly torn by bloody contests between rival competitors for power. The history of this epoch is epitomized by Sismondi in the following language: “With Commodus com-



menced the third and most calamitous period. It lasted ninety-two years, from 192 to 284. During that period thirty-two emperors, and twenty-seven pretenders alternately hurled each other from the throne by *incessant civil warfare*. *Ninety-two years of almost incessant civil warfare* taught the world on what a frail foundation the virtue of the Antonines had placed the felicity of the empire.”—*Sismondi's Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. I., page 36. A full history of this dark and unhappy period is also given in the first volume of Gibbon. During the ninety-two years there were thirty-four emperors, besides nineteen pretenders, known as tyrants. *Of these all but two died violent deaths*. What could more strikingly represent such a period of civil contention, of incessant warfare, of fratricidal bloodshed, than the *red* horse and its rider, “to whom was given a great sword, and the power to take away peace, that men should kill one another?” I suppose that no such prolonged and terrible period of civil warfare can be pointed out in the history of the world, and there is certainly a wonderful correspondence between the vision and the events of history.

THE THIRD SEAL.

5, 6. And I beheld, and lo a black horse, etc. Again there appear a horse and a rider. Again the color of the horse is changed, as well as the instrument held in the hand of the horseman. If the white and red colors, the bow and the great sword, had a significance, this must be true also of the black color and the balances. It has been found that the horse, whatever his color, is the symbol of war. The black horse makes it plain that the land is torn by calamitous war, and is filled with sorrow, mourning and despair. Black is the color of mourning. The prophet ([Jer. 14:2](#)) says: “Because of the drought Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are in deep mourning (*lit. black*) for the land.” The balances used for weighing food are a symbol of scarcity and famine. “Bread by weight” always implies scarcity. See [Lev. 26:26](#); [Ezek. 4:16, 17](#). The prices named also signify the same. The *measure* was about a quart, and the *penny* about sixteen cents, which would make the wheat worth about \$5 per bushel; or, if it be borne in mind that one dollar in that age would usually purchase as \$5 now, the wheat would be about \$25 per bushel in the modern currency. Oil and wine, though common foods, are entirely prohibited. An age of war, mourning, calamity and famine is certainly symbolized.

The Fulfillment. —The first and second seals mark distinct epochs, clearly separated from each other. We can determine the exact number of years that belongs to each period. It is not possible to separate, with the same distinctness, the events indicated by the third and fourth seals. The prophecies are fulfilled with startling accuracy, and the occurrences symbolized by each seal follow each other in the same order as the seals, but the events overlap, and are related to each other as effects to cause. During the terrible period of civil commotion, indicated by the red horse, the era of blood and anarchy produces the events symbolized by the black horse, and as the combined result of the two preceding seals there follow the events indicated by the pale horse. There is a period of extreme taxation,

enormous prices, great scarcity, want and famine, due to the destruction of armies and untilled fields during a period of civil war of ninety-two years. There is *first* the civil war as the cause, and *second*, the scarcity and famine as the effect. I will verify this by historical quotations under the next seal, which also relates to this calamitous period.

THE FOURTH SEAL.

7, 8. Behold a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was death. Again, for the fourth time John beholds a horse. It is still a time of war. The horse is now *pale*, the bloodless color of the dead. Upon him sits an undescribed figure, called by the apostle Death. Behind the dread destroyer follows *Hades*, the unseen world, swallowing up the dying mortals and hiding them from human vision. The means employed to destroy men are described. Death and Hades employ (1) *the sword* or war; (2) *hunger*, or famine; (3) *death*, or pestilence, for so is the word here used often to translated, and such is its meaning in this place; and finally (4) the destruction caused by the wild beasts of forests and field. The evident meaning of this symbolism is so plain that all can understand its application, and we need only ask if the facts correspond. Do we find the scarcity, want, hunger, and pestilence, indicated by the prophecy, during the latter portion of this period of civil commotion? Do we have an awful reign of *Death* in the forms signified by the seal?

The Fulfillment. —Let the reader turn to the tenth chapter of the first volume of Gibbon's Rome. It details a condition of things which existed in the reign of Gallienus, when the ninety-two years of civil war were drawing towards a close about a.d. 268. During that reign nineteen pretenders to the throne aroused rebellions which were quenched in blood. The chapter closes with a passage which I ask the reader to compare carefully not only with [verses 7 and 8](#), but also with [verses 6 and 7](#). "But a long and general famine was a calamity of a more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression, which extirpated the produce of the present and the future harvests. Famine is almost always followed by epidemical diseases, the effect of scanty and unwholesome food. Other causes must, however, have contributed to the furious plague, which, from the years two hundred and fifty to the year two hundred and fifty-six, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almost every family of the Roman Empire. During some time five thousand persons died daily in Rome; and many towns that had escaped the hands of the Barbarians, were entirely depopulated. Applying this authentic fact to the most correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves, that above half the people of Alexandria had perished; and could we venture to extend the analogy of the other provinces, we might suspect that war, pestilence, and famine had consumed, in a few years, the moiety of the human species."

Note the correspondence, John in round numbers states that *one-fourth* of the people of the Roman Empire would perish; Gibbon furnishes data for suggesting that *one-half* perished. John assigns four causes for this awful mortality: the sword, hunger, pestilence and wild beasts. Of these four Gibbon names in the last sentence of the above quotation

three, and writers of the period itself speak of the fourth, the scourge of ravenous wild beasts which had multiplied owing to the depopulation of great provinces.

The first four seals, the Seals of the Horses, are associated. These have now been considered. The first, described in [verses 1 and 2](#), I have pronounced the seal of the Triumphant prosperity, the age of Trajan and the Antonines. The red horse of the [fourth verse](#) is the seal of *civil war*, fulfilled in the awful convulsions that began around a.d. 186, and agitated the whole civilized world. The third seal, the black horse and balance of the [fifth verse](#), is the seal of *want*, while the next, the pale horse of the [eighth verse](#), is the seal of *death*.

THE FIFTH SEAL.

It is evident from the entire change of imagery, that, after the fourth seal, the subject of prophetic vision is entirely changed. The horse now disappears, and is seen no more in connection with the opening of the seals. Along with the horse the armed warriors sweep out of sight. The next vision is that of suffering saints.

9–11. I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God. These are clearly Christians who had suffered martyrdom. They had died “for the word of God.” *They were under the altar.* Since the temple is typical of the church, the altar, the center of worship, points to the church and its worship. The brazen altar stood at the door of the tabernacle, and at the bottom of it all the blood of the offerings was poured ([Lev. 4:7](#)). Their position probably points out that their own blood was poured out for Christ. **10. And they cried with a loud voice.** Their cry denotes that the church had suffered long and severely, and they raise a cry for deliverance. **11. And white robes were given unto every one of them.** The robes of justification and victory. They are assured that the day when “they will be avenged” will soon come, but that they must wait a little season. Others must be added to the number of the martyrs before the number is fulfilled. It is a time of persecution. The fifth seal is the seal of persecution, and it evidently marks some notable era in the history of the Church, when more fiercely than ever before it felt the intolerant hand of “them who dwelt upon the earth.” The fulfillment is to be sought in a war of extermination waged against Christianity. Again we ask if, following the events already described, history records events that fulfill this prophecy?

The Fulfillment. —The ninety-two years of civil turmoil began a.d. 192 with the death of Commodus. They ended in a.d. 284. In that year Diocletian ascended the Roman throne, and his reign was distinguished by the most terrible, most prolonged, and most general persecution known in the history of the ancient Church. The Church had often been persecuted before, but no persecution had ever been so universal, so long continued, and so terrible. The Emperor was not by nature a persecutor, but the great men of the empire, especially Galerius, whom he had associated in the duty of government, were alarmed at the astonishing progress of the new religion, and demanded its extirpation. At last Diocletian yielded, and

became the leader in the effort to root out the religion of Christ from the very face of the earth.

Early in a.d. 303 secret councils were held in Nicomedia, concerning the destruction of Christianity. "Perhaps," says Gibbon, "it was represented to Diocletian, that the glorious work of deliverance of the empire was left imperfect so long as an independent people (the Christians) were permitted to subsist and multiply in it." On the twenty-third of February, the first blow was struck. An armed force was sent to destroy the great church of Nicomedia, and to burn the sacred books, so carefully preserved in that day when the printing press was unknown. This was the signal for beginning a persecution which was, by the consent of all historians, the longest, the most general, and the fiercest ever waged against the Church. It is a remarkable fact that a chronological era, dating from the time when Diocletian began to reign instituted not for religious, but astronomical purposes, and used until the Christian era was introduced in the sixth century, has received its name from the persecution, and has been called *the era of martyrs*.

With regard to this period I make a quotation from Gibbon, Vol. II., page 69: "The resentment, or the fears of Diocletian, at length transported him beyond the bounds of moderation, which he had hitherto preserved, and he declared, in a series of cruel edicts, *his intention of abolishing the Christian name*. By the first of these edicts, the governors of the provinces were directed to apprehend all persons of the ecclesiastical order; and the prisons, destined for the vilest criminals, were soon filled with a multitude of bishops, presbyters, deacons, readers and exorcists. By a second edict, the magistrates were commanded to employ every method of severity, which might reclaim them from their odious superstition, and oblige them to return to the established worship of gods. This rigorous order was extended, by a subsequent edict, to the whole body of Christians, who were exposed to a violent and general persecution." This terrible persecution, conducted with such vindictive fury that sometimes church buildings were surrounded by soldiers, the doors locked and the congregations burned in them, continued for over ten years.

In the answer to the martyrs ([verse 11](#)) there are three things that are noteworthy. First, it is said that they must await the great judgment, which would not be until another distinct set of martyrs was slain. These are evidently the martyrs slain, not by pagan Rome, but by anti-Christ. Second, they must wait "a little season." This season is to be measured by God's standard, and not by ours. Third, there were given unto them *white robes*. White robes are a symbol of justification and of triumph. "The white robes are given to him that overcometh." These souls are not in the inner sanctuary, the type of heaven; but under the altar of the outer court, the type of the world. The white robes, therefore, imply their triumph and justification upon the earth. *This came within twenty-five years of their suffering, through the formal acceptance of Christianity by the Roman Empire.*

THE SIXTH SEAL.

12–17. There was a great earthquake. The symbol of political or moral agitation and upheaval. **The sun became black as sackcloth.** The *sun*, *moon*, and *stars* are symbols of earthly dignitaries, great lights in the political or religious heavens. In the dream of Joseph, which so maddened his brethren, these terms are used in this meaning, as well as by the ancient prophets. In the East it was common to liken the king or emperor to the sun, and the stars as the symbols of princes or rulers. For the use of the term we refer the reader to [Dan. 8:10](#). The blackness of the sun and the bloody hue of the moon point out scenes of mourning and bloodshed among rulers and princes. The falling of the stars would indicate the downfall of those who had high places on the earth, or rather within the Roman Empire. **14. The heaven was removed as a scroll.** The old religions, supposed to be of heavenly origin, pass away. **Every mountain and island were moved.** *Mountain* and *island* are used to denote earthly rulers and kingdoms, the latter referring more especially to European provinces which are often called “the isles of the sea” in the Bible. From the period of Diocletian, the great persecutor, the title, “Your Eminence,” or, in other words, “mountain,” was bestowed upon princes. As a mountain stood above the plain, so the rulers of the earth were exalted. **15. And the kings of the earth, and the princes ... hid themselves.** This implies great terror among “them that dwell on the earth;” their belief that terrible judgments were impending from God; that **the wrath of the Lamb** was manifested, and their efforts to escape.

The Meaning. —Many have explained this startling symbolism to describe the closing scenes of the world and the personal coming of Christ to judgment. This cannot be the meaning, for the series of visions continues on until the seventh seal is opened, and all it contains is exhausted. Others have supposed that the rush of the northern race which overthrew the Roman Empire is meant. I believe that it refers to great events which have long since taken place. The various phenomena in earth and sky, the earthquake, the falling stars, the heavens rolled away, the mountains and islands moved out of their places, all foreshadow a violent, bloody, remarkable upheaval of systems, rulers, governments, kingdoms, and the establishment of a new order upon the earth. It is on earth, it is in history that we are to look for the fulfillment of the prophecy. And since the “earth” that is present to the mind of John is the civilized world known to the ancients, the Roman Empire, it is within its boundaries that we must look for the fulfillment. There can be no doubt that this is the seal of revolution.

The Fulfillment. —Several circumstances help us to fix the meaning. 1. *The time.* It follows immediately after the great persecution indicated by the fifth seal, which closed in a.d. 311. These events occur, then, near that time. 2. It is a time of blood and mourning. Who are the mourners? Kings, great men, rich men, bondmen and freemen. Are these Christians? They are enemies of the Lamb, who fear his wrath and mourn over his power. The mourners are the opposers of the Church.—([Verse 16.](#)) 3. The seal is followed by a period of great joy

and prosperity on the part of the Church.—(See [chapter 7](#).) An innumerable multitude are sealed with the seal of the Lamb, of which the [next chapter](#) gives record. Have we, near a.d. 311, the time when the great persecution closed, a period of mighty revolution, that filled the unbelieving world with mourning, and which was followed by a time of triumph, prosperity and glory to the Church of Christ? In the year 312, leaving Britain, marching through Gaul, Constantine launched his armies upon Italy. The Church watched his progress with singular interest; for although he had, as yet, made no profession of Christianity, his mother, Helena, was a Christian, and it was felt that he was favorable to his mother's faith. The Italian emperor opposed to him, Maxentius, was a firm Pagan, and around him centered the interests of the Pagan faith. Indeed, he gave public assurance that he would extirpate the Christian religion, and vowed to Jupiter that, in the event he was successful, he would make his worship universal on the ruins of Christianity. In three great battles Maxentius was defeated and in the last was slain, and Constantine became the ruler of Rome. In the East another emperor, Licinius, a Pagan and a persecutor, still held the reins of power. Wars, truces and battles followed, until in a.d. 324 he was crushed and put to death. In this period of conflict, lasting about sixteen years, six emperors in all strove for the pre-eminence, of whom Constantine remained the sole survivor.

But these are not the most remarkable changes of this period. Let us note these: 1. The votaries of the old Paganism had rallied around the enemies of Constantine, because he was felt to be its unrelenting foe, who would compass its destruction. When he was seated in triumph upon the ruins of six imperial thrones, there was great mourning from the enemies of the Cross. They felt that theirs was a doomed religion. They were right. 2. In the year 319, before his final triumph, he had decreed that his mother's religion should be tolerated as an acknowledged faith of the empire. 3. In 321 he decreed that Sunday, the sacred day of Christianity, should be observed in all the cities by the cessation of trade and labor. 4. In 325 he abolished by decree the bloody combats of the gladiators, where men killed each other to amuse the populace, a Roman institution that had existed for a thousand years. 5. He convoked, by imperial authority, a great council of Christian bishops, the one known in history as the Council of Nice. 6. In 331 he decreed that the Pagan religion should exist no longer, and that all the heathen temples should be leveled, or converted into churches. 7. At the same time the old Roman laws were remodeled according to the precepts of the Christian religion, and a Pagan empire was transformed into an empire of the Christian faith, under new institutions. Surely the old heavens were moved away as a scroll is gathered together. But this is not all. I name another wonderful change of this age of revolution. In 324 he determined to shake the Roman world to its very center, and to deprive the imperial city of the crown worn for eleven centuries, by removing the capital from Italy to a new city upon the banks of the Hellespont, that should henceforth be called Constantinople, from his own name. The mighty mountain of the West is moved from its place. Not only do these



revolutions, the greatest in the history of the world, fulfil the imagery, but the mournings of the heathen in that age almost adopted the language of Revelation in describing this period. The ruin of the Pagan religion is described by the Sophists, says Gibbon, “as a dreadful and amazing prodigy, which *covered the earth with darkness, and restored the ancient dominion of chaos and night.*”

Those who insist that the opening of the sixth seal portrays the end of the world should bear in mind, not only the chain of events continues on through the [7th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th chapters](#), and that it is only when the Seventh Angel sounds his trumpet (11:15) that the proclamation is made that “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ,” but they should keep in mind also that the scenes beheld by John are not literal pictures of the events, but symbolic visions. The interpreter should ask himself not, What would be the literal fulfillment of the visions? but, What do the symbols signify? The earthquake, the blackened sun, the falling stars, the moving mountains and islands of the sixth seal are not to be regarded as literal any more than the pale horse in the fourth seal.



Chapter VII

The Sealing of the Servants of God

Summary —*The Four Winds Held. The Sealing of the One Hundred and Forty Four Thousand. The Great Multitude with the Palms of Victory. They with White Robes About the Throne.*

The symbolism which represents the opening events of the sixth seal has been given in [chapter 6, verses 12–17](#). These, however, only show forth the great revolution in the world's history with which the seal opened in [chapter 8, verse 1](#). Hence, all the symbolism of [chapter 7](#) represents events which belong to the sixth seal, or at least are not completed before it closes.

1–3. After this. After the opening of the sixth seal. **I saw four angels.** The vision that appears before his eyes is that of four angels at the four points of the compass, holding four winds to prevent them from rushing in destruction upon the earth. These certainly represent four destructive powers which are held back for a time from the land, the sea, and the vegetation of the earth. **2. I saw another angel.** The picture is that of an angel having the seal of the living God. The object of this seal is indicated in [verse 3](#). The seal was a mark of ownership. The seal of God on the forehead would mark those sealed at God's. The seal mark on the forehead would be visible to everyone; hence the seal in the forehead has been understood to be the public confession and profession of Christ. This angel would thus symbolize a great and successful movement to evangelize the race. **3. Hurt not, etc.** The four winds are forbidden to do their work of destruction until the sealing has been accomplished; or in other words, until the preaching of the gospel has wrought a certain result.

4–8. And I heard the number of them which were sealed. The number first named is one hundred and forty-four thousand, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. These numbers are not to be taken literally, but only signify that a great number, not a countless number, but a part of each tribe of Israel, accepted the gospel. Of the tribes Ephraim appears under the name of Joseph, and Dan is entirely omitted, a fact possibly due to the early falling away of Dan into idolatry. The number twelve is preserved by counting Levi. For another appearance of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, see [14:1](#).

9–10. After this I beheld. First he saw the vast company of those of the blood of Abraham who had been saved, and then he sees another company, not numbered, because they were so great that no man could number them. **Of all nations and kindreds.** The first multitude represented the Jews saved through Christ; the second, the countless multitude, represented the saved of all nations, the Gentile saints. **Before the throne.** In the vision they seem to stand before the throne and before the Lamb, to whom they ascribe the praises of their salvation. **White robes.** Victorious, triumphant. **Palms in their hands.** The symbol of joy. The



palm branch was used at the feast of Tabernacles, the feast of thanksgiving. **10. Salvation to our God.** The praise of our salvation be given to God and to the Lamb.

11, 12. All the angels. In [chapter 5](#) the elders, four living creatures, the angels about the throne, and every creature join in the praises. Here again all are named, and the angels worship and join in praising God for the blessed scene they have just beheld.

13–17. What are these? The questions are asked by the elder that he may teach. “These” refer to the vast multitude described in [verse 9](#). **14. Thou knowest.** “I do not know but thou dost.” **These are they which came out of the great tribulation.** See Revision. Some great period of trial of the church is meant. They have stood the trial, and been true. **Washed their robes.** Have made themselves spotless by trust in the blood of Christ. **15. Therefore are they before the throne of God.** They are exalted to heaven. **16. They shall hunger no more.** Their sorrows are over forever. **17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them.** God and the Lamb shall bestow upon them every blessing and remove every sorrow.

The Meaning. —What do the symbols of this vision signify? It is evident that they indicate that four destructive agencies were to be checked and restrained until some great work of the gospel was accomplished. The work to be wrought is symbolized by two multitudes, one numbered, the other countless, both of them saved and praising God for salvation. The first company is composed of Jews, while the second and larger company is composed of Gentiles. In the fourteenth chapter we find again a company of one hundred and forty-four thousand with the Lamb upon Mt. Zion, evidently, from the same number, to be associated with these. We are there told that they were “virgins,” a term whose spiritual signification is that they had never been defiled by idolatry, and they were “the first fruits” unto the Lamb. These marks, as well as the literal statement here that they were of the tribes of Israel, identify them as the Jewish members of the Church. These had never been guilty of idolatrous fornication, and had been the first fruits of Christianity. Jews were the original first fruits, and they were represented by the Jewish Christian element. The thought, as it appears to me, is to bring before the mind that at this period of triumph there were the Jewish and the Gentile elements. I am aware that many commentators have held that the one hundred and forty-four thousand refers to spiritual Israel. All Christians belong to this spiritual Israel, but it is evident that a different meaning is intended here. 1. Those sealed are taken out of the tribes of Israel. They are a remnant, while the great body of the membership of the tribes is left unsealed. 2. The Gentile Christians are named immediately after. Observe the marks of the countless multitude of the Gentiles saved: 1. They are clothed in white robes. White robes are the mark of triumph. 2. They have palms in their hands. Palms belong to victors. 3. They join in a song of praise to the Lamb as the author of their salvation. This is evidently a heavenly picture, representing

a great triumph of the saints immediately after the events last described. The subsequent portion of the chapter is in harmony. "Who are these," it asked, "arrayed in white garments?" The reply shows these, who have come through *the* (there is an article in the Greek) great tribulation of a suffering and persecuted church, are permitted to witness its justification and victory. The whole is a picture of a great triumph of the church, triumphant on earth, and its triumphant sufferers enjoying the final reward on high. The meaning is that those who have suffered and wrought during the long period of tribulation covering the first three centuries of the church have won their triumph on earth, in the victory of the church, and the final reward in heaven.

It only remains to ask, whether before the "four winds" were loosed and after the great persecution of the fifth seal, such a triumph was won. I have already shown that the opening of the sixth seal refers to the overthrow of the old Paganism. I will state briefly that at the end of the third century Paganism was dominant, persecuting, seeking to "abolish the Christian name." *At the end of the fourth century the civilized world was Christian.*

The Four Winds. —I have already indicated that I regard the Four Angels with the Four Winds which are held back from hurting the earth until this great sealing is effected, four mighty agencies of destruction which were soon to sweep in fury upon the Roman Empire, "the earth" of John's vision. This will be explained more fully in the [next chapter](#). Until this sealing, the mighty triumph, is effected, the four winds are held. It is significant that we will find following close upon the triumph of Christianity the Roman Empire utterly overthrown by four agencies, symbolized when four angels blow their trumpets under the seventh seal. It was part of the providence of God that these agencies should be restrained until the empire was converted to Christianity. Indeed, to this providence we may attribute the fact that Europe at this day and for a thousand years, as well as the descendants of Europeans in America, acknowledge the Christian faith. Had the overwhelming hordes of northern barbarians rushed down upon the civilized world before the new faith had been firmly planted, it could hardly have survived the wreck of empires and civilization; but, deeply rooted in the hearts of the vanquished, when all else was lost, Christianity rose above the ruins of the past and pointed the ferocious invaders to the Cross of Christ. The conquerors, in their new lands, laid aside the Paganism of their fathers and accepted a new religion from those whom they had vanquished. The new nations that emerge from the darkness of the Middle Ages, seated in the vast boundaries of the old Roman Empire, all acknowledge the Christian faith.



Chapter VIII

The Seventh Seal Opened

Summary — *The Silence in Heaven. The Seven Angels with the Seven Trumpets. The Incense Offered. The Fire Cast on the Earth. The First Angel Sounds; Hail, Fire, and Blood Follow. The Second Trumpet and the Mountain Cast into the Sea. The Third Trumpet and the Great Burning Stars. The Fourth Trumpet and the Sun Darkened.*

In the opening of the [seventh chapter](#) we are told that four angels were holding back hurtful winds or destroying agencies until a great work was done for the Church. That work accomplished, the eighth chapter describes how four angels let loose four terrible agencies to a work of destruction. The first four trumpet angels are entirely separated from the remaining three and do a separate work. There ought not to be a doubt that the *four* agencies let loose by the four trumpet angels of the [eighth chapter](#), are the same as the *four* hurtful winds held back by the angels in the [seventh chapter](#).

1, 2. When he opened the seventh seal. It is the Lamb who opens all the seals. **There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.** There has been a great effort among commentators to interpret the meaning of this silence. I think that it is a hush of awe before the march of the awful judgments about to come, the calm before the storm breaks forth, the oppressive silence before the burst of battle. It is designed to emphasize the events that follow. **2. And I saw.** Thus John introduces the vision of each seal. The vision is not the silence in heaven, but what John *saw*. On this point some commentators make a mistake here. What he saw was the **seven angels which stand before God**; that is, the angels who act as his immediate ministering servants, to whom were given seven trumpets. The seventh seal, therefore, embraces these angels and their trumpets, and all they do in the following verses belongs to this seal. The seventh and last seal will not be exhausted until the seven trumpet angels have discharged their mission.

3–5. And another angel came and stood over the altar. The scene reveals the altar of the tabernacle, “a pattern made after heavenly things.” This is the altar of sacrifice from which the coal was always taken to light the incense ([Lev. 16:13](#)). This angel receives the incense and offers it upon the **golden altar**, the altar of incense. The incense is “the prayers of the saints;” these to reach the throne must be lighted from the altar of sacrifice; or by faith in the blood of the Lamb of God. **4. And the smoke.** As the smoke arose before the throne, so the prayers of the saints in the name of the crucified Savior arise to God. The special significance of all this is that in the terrible judgments about to follow, the prayers of the true and faithful saints will still come before God, and his providence will be over them. **5. And the angel ... filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth.** Fire is usually a symbol of suffering. This fire cast from the altar upon the earth indicates that the



judgments of God are about to fall upon it. The *earth* in the sense used by John is the great Roman Empire, which embraced the civilized world. **There followed thunders, etc.** These mutterings and the quaking are ominous of the terrible scenes to follow when the angels sound their trumpets.

6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets. See [verse 2](#). There is the utmost deliberation. All must be made ready. The four angels hold back the winds ([7:1](#)), then there was the silence of half an hour ([verse 1](#)); now the seven angels **prepared themselves to sound**. This implies that all things were being made ready for the great events to follow. *Trumpets*. The trumpet is used to give a signal. Usually it implied the march or charge of armies. See [Joel 2:1, 15](#); [Jer. 4:5](#); [Ezek. 33:1–6](#). Sometimes it calls the people to worship. See [Num. 31:6](#); [1 Chron. 15:24](#). The reader will see that the first is likely to be the significance here.

7. The first angel sounded. When the trumpet sounded there followed the wonderful scenes described. When the first trumpet is blown John beholds a mighty storm-cloud rush over the earth. From it pour hail and fire mingled with blood. They fall upon the earth and a third part is scorched and blasted. These terms indicate desolation by some kind of judgments. The scene of the desolation is “the earth,” or the Roman Empire in John’s use of the term. The blood indicates carnage. The scorched and blasted land indicates the devastation of destroying armies. The language implies a terrible destruction descending upon a third of the world known to John.

8, 9. And the second angel sounded. Then the scene changes. Now a great burning mountain is cast into the sea. The sea is the theatre of destruction. Again there is fire and blood indicating carnage and destruction. In the first judgment the third part of the earth suffers; but now a third part of the sea. The symbols imply that some mighty volcanic power shall be turned upon the sea, and make it a scene of awful warfare and destruction.

10, 11. And the third angel sounded. With the third trumpet the vision again changes. Now a great, burning, blazing meteor falls upon a **third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters**. A “third part of the earth,” a “third part of the sea,” and now “a third part of the rivers” are subjected to judgments. **11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood.** That is, it is bitterness, because it shall fill the world with bitter sorrow. A star is a symbol of a great leader. Such a star as this, a blazing meteor, is a symbol of a leader who suddenly appears, rapidly does an awfully baleful work, and then disappears. In some way the rivers will be the scenes of his malign influence. They shall become bitterness and shall be scenes of death.

12. And the fourth angel sounded. Again the scene changes. Now it is the third part of the sun, and of the moon, and of the stars that is smitten, and darkness follows. The sun is a symbol of the supreme ruler, and the moon and stars of inferior dignities. If the Roman emperor, ruler of the world, should be cast from power, his empire overthrown, the consuls,

senators, and great men who supported his power be cast to the dust, and a period of intellectual and moral darkness should follow, it would fully meet the symbolism.

13. And I beheld, and heard an angel. An eagle in the Revision. The flight of this messenger through the midst of heaven shows that an epoch has been passed with the four trumpet visions, and that another epoch is about to begin. The voice proclaims, **Woe, woe, woe.** There are three woes; there are three woe angels. **Upon the inhabitants of the earth.** Upon the earth as known to John. The geographical scene of those events which are historical must be looked for somewhere within the bounds of the great Roman world.

THE FULFILLMENT.

I have explained briefly the symbolical significance of the visions which follow each trumpet blast of the first four angels. The next question is whether history has anything corresponding which follows the overthrow of Paganism and triumph of Christianity as predicted in the sixth seal. Thus far we have a complete correspondence between the series of symbols and the events of history, following each in regular order, events and symbols corresponding. Does this correspondence continue? Do we find that, as the four trumpet blasts are blown, four hurtful agencies long held back (the four winds) rush to the destruction of the Roman Empire? Let us see:

1. About a.d. 400, the "four winds" could be held no longer. The Goths gathered out of the mysterious lands of the unexplored North, and, like a mighty torrent, threw themselves, a mighty, dauntless, savage host, upon Rome. Barbarous as the Indians of the desert, they left behind their march, scarred, scorched, blackened, bloody and desolated lands. Countries blooming like garden were turned into treeless deserts. In a.d. 409, under Alaric, their king, they descended on Italy. It had not seen the face of a foreign enemy for eight hundred years. At last the hosts gathered around the Imperial City. After a long siege, in the dead hour of night, the gates were opened by the hands of traitors and the barbarians rushed in. For three days the sack went on before they were glutted with blood and spoil. Then, their leader having died, they retired, loaded with spoil. The iron hail of war, the fire of burning towns and cities, mingled with the blood of the slain defenders, the scorched and blackened lands denuded of their fruit trees, and the grass trodden under foot by the march of armies all correspond surprisingly with the language of the Scripture. It is strange, also, how the infidel Gibbon has chosen the very language of inspiration to describe some of the events of this period. I will quote a few phrases found in his thirty-first chapter and descriptive of the great invasion of Alaric and the Goths. "The tremendous sound of the Gothic *trumpet*" stirred the host to invasion. "At the first sound of the *trumpet* the Goths left their farms" to rush on in invasion. "The Gothic *conflagration*" consumed the empire. "Blood and conflagration and the burning of trees and herbage marked their path." Here is surely a remarkable fulfillment of the symbolism that follows the *First Trumpet*.



2. The second trumpet implies a warfare upon the sea. Let us turn to history. The Goths completed their work about a.d. 409. About ten years later another mighty horde of northern barbarians was sweeping south. The principal tribe was called the Vandals, from whence our word *vandalism*. They rushed over Gaul, swept through Spain, leaped over the narrow straits of Gibraltar, and wrested northern Africa from the Roman dominion. Then they threw themselves like *a burning mountain upon the sea* and filled it with fire and blood. In order that they might assail Rome on the seas and carry their armies to the islands and to Italy, they built fleets and struggled for the mastery of the Mediterranean. For six hundred years no ship hostile to Rome had disputed the mastery of the sea, but now it becomes the theatre of war. Fleets meet in the shock of battle; the sea is reddened with the blood of the slain; the Roman ensign goes down, dyed in blood; the islands of the sea fall into the hands of the fierce barbarian, and at last, near thirty years after the contest began, their fleets land their armies in Italy, and they rush upon Rome. The city is besieged, falls, and for fourteen days a pitiless barbarian soldiery spare neither age nor sex. The spoil gathered for eight hundred years, from a hundred conquered nations, is carried away and loaded upon the Vandal fleets, and the blasted, scourged, and pillaged Capital is abandoned as unworthy to be held as a permanent possession. Surely these facts correspond to the *Second Trumpet* vision.

3. *The blazing meteor* that follows the sound of the third trumpet has been found to imply some mighty leader who suddenly appears and enters upon a baleful work. Is there such a leader? Before a.d. 440, the Romans knew nothing of the Hungarian nation. About that time there suddenly appeared, as a meteor would flash in the sky, a warrior upon the banks of the *river* Danube, with eight hundred thousand fighting men under his banners. They had come from the depths of Central Asia, marched north of the Euxine Sea through Russia, and now knocked at the *river* boundary of the Roman Empire. Overcoming opposition to their passage of the Danube, they rushed westward, crossed the *river* Rhine, and on the *river* Marne were met in conflict by the hosts of Rome. The historians tell us that the blood of slaughtered heroes made the river run with blood, and that from one hundred and fifty thousand to three hundred thousand bodies of the dead attested the fury of the conflict. Then they desolated the river Rhine to its mouth. Turning southward, on the banks of the *river* Rhone, the hosts met again in fury. Then, descending from the Alps, the fierce warrior, on the banks of the *river* Po, contended for the mastery of Italy. Victorious, he marched southward to seize the imperial prize. Unable to contend longer, Rome sent a priestly deputation to ask him to depart. By rich bribes and by work on his superstition they succeeded, and he retired, made Buda, on the river Danube, his capital and founded the Hungarian nation. When he died, his followers turned the waters of the Danube from its course, buried him in its bed, and then let them return to flow over the grave of the hero. Beneath

the waters of the river Danube still lie the bones of the star called Wormwood, that fell upon the rivers. The trumpets have blown, three awful blows have been struck, and the weakened empire is ready to fall when the fourth trumpet blows.

4. *The fourth trumpet.* Read again the [12th verse](#). We have found that the Goths struck their blow about a.d. 409; the Vandals from the sea about a.d. 422; and Attila upon the rivers about a.d. 440. What follows? We are to seek the fulfillment in the next and final invasion of Rome. It occurred a.d. 476. Odoacer, king of the Heruli, a Northern race, encouraged by the apparent weakness of the falling empire, besieged and took the almost helpless city. Augustulus, the feeble emperor, was hurled down, the Roman Senate that had met for twelve hundred and twenty-eight years, was driven from the Senate chambers, the mighty fabric of the empire fell to the dust, and the great men were humbled never to rise again. Sun, moon, and stars, emperor, princes, and great men, are smitten, lose their power, and cease to give light. Nay, more. There now began the period called by all historians the “Dark Ages.” The fall of Rome introduced the period when, intellectually and spiritually, the day and night were darkened; when the minds of men were blinded, and when the Church, falling gradually into apostasy, gave forth for ages only a feeble light to human souls. Again the correspondence is complete.

The Third Part. —The *third part* is named each of these four judgments. The first falls on a third part of the earth the second on a third part of the sea, the third on a third part of the rivers, and the fourth on a third part of the sun, moon, and stars. If they were to fall upon a *third part* of the great Roman world, (1) upon its land provinces, (2) upon its seas, (3) upon its river systems, and (4) upon emperors and rulers (sun, moon and stars), the whole would thus be fulfilled. *This is just what took place.* During a great part of the period when the events were taking place which are covered by the seven trumpets, the great Roman world was divided into three parts. Gibbon, Chapter LIII., says: “From the age of Charlemagne to that of the Crusades, the world (for I overlook the remote monarchy of China) was occupied and disputed by *the three great empires*, or nations of the *Greeks*, the *Saracens*, and the *Franks*.” “*The three great nations* of the world, the *Greeks*, the *Saracens*, and the *Franks*, encountered each other on the plains of Italy.”—Chapter LVI. “*Three classes* of men during the interval are conspicuous, the *Saracens*, or Arabians, the *Latins* or *Franks*, inhabitants of Western Europe, and the *Byzantine Greeks*.”—*Phil. Inquiries*, Part III. These quotations, which might be multiplied, show that during the long period of a thousand years, a period embraced in the fulfillment of the visions of John, the civilized world was divided into three distinct parts, and that these were clearly marked in history. It is upon one of these parts, a *third part*, the Western third part, called the Latin or Frank part, that all the calamities of

the four invasions of Goths, Vandals, Huns, and Heruli fell. It was the Western *third part*, the Old Roman Empire, which fell forever under their blows.



Chapter IX

The Woe Trumpets

Summary — *The Fifth Trumpet. The Fallen Star. The Destroying Locusts. The Five Months of Their Power. The Sixth Trumpet. The Four Angels at the Euphrates Loosed. The Myriads of the Horsemen. The Third Part of Men Killed. The Rest of Mankind Repent Not.*

It has already been seen that the trumpet angels are divided into two groups. There remain the three who have been called the *woe* angels, on account of the language applied to them in [chapter 8:13](#). It is manifest that the first four have completed their work, and that the others are devoted to another and a distinct work, which shall be the source of great woe to a part of the inhabitants of the earth. This work must be at a later period, and hence must be after the year 476.

1–6. I saw a star from heaven fallen. (Revision). John saw when the trumpet sounded, not a star fall, but a star fallen to the earth. A star is a symbol of a leader. A star fallen to the earth would indicate his degradation in some way. **To him was given the key of the bottomless pit.** He was given power to let out hellish influences on the earth. **2. There arose a smoke.** From that source came forth some influence, symbolized by smoke, which darkened the earth. **3. There came out of the smoke locusts.** The destroying locusts symbolize destroying armies. See [Nahum 3:15](#); [Exod. 10:12](#). Observe that they come out of the smoke. To the smoke their origin is due. **Unto them was given power.** Power to hurt is implied, since they are compared to scorpions. **4. They should not hurt the grass, etc.** The locusts usually devour every green thing. These, however, shall seek to preserve trees and vegetation. **Only the men.** Their special hurt shall be directed against men who are not sealed as God's own. **5. They should not kill them.** This either implies that the armies symbolized by the locusts should seek not to destroy the races they attacked, or that they should not destroy the empire assailed. **Five months.** Their torment should continue five months, or one hundred and fifty prophetic days. Since a day is a symbol of a year, this implies one hundred and fifty years. **Their torment was as the torment of a scorpion.** Their warfare and torment shall be almost intolerable. **6. Shall men seek death.** So terrible will be the torment that death will be desired.

7–11. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war. The appearance of the locusts is described. They represent armies of horsemen. **Crowns like gold.** There was an appearance like golden crowns. An array of men wearing yellow turbans would have such an appearance. **Faces of men.** Faces covered with beard. Roman soldiers wore no beard, hence the beards would be a striking feature. **8. Hair as the hair of women.**



Wearing long, flowing hair. **Teeth as the teeth of lions.** This probably signifies fierceness. **9. Breastplates as breastplates of iron.** There was something that seemed like an army clad in iron coats of mail. **The sound of their wings.** They gave a sound like the rush of chariots and horses rushing to battle. **10. And they had tails.** They stung terribly, and left a string in their path. **11. They had a king over them.** The real king was not the star, but the power of the bottomless pit. **Apollyon.** The destroyer; either the devil or one of his angels.

FULFILLMENT.

The locust, the horse, the horsemen, the scorpions, and indeed all the symbols point to Arabia as the source from whence the locusts come. I believe that there ought to be no reasonable doubt that the uprising of the Mohammedan or Saracen power is meant. The Western Roman Empire had fallen in a.d. 476. There yet existed the Eastern Roman Empire, with Constantinople for a capital, called the Greek Empire. Against it the Saracen effort was especially directed. Let us see how that movement corresponded to the symbols: It was the *right time*, after a.d. 476, and in the *right place*, directed against the eastern part of the Old Roman world. Not only the facts just mentioned, but the description of the men symbolized by the locusts, point to Arabia. The locusts “were like unto horses prepared for battle.” The Arabians, unlike the Goths, Vandals, and Huns, were an army of horsemen, and moved over a country almost with the swiftness of the locust. Let the reader note the following facts concerning the Arabs: 1. They came forth from the home of the locust. 2. They all fought on horseback. There was not a foot-soldier in the armies which in a.d. 632 assailed the Eastern Empire. 3. They wore upon their heads something like crowns of gold. The historians often speak of them as the “turbaned Arabs.” Ezekiel (23:42), speaking of the Sabeans, which were an Arabian tribe, says, “The Sabeans of the wilderness who put upon their heads beautiful crowns.” The yellow turbans of the Arab horsemen, at a little distance, would strikingly resemble “crowns of gold.” 4. The locusts had “the faces of men.” The Jews and Arabs wore long, patriarchal beards. The Roman and northern races shaved the face. John notes that these locusts have the distinguishing mark of manhood in the East,—the unshorn beard. 5. But to the faces of men is added “the hair of women.” The female distinction is long hair, and evidently John beholds, as the riders rush by, long hair flowing from their shoulders and streaming in the air. Did the Arabs in the seventh century wear long hair? Pliny, who was the contemporary of John, speaks (Nat. His. 7:28) of “the turbaned Arabs with their uncut hair.” Ammianus Marcellinus in the fourth, and Jerome in the fifth century, each speak of the long-haired Arabs. An Arabian poem, *Antar*, written in Mahomet's time, often speaks of the hair of its heroes flowing down upon their shoulders. We quote: “He adjusted himself, twisted his beard, and folded his hair under his turban, drawing it up from his shoulders.” 6. But the locust had “breastplates of iron.” The historians of the Arabian wars constantly speak of the iron coats of mail. Mohammed, in the Koran, says: “God has given you coats of mail to defend you in your wars.”

Other Details. —Many corroborations might be added. 1. Mohammed was literally a *fallen star*. He was a prince by birth, the heir of the rule of Mecca, but his grandfather and father dying while he was young, he was pushed aside and became a servant. 2. *The locusts came out of the smoke*. The Arabs were unknown as a conquering power before Mohammed. The smoke of his imposture filled them with the fierce, stern fanaticism of the Koran. 3. They had literal orders in their invasion not to destroy vegetation. “*Cut down no palm trees, nor burn fields of corn. Destroy no fruit trees.*”—Gibbon, Vol. V., page 189. 4. Passing other marks, their destructive work was to *continue five months*, or one hundred and fifty years. Though Mohammed's work began earlier, it was in a.d. 632 that the Arab hosts bursts forth from their deserts to assail the world. Within a hundred years Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, the north of Africa, and Spain had fallen beneath their sway. In 762, the capital of the Saracen Empire was placed at Bagdad and their rulers began to cherish peaceful ideas. In 781, the Caliph Haroun Al Rashid was their ruler. This is the golden age of the Saracen power. This is the era of the Arabian Nights. Bagdad was called the “City of Peace.” How long is this from the time when the torment that had stricken half the world began? In a.d. 632, the Arabs assailed the nations, to which date one hundred and fifty years may be added. This would bring us to 782, the second year of Haroun Al Rashid's reign. Did the torment continue longer? Nay. He was engaged in friendly correspondence with the Christian rulers of Europe, and from this time the Saracens ceased their efforts to make the world Mohammedan. Their aggressive wars were forever ended.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

13–15. The sixth angel sounded. A voice is then heard coming from the golden altar of incense (see 8:3). He does not say who spoke, but declares the command uttered. **14. Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates.** The four angels represent four agencies which had been restrained and kept from advancing. **15. And the four angels were loosed.** Whatever these angels represent, they are no longer restrained. It is implied that there were four agencies, or a fourfold division. **Prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year.** The Greek word used that for the regular solar year of 365 1–4 days, Julius Cæsar having reformed the calendar. This would make 365 1–4, plus 30, plus 1, plus 1–12, equal 396 1–3 days. Or, a day being a symbol of a year, three hundred and ninety-six years and four months.

16–19. The number of the army of the horsemen. Countless armies of horsemen are signified. **17. Having breastplates as of fire, and of hyacinth, and brimstone.** Or, bright red, blue and yellow. These are the colors observed. **The heads of the horses.** Strength and fierceness are implied. **Out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and brimstone.** This is a destroying power. It might well describe the use of gunpowder. One looking at a distance would see the flash of fire, and the smoke, apparently coming from the horses' heads, would smell the brimstone odor, and would see the destructive effect. **18. By these**



three plagues. The fire, smoke and brimstone. These agencies slay **the third part of men.** We have before found that the Old Roman world was divided into three parts. One third part had been destroyed by the first four trumpet invasions. A second third part was taken by the Saracens. If now the third part was taken and destroyed by these three plagues, the symbolism would be fulfilled.

THE FULFILLMENT.

We have found that the Arabian scourge had fulfilled its work by a.d. 782. It had taken from the Eastern Empire its provinces in Africa, and most of its possessions in Asia. The world, according to Gibbon, was at this time divided into three parts. Two of these had fallen before five destructive agencies. One still remains to be destroyed by the angels *bound at the river Euphrates*.

A few years before the thousandth year of the Christian era, a fierce Tartar race, formidable by numbers and bravery, left their seats east of the Caspian Sea, and moved southward, until they rested upon the river Euphrates. A vast region of country east of that river fell before their arms. Persia became one of their provinces, and India, as far as the ocean, was subjected to their sway. But for two generations they “were bound by the river Euphrates” and lying upon its eastern banks, their armies were restrained by the river from ravaging the countries that lie to the west. For more than half a century, in some mysterious way, they were restrained at that river. At last, in the year 1057, sixty years after their appearance upon the east bank of that stream, after being *bound* for two generations, they crossed the Euphrates and marched upon the eastern Roman Empire. This people were called the Turkomans or Turkmans; we call them *Turks*.

There were *four* angels. This would imply, in some way, four powers. It is remarkable that this people were divided into four bodies, which formed four kingdoms, under the four grandsons of the leader who established the empire of the Turks in western Asia. The prince who was commissioned by the Caliph to attack the Greek Empire was named Togrul, but dying, his son, Alp Arsian, led the Turks across the Euphrates, and when he was slain in battle, he was succeeded by Malek Shah. If the reader will open at 532d page of Gibbon, Vol. V., he will find that the mighty empire of Malek Shah was divided into four principalities, under his four sons, which are described by the historian under the names of Persia, Kerman or India, Syria, Roum or Asia Minor, extending from the shores of the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. There are then four angels or messengers of destruction.

Observe the correspondence: (1) They were *bound at the Euphrates*. (2) There were *four* commands. (3) Their armies were horsemen, apparently countless. (4) They numbered their horsemen by *myriads* instead of by thousands. Gibbon often speaks of the myriads of horses. See Chap. LVII. (5) “The Ottomans until a very recent period wore warlike apparel of *scarlet, blue and yellow*.” (6) The first time that gunpowder and firearms were employed in war was in their campaigns. Constantinople was taken by cannon. See Gibbon, Chap. LXVIII. I quote

one passage: "The great cannon of Mahomet has been separately noticed; an important and visible object in history of the times; but that enormous engine was flanked by two fellows almost of equal magnitude; the long order of the Turkish artillery was pointed against the walls; fourteen batteries thundered at once on the most accessible places; and of one of these it is ambiguously expressed, that it was mounted with one hundred and thirty balls, or discharged one hundred and thirty bullets." (7) *There was power in the tails of the horses.* This is a singular statement. No less singular is the fact that among the Turks the horse's tail is an emblem of power. The number of horses' tails determines rank. A Pacha of *three tails* is a great officer. The emblem of the rule of the Pachas, the most wasteful, oppressive, unjust rule the world has ever seen, is the horse's tail.

The Time. —One point more must suffice. It has been already shown that the prophetic period is three hundred and ninety-six years and four months, and it must evidently begin at the time when the angels were "loosed" in order to commence their work. It was in the year 1057 that the Turkish armies crossed the river and assailed the Empire. By the beginning of the next century their conquests extended to the Hellespont, and embraced all that portion of the world now portrayed upon the maps as Turkey in Asia. Then came the mighty uprising of Europe in the Crusades, which for the time beat back the torrent of Moslem invasion and recovered a portion of Asia. Between Europe and Asia the contest continued for two centuries, when Europe, weary of the fruitless struggle, abandoned the attempt, and the Turkish Empire, re-organized with the Ottoman Turks in power, passed over into Europe. The Eastern Empire was soon shorn of all its territories and reduced to the city of Constantinople. In the year 1453, assailed by two hundred thousand Turks, its walls battered down by the first cannon ever used in a siege, one hundred thousand of its citizens lying dead upon the ramparts, it was stormed by the Turks, and the last relic of the mighty empire which had existed for two thousand two hundred years was swept away forever. The work was done. The Empire fell in 1453. In 1057 the work began by the passage of the Euphrates. The interval between is three hundred and ninety-six years!

This remarkable prophecy is still more exact. The reader cannot fail to note particularly the language of the prophecy. We have found it to mean exactly 396 years and four months. On January 28th, 1057, according to Arabian historians, the Turks marched from Bagdad. 396 years and four months, or 120 days, would bring us to May 29th, 1453, *the very day of the fall of Constantinople, and of the final overthrow of the Greek third part of the world.*

20, 21. The rest ... repented not. It is implied that these woes were sent as judgments. The Christianity of the East overthrown by the Saracens and Turks had become utterly corrupt. *The rest*, that is, those in other countries not conquered by Turks, continued their sins. **That they should not worship devils.** The worship of dead saints is what is meant by demon worship in the Scriptures. **And the idols.** Images had now been introduced into the churches everywhere and were worshiped. **21. They repented not of their murders.** In the

Crusade against the Albigenses, conducted by Rome in the thirteenth century, it is estimated that one million martyrs perished. **Sorceries.** Tricks to deceive, so characteristic of the priests. **Fornication.** This term may mean spiritual fornication or apostasy, and it may mean literal fornication. In either sense it is true of the religious features of the fifteenth century. **Thefts.** Thefts in resorting to deceptions and impostures to extort money from the people. Tetzels mission to Germany early in the sixteenth century is an illustration. Instead of repentance after the great judgment on the Eastern Church, the Western Church grew worse and worse.

We have now followed the opening of the seals and the blowing of the trumpets to the sixth trumpet under the seventh seal. These have been followed in their order, then history has been consulted and, following in chronological order, have been found great epochal events in history which corresponded surprisingly to the symbolism of the visions. The American Editor of Lange on Revelation says: "The writer must acknowledge that, after a careful consideration of the principal views that had been presented, he has been constrained to the conclusion that the scheme of interpretation advocated by Elliot and Barnes (Substantially that which have I have followed.—B.W.J.) is in most respects correct. The points of resemblance between the symbols and the events of history, especially as portrayed by the infidel Gibbon, are too many, too striking and too exact, to allow the thought that they are merely fortuitous. It would seem as though God had raised up the great historian just mentioned to perform a work for the Bible and the Church, which could not have been so effectively performed by a friend. At times it seems as though he was writing history expressly to elucidate prophecy."—*Lange on Revelation*, page 213.

I will add that I have consulted Lange, Düsterdieck, Meyer, Elliott, Barnes, Alford, Prof. Wm. Milligan, Swedenborg, Archdeacon Lee, and all the principal commentators on Revelation, and find no other interpretation clear, consistent and complete. They are all more or less meaningless.

Chapter X

The Open Book

Summary —*The Strong Angel. The Open Book. Standing on Sea and Land. The Seven Thunders. The Angel's Oath. John Asked to Devour the Book. Sweet, and Yet Bitter. Called on Again to Prophecy.*

The [tenth and eleventh chapters](#) should be one chapter. They relate to one series of events. The reader should keep in mind the point reached in the unveiling of the symbols. The sixth trumpet has blown. The Euphratean horsemen have done their work in “a year, a month, a day and an hour.” The Greek Empire, the last remnant of the old Roman world known to John, has fallen. The state of “the rest” is described in the [last verse of chapter 9](#). The events beheld in [chapters 10 and 11 up to 11:15](#) belong still to the sixth trumpet. As the Greek Empire fell in 1453, the symbols in these chapters point to events subsequent to that date.

1–3. I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven. This mighty angel was seen in vision and is to be regarded as a symbol. The description is very much like that of the Son of Man in [chapter 1](#). While the whole may signify some momentous movement the similarity of the description implies that Christ comes in that movement. Let the facts stated be observed closely. 1. He is a *mighty* angel. 2. He comes down *from heaven*, enveloped in a cloud. 3. The rainbow about his head is the symbol of hope and peace. 4. The shining of his face and feet indicate that he shall spread light and intelligence. 5. His standing on sea and land shows that his mission was to the whole world. 6. The angel holds in his hand an *open book*. The roll is not only unsealed, but it is unrolled so that it can be read. This open book occupies a very conspicuous place in his work. The book in the angel's hand must be an emblem of some fact. 7. The seventh fact is that when he, standing on land and sea, with the open book in his hand, cried in a loud voice, a command, or proclamation, or a call for attention, the seven thunders uttered their voices. The whole evidently signifies some mighty movement on the earth inaugurated by Christ.

The Fulfillment. —Beginning in the early part of the sixteenth century, within a short time of the date already reached, was a movement which corresponds fully to the symbols. Indeed the Reformation might be said to have begun earlier with Wicklif and Huss, but was fully inaugurated in the sixteenth century. It was a movement (1) in which Christ came in spirit; (2) a movement full of peace and hope; (3) a movement to diffuse light; (4) a movement for the whole world; (5) a movement *due to the influence of the open book*. The Reformation was the *work of a book*. Whatever the Romish clergy may pretend now, there is no doubt that before the Reformation they had taken the Bible from the people. The whole influence of the Catholic Church was opposed to its circulation, and in many instances persons have

been burned for no other crime than having the Bible in their houses. The book was left sealed up in dead languages, and it was impossible for it to be read in the native tongue of any European people. This radiant angel, however, has in his *hand* a book *open*, significant of the fact that God's providence the Reformation should present the New Testament, *open*, to the world.

4. When the seven thunders had uttered their voices, etc. The seven thunders (definite article in the Revision) uttered their voices when the angel cried in a loud voice. John was forbidden to record what they uttered. Certain facts will help us to understand what is meant. 1. The apostate power which had taken away and *closed* the book of the New Testament was called the seven-hilled city, and is alluded to in Revelation as the woman that sat on seven mountains ([chap. 17:9](#)). 2. The word *thunder* has been constantly used to describe the threatening, blasphemous, and authoritative fulminations issued by the seven-hilled power against its enemies. To illustrate this, Le Bas says in his life of Wiclif, page 198: “The *thunders* which shook the world when they issued *from the seven hills*, sent forth an uncertain sound, comparatively faint and powerless, when launched from a region of less devoted sanctity.” These ecclesiastical thunders derived their power from the fact that they were hurled from the seven-hilled city. Very appropriately the bulls and anathemas of Rome may then be called *the seven thunders*. 3. It is a historic fact that the *opening of the book* by the Reformation, called forth the loudest voices of *the seven thunders*. The anathemas that had been wont to shake the nations were hurled at Luther and his supporters.

John says that he was about to write what they uttered. His act is symbolic. He becomes himself a part of the symbolism. His act shows that the voices of the *seven thunders* claimed a record as of divine authority. There was something uttered, and what was uttered was so presented that John was about to record it in the word of God. Then he *heard a voice from heaven* which bade him seal up what was uttered and write it not. When we remember that the *thunders* that issued from the Vatican were regarded by the nations as the voice of God, and that the Pope claimed to be the vicar of Christ, we can understand the meaning of John's symbolical purpose to record them as a part of the word of God, and also that of the heavenly voice which forbade them to be written. It simply represents what *did* take place among the reformers. There was an open book offered to the world. This resulted in the voices of thunder of the seven-hilled city. At first there was a disposition on the part even of Martin Luther, to listen to these thunders as divine, but finally he committed the Papal Bull issued against his teachings to the flames to be rejected, and it was rejected by the Reformers.

5–7. And the angel ... sware ... that there should be time no longer. The whole passage means that the time remaining is short, and that in the time of the seventh trumpet angel the whole consummation shall be reached. In response to the anathemas, thunders, and persecutions, called forth by the Reformation, the great angel who stands on both sea and land lifted his hand and uttered his solemn oath that the period of probation, persecution



and suffering on the part of the Church, soon shall end. In [chapter 6, verse 10](#) the suffering martyrs of Pagan persecution cry, O Lord, how long? And here to the second great body of martyrs assurance is given that events are hastening to the end. The mystery shall be finished when the seventh angel shall sound.

8–11. Go and take the little book ... eat it up. I will give a synopsis of the events of the chapter. 1. The angel holds in his hand an open book. 2. He calls attention to it in a loud voice. 3. The *seven thunders* launch their thunderbolts against the reception of the open book by the world. 4. John is about to record their words, but is forbidden. 5. The angel affirms with an oath, that the duration of the power and terror of the seven thunders shall be short, and that soon the seventh angel shall sound universal redemption and triumph. 6. John is bidden to take the book. 7. He receives it and is told to eat it, or to receive and devour its contents. 8. Its words are sweet like honey. In the [nineteenth Psalm](#) the word of the Lord is compared to the sweetness of honey. 9. There are bitter effects that follow. The great object of this angel seems to be to present the open book to the world. The book is mentioned four times in the chapter; twice it is stated that the book was open. John, in behalf of humanity, receives the book; a symbol of the reception of the New Testament in their own tongues, received by the nations as a result of the Reformation. The word of the Lord was received by the people with great eagerness and joy. They found it “sweeter also than honey and the honey comb.” But while they devoured the word with great enjoyment, there were bitter effects that followed. Millions, perhaps, in all, were persecuted and put to death because they had accepted the book and suffered it to determine their lives and worship.

There is portrayed last another consequence of eating the book. “Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” To prophesy is not only to foretell future events, but to declare the message of God. This message had been declared once by the apostles, both in person, and by those who preached their words. Apostolic preaching had almost ceased for many ages before the Reformation. John, the representative of the apostolic body, commanded to prophesy, implies a revival of apostolic preaching among all people and nations.



Chapter XI

The Two Witnesses

Summary — *The Temple Measured. The Holy City Trodden Down by the Gentiles. The Two Witnesses. Prophesying in Sackcloth. The Forty-Two Months. The Witnesses Slain. The Witnesses Exalted. The Fall of the Wicked World. The Seventh Trumpet Blown. The Final Triumph.*

1, 2. There was given me a reed like unto a rod. There are several points that must be noticed: 1. Who measures? 2. The measure used. 3. What is measured? (1) A reed is given to John to be used as a measure. It is not an angel who measures, but an apostle, the sole *representative* of the apostles then living. The apostle is a representative of the apostolic body. It is the apostles who are to measure. (2) The measure is not a human one. John did not make it, nor did any other apostle, nor any man, or body of men. The reed *was given to him*. It is a divine measure. Whatever is measured is to be compared with a divine standard. There is a divine standard for measurement which was given by our Lord to the apostles. This is the New Testament of Jesus Christ. (3) **Measure the temple of God.** This cannot mean the literal temple. It was not in the part of the world where John was, if it had been standing; nor was it then standing. What is meant is that of which the temple was a symbol; viz., *the Church*. See notes on [1 Cor. 3:16](#). **And the altar.** In the Jewish temple the altar was the place where the worship centered. Without the altar worship was impossible, and the altar is taken as a symbol of the worship. The sacrifices of the altar were all typical of Christ's atonement. Hence, the measurement has a relation to the death of Christ. **And them that worship therein.** The measure shall be applied to those who profess to be Christians. It will be seen whether they come up to the standard. **2. And the court which is without the temple.** This was the outer court, the court of the Gentiles, the type of the world. This measurement does not relate to the world so much as to the Church. **It is given unto the Gentiles.** Not only it, but the **Holy City**. By the Holy City Jerusalem is meant when the term is named literally, but Jerusalem is used often by both Paul and John as a symbol of the Church. See [Gal. 4:26](#); [Heb. 12:22](#); [Isa. 2:2](#); [Isa. 52:1](#); [Rev. 21:2](#). Hence, the prediction is to be fulfilled by a prostration or desecration of the Church by worldly influences. **Forty and two months.** This period is given several times in prophecy in varied forms. These will all be considered at once below. Here it will suffice to say that this is a period of 1260 days, and a day being a symbol of a year, the period meant is 1260 years.

THE MEANING AND FULFILLMENT.

After this explanation of the meaning of terms, the significance becomes plain. This prediction will be fulfilled if, under the sixth trumpet, before the seventh is blown, a corrupted Church, corrupted during long ages of apostasy shall be compared with some divine

standard. Or, in other words, *after 1453 there ought to be an effort to reform the Church, and to conform to the New Testament*. Let us ask, who shall measure the Church? It has been measured for hundreds of years, not by the Bible, but by the decrees of councils, and by the decisions of Popes. There was during all this time a voice, almost suppressed, asking that it be measured by the divine standard, but it was stifled. This prophecy, however, implies a movement of commanding power which shall seek to apply the divine reed to the measurement of the Church. Who now, according to John, shall make the measurement; what shall be the standard? Not Popes, not councils, not apostolic fathers, but the reed is given to an *apostle, the living representative of the apostolic body*. The twelve to whom were given twelve thrones, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, shall also measure the Church of Jesus Christ in the day signified by the symbolism employed. How? The reed was not their own creation but was given to them. There is but one divine measure that has ever been given. The New Testament, written by apostles, given to them by inspiration, is the divine standard with which the Church, the worship and the worshippers, must be tested. Not the traditions of men, not the decisions of councils, not the decrees of synods, or conferences, not the creeds of any uninspired body that ever met on the face of the earth, but the standard measure is the New Testament.

THE TRUE CHURCH.

This is not the only place where the *reed* is named as the appointed instrument for the measurement of the Church. If the reader will turn to the [twenty-first chapter](#), he will find that the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, is measured by an angel with a golden reed. In [Ezekiel, chapter 40](#), the prophet sees an angel measure with a reed a temple such as never been seen by mortal vision. The temple itself is just equal to the measure, and it is composed of many chambers, all equal in size to the reed, to each other, and to the temple itself, of which they are parts! This strange symbolism, this representation of what is apparently impossible, most beautifully represents the character of the true Church, when it has reached the fullness of divine measure, and appears as the New Jerusalem. The whole temple is just the size, neither larger nor smaller than the reed. The true Church corresponds exactly with the divine measure of the Word. It neither adds to itself things unknown to the apostles, nor omits the things therein enjoined. As the temple of Ezekiel was composed of chambers, each of which was the same size of the temple, so the Church is composed of many congregations, each of which should correspond exactly to the measure of the whole body. These individual congregations, which make up the spiritual temple, should not differ from each other in name, in creeds, in rites, in observances, as do the sects of modern times. In the true Church, when fully restored, there will be one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one spirit, one hope, one name, one practice.

The symbolism recorded by the apostle evidently describes the measurement of the Church, its worship, and of its worshipers by the divine standard of the New Testament.



Our next inquiry is whether history records the fulfillment. Do we find aught in history, subsequent to 1453, which can be regarded as fulfillment of the prophecy? Earlier reformers, such as Waldo, Wiclif, and Huss, made an attempt to reform the Church, but the whole world dates the beginning of the Protestant Reformation with Luther. It was in 1517 that he nailed to the doors of the church in Wittenberg his Theses, by which he broke with Rome. It was held by the Papacy, which then lorded over Christendom, that the writings of the Fathers, tradition, and the decrees of councils were not only an additional measure, but might even set aside the Word of God. The great Reformation planted itself upon the principles maintained by Martin Luther, and the corner-stone of Protestantism is that the Bible is the only rule of faith and practice of the Christian Church. Protestantism has not always been true to its principles, but it has always conceded that the final standard of measurement is the Word of God.

THE TWO WITNESSES.

3, 4. I will give unto my two witnesses. These two witnesses are witnesses for the Lord. They shall bear witness for 1260 days, the forty-two months the Holy City is trodden down. During this time they shall prophesy in **sackcloth**, a symbol of sorrow and mourning. It implies that these witnesses shall be in tribulation during the period named. **4. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks.** The olive tree was the source of the oil used to provide for the candlesticks. The candlesticks, burning the oil, gave forth light. The symbols imply that during this period of 1260 days God shall have two agencies, bearing divine witness, which shall give forth light to men. These agencies shall be filled and sustained by the Spirit.

5, 6. Fire proceedeth out of their mouth. Whatever is signified by these two witnesses, they have the power to destroy. In seeking for the two witnesses we must find agencies which can save life and can destroy it, can shut the heavens and open them, can prevent blessings from descending upon the earth, can inflict curses and plagues on the inhabitants of the earth. The witnesses have supernatural powers.

7–10. When they shall have finished their testimony. The thought is, “When they shall have made their testimony complete.” **The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit.** The coming up of the beast out of the abyss is named here, in [13:1](#), and in [17:3](#). The powers that come from the abyss are satanic. Compare [9:2](#) with [9:11](#). The beast, therefore, represents some devilish power or influence. The word rendered “beast” here, in [13:1](#), and in [17:3](#), denotes a savage wild beast of prey. The beast from the abyss should be distinguished from “the beast coming up out of the sea” ([13:1](#)), and from “the beast coming up out of the earth” ([13:11](#)). They are all malign powers, but the power of evil manifested in different forms. **Shall ... kill them.** Whatever the beast represents, that power shall assail the witnesses, and shall slay them for a time. **8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street.** They shall not be buried, but remain in plain sight. I believe that this is what is signified. Though the

witnesses were slain, their enemies could not get them out of sight. They could not bury them. **Of the great city.** This term is used eight times in Revelation. It is never used of Jerusalem. It is in contrast with the Holy City. As the Holy City is a symbol of the church, a wicked City would symbolize a false religion, or apostate church. **Spiritually is called Sodom, and Egypt.** Symbolically so called. Sodom, with its sins, was a type of this city; Egypt, the house of bondage, is also a type. It is a sinful organization which has enslaved the true Israel. **Where also our Lord was crucified.** Many commentators have insisted that this refers to literal Jerusalem, but we must remember that the place is one in which our Lord was *spiritually* crucified. This is done by apostasy. See [Heb. 6:6](#). That the reference is to spiritual declension is plain. **9. Look upon their dead bodies three days and an half.** During a period of three and a half days their bodies shall be seen in the street of the city slain, and all shall see them. They shall be conspicuous. This would seem to point to a period of three and one-half years. **10. They that dwell on the earth.** This expression, often used in Revelation, always refers to enemies of Christ. These rejoice because the witnesses are slain. They make merry over their death, **because these two prophets tormented them.** These witnesses, then, prophesied; that is, they spoke the will of God. Their warnings, exhortations, and denunciations of sin tormented the dwellers of the earth.

11–13. After three days and n half. After lying in a state called dead three and a half years, they come to life again. God gave them life. The effect of their appearance was to fill the people of the wicked city with fear. **12. They heard a great voice from heaven.** That voice called on the witnesses to come up thither. To be exalted to heaven, symbolically, always means to give power, prosperity and glory. This means that the witnesses now receive power and influence over men. Their exaltation implies that their prophesying is to be accepted as authority over men. **13. In that hour there was a great earthquake.** The symbol of commotion, and of political or religious changes. The earthquake is caused by the exaltation of the two witnesses. The result is that the wicked city is shaken, and a part of it falls. **A tenth part.** A large part. **Seven thousand persons.** Various explanations have been given for these numbers. In my judgment seven is used because it is the perfect number. *Seven* thousands would imply totality. The meaning is, therefore, a total overthrow. **And the remnant.** So complete was the overthrow from the earthquake, that the rest were filled with fear and glorified God. The whole implies that when the witnesses were lifted up, a commotion shook the false religion or apostate church, and that it was destroyed by the commotion. A part of its inhabitants were slain (perhaps spiritually), and the rest repented.

THE MEANING AND FULFILLMENT.

It has been remarked by several commentators that the passage concerning the two witnesses is the most difficult to explain of any in Revelation. Certainly there is a wide disagreement concerning its meaning, but I believe that it can be clearly explained. Let all the facts stated of the witnesses be taken in one glance. 1. There are *two* witnesses, and only

two. 2. These two are *witnesses*. Their business is to testify to certain facts or truths. 3. The Lord says they are “*my*” witnesses. They testify for the Lord. 4. The Lord gives these witnesses power. “I will give power,” etc. 5. They shall testify in sackcloth. This implies that they shall testify in sorrow, robed in mourning. 6. They shall do this in 1260 days or, since a day in prophecy is the symbol for a year, for a period of 1260 years. 7. These witnesses are likened to two olive trees and two lampstands. 8. It is stated that they shall have power to destroy their enemies. 9. Also to intercept blessings. 10. At the end of three and half years, or 1260 days, shall be slain. 11. Shall lie unburied, but after three and half days shall rise again. 12. The witnesses are “prophets” and they “prophesy;” that is, they speak by inspiration. 13. Shall have great power and glory and be exalted to heaven. 14. The city of sin shall be overthrown.

There are a number of facts recorded here which must be true of witnesses, and the business of the interpreter is simply to ascertain whether there is anything of which they are true and which would correspond with these facts. (1) The first one of the fourteen facts I have noted is that there were only *two* witnesses. I have lying before me an open Bible. I find that the book of Revelation is in what is called the *New Testament*. The whole Bible is divided into two great divisions, which are called the *Old* and *New Testaments*. There are, then *two* Testaments. Note further that the term *testament* is a word that signifies to bear *witness*. It is derived from a Latin word, *testor*, which means “I testify.” The two testaments, then, imply *two* witnesses. We have, therefore, in the Old Testament and New Testament, two witnesses, whether they are those described by John or not. (2) These two witnesses of the Bible each testify of the Lord. He said to the Jews concerning the Old Testament Scriptures, “They testify of me.” The Apostle John says concerning his life of the Savior, “These things were written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” One of these witnesses testifies of the Lord in type and prophecy; the other testifies by its history of facts. (3) The two witnesses are the *Lord’s*. He gives them their power and they testify of Him. Thus far the two witnesses of the Bible correspond exactly with the two witnesses of the prophecy. (4) The two witnesses of the Word are fed with the oil of inspiration and give forth light. (5) These two witnesses speak by inspiration, or “prophesy.” Passing over some marks of minor importance, we come to (6) the statement that the two witnesses have power to destroy. The Word of God can save and it can destroy. It can justify and it can condemn. In the Judgment the fate of men will be decided by the Word. If the reader will turn to [Rev. 19:11–15](#), and read what is written of the conquests, triumphs, and destruction by the Word of God, he will require nothing more upon this point. In fact everything stated of the power of the two witnesses has been affirmed of the Word of God. (7) It is said that for 1260 days the witness shall prophesy in sackcloth. Every reader knows that for ages the Bible was forbidden to the people and locked up in the dead languages. It was even a crime, for which many suffered death, to have the Bible in the tongue of the people. It is proper that we should



consider here this period of mourning in which, if I am correct, the witness of the Old Testament and New Testament shall be given in sorrow.

TWELVE HUNDRED AND SIXTY DAYS.

This period of mourning, during which the witnesses shall prophesy in sackcloth is 1260 days. The same period is named in several places in this prophecy. In [Daniel 7:25](#) it is stated that the youngest horn of the sea monster shall have dominion for a time, times, and a half time. This is understood to be a period of three and a half years, forty-two months, or 1260 days. The outer court of the Holy City shall be trodden down by the Gentiles for forty-two months, or 1260 days ([verse 2](#)). The woman was fed of God in the wilderness for 1260 days ([Rev. 13:6](#)). She was nourished a time, times, and a half time, or three and one-half years, or 1260 days ([chap. 13:14](#)). In five different passages the same period of time is named, and evidently covers in each case the same period of the history of the Church. The day being used as a symbol for a year, we know that 1260 years, the horn spoken of by Daniel, which speaks great words against the Most High, shall have dominion; that for the same period the Gentiles, the enemies of the saints, shall be in power; the two witnesses prophesy in sackcloth, and the woman, the type of the true Church, flee into the wilderness. This remarkable period is that of the power and glory of Papal Rome. It becomes us, once for all, to settle when this period began and when it ends.

It is somewhat difficult to mark the exact point in this development of the Romish power, which may be regarded as the beginning of the 1260 years. But I believe that the consummation of the usurpation can be pointed out to the year.

In a.d. 527 Justinian ascended the throne of the Eastern Empire. Before his reign the schism had begun between the Greek and the Roman churches. He healed that schism by force in favor of Rome. If the reader will open Gibbon, Vol. IV., p. 528, he will find an account of a terrible persecution, inaugurated by this monarch, in order to make all conform to the Papal rule. "His reign," says Gibbon, "was a uniform, yet various scene of persecution ... Churches with their congregations were surrounded by *Catholic* soldiers, and the houses were burned with the congregations in them." At this period, then, the Church is drenched in blood in order to make the Romish power universal. The witnesses certainly prophesy in mourning. What more? In a.d. 531, Justinian, the ruler of the Eastern half of the old Roman world, the ruler of the countries where the churches still protested against the arrogant claims of Rome, decreed and enforced by arms the subjugation of the whole Church to the Roman Pope, and in a.d. 533, he bestowed upon him the title of *Rector Ecclesiae*," or Lord of the Church. (D'Aubigne's Reformation, Vol. I., p. 42.) In a.d. 533 the "Man of Sin" was certainly fully revealed. The Papacy was completely established. The universal claims of the Pope were sanctioned by imperial power. Here, then, is the beginning point.

During the long period extending from a.d. 533 to 1793, a prophetic period of 1260 years, the two witnesses, the Old Testament and New Testament, remained in sackcloth.

Even where the light had begun to spring up and the Protestant Reformation had taken the place of Romish faith, there was still intolerance. Puritans were persecuted in England, Baptists in Lutheran Germany, Calvin burnt Servetus in Geneva, Quakers and Baptists were punished for their religion in the American colonies.

“*War was made upon them.*” Near the close of the last century the most determined attack ever known was made upon the Bible. Voltaire and Rousseau led in France; Frederick the Great in Germany; Tom Paine, Hume, Gibbon and Bolingbroke in England; Thomas Jefferson and Paine in America. At last the culmination was reached in France. The nation rose in a crusade against all religion. The Convention, composed of the representatives of the mightiest nation then upon the earth, by national law abolished not only the Bible but God. They decreed that France would worship no gods but Reason and Liberty. Atheism became the law of the State.

This is the only instance known to all history of a deliberate enactment abolishing all religion. Most fitly might such an event be styled the slaying of the witnesses who testify of the Lord. For 1260 years the testimony of the witnesses had been in part suppressed; in 1793 it was enacted that they should testify no more, or henceforth should be silent as death. It was decreed that time should date no more from the Christian era, and that the week itself should be abolished because it was a Bible division of time. Let it be borne in mind: 1. That the war was waged by the power from the bottomless pit; an infidel power. 2. The witnesses were slain by the state which has done more than all others to build up and uphold the temporal power of the Pope. They lie in the *street of the great city*. 3. It is just 1260 years, the prophetic period, from the time when the Pope was styled *Lord of the Church* by imperial authority, until the state of the abolition of the Bible and of God by “the eldest son of the Church,” or from a.d. 533 to a.d. 1793.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE WITNESSES.

After three days and a half the witnesses came to life. This implies that they regain their power and influence. The French “Convention,” which inaugurated the Reign of Terror, guillotined all the royal family and many thousand citizens, decreed the dethronement of God, and made itself a terror to mankind, continued in existence for a little more than three years, and in about three and a half years the French nation began to recover from its madness. Its atheistic laws were repealed, and Christianity was acknowledged as the religion of the State. This was not all. The resurrected witnesses were in sackcloth no longer. The age of religious toleration had come. With the beginning of the present century a movement began to sweep over the civilized land in favor of religious liberty.

The exaltation of the witnesses has followed. With the nineteenth century began a mighty movement to extend the circulation of the Bible. It is now translated into every written tongue of the earth, and the Bible societies have made it the cheapest book in the world. To all who are not able to buy it is freely given. All are free to study it for themselves. Ours is



also *the age of missions*. At the same time began a movement to preach the truths of the Bible to all nations. The result of this exaltation is that in our age we feel the heaving of a great moral *earthquake*. It is stated that a tenth part of the city shall be shaken down. Already Rome has lost its hold upon the governments of Italy and France. The trend of events is now towards the falling of the wicked city, the overthrow of its confirmed supporters, and the repentance of the others. These results are in the future; their fulfillment may yet require generations. We cannot name times and seasons, but the result will come.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

14, 15. And the seventh angel sounded. This is the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal. It should bring the end, the final victory, the grand consummation. That is what the apostle now beholds in the vision. **The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.** Here is the final triumph. It is the brightness of Zion's glad morning, the long deferred day of victory, the ushering in of the conquering reign of Christ. The Agency by which this conquest is effected is the exaltation of the witnesses, or the diffusion of the Word of God. This exaltation causes the earthquake, the fall of a part of the Great City, the destruction of a part of its inhabitants, and the repentance of the remnant. These events are followed by the seventh trumpet and the proclamation of the universal reign of Christ. Then the heavenly inhabitants join in pæans of victory and songs of praise and thanksgiving.

16–18. The four and twenty elders, which sat before God. These heavenly princes, in some way identified with the work of redemption, join in worship and praises. “The mystery of God has been finished in the days of the voice of the seventh angel” (10:7). The [eighteenth verse](#) will sufficiently explain why this also should be called a woe trumpet. It is the trumpet of judgment.

19. I believe this verse ought to belong to chapter 12, and will there consider it. If it is connected in meaning with [verse 18](#) it signifies that heaven is opened at the close of the seventh trumpet, and that from thence come judgments as well as blessings.

With [Rev. 11:18](#) closes the first great division of the Book. It brings one series of visions which reaches from the time of John to the end of the world to a close. It will aid those who have studied the preceding chapters to study the results in a condensed analysis.

The first four chapters are not prophecy, except as the history of the Seven Churches is outlined. The future history of the world and the Church is symbolized by a sealed book. It has seven seals. These are seven epochs that reach into the future until the end of time.

The First Seal. —The White Horse. The Era of Triumph. The Glorious Period of Roman History; 6:1, 2. a.d. 96 to a.d. 180

- 1 The Second Seal. —The Red Horse. The Era of Blood and of Civil Discord; [6:3, 4](#). Beginning a.d. 193.



- 2 The Third Seal. —The Black Horse. The Seal of Calamity, and of National Distress; [6:5](#), [6](#). Beginning about a.d. 200.
- 3 The Fourth Seal. —The Pale Horse. The Era of Famine, Pestilence and Death; [6:7](#), [8](#). About a.d. 240 to a.d. 270.
- 4 The Fifth Seal. —The Era of Persecution. The last effort of Paganism to blot out the Christian name; [6:9](#), [10](#). a.d. 303.
- 5 The Sixth Seal. —The Seal of Revolution. The Era of the Overthrow of Pagan Civilization; [6:12–17](#). Beginning about a.d. 310 and extending to a.d. 350.
- 6 The Four Winds. —A vision of destructive forces that shall destroy the Roman Empire, but held back until it shall be Christianized. The Four Winds represent Four Northern Invasions, also indicated by Four Trumpets; [9:1–17](#). Fulfilled from a.d. 340 to a.d. 395.

The Fall of the Old Roman Empire

- 1 The First Trumpet under the Seventh Seal.—The Gothic Invasion fulfilled by the Invasion of Alaric; [8:7](#). a.d. 409.
- 2 The Second Trumpet. —The Vandal Invasion. The Conquest of the Seas; [8:8](#), [9](#). a.d. 422
- 3 The Third Trumpet. —The Invasion of Attila the Hun. The Scourge of the Rivers; [8:10](#), [11](#). a.d. 440.
- 4 The Fourth Trumpet. —The Final Overthrow of Rome by Odoacer. The End of Ancient History; [8:12](#). a.d. 476. These Four Trumpet Invasions are the Four Winds which were withheld.

The Fall of the Eastern or New Roman Empire

- 1 The Fifth Trumpet Sounded. —The Mohammedan Uprising. The Saracen Empire; [9:1–12](#). a.d. 632 to a.d. 782.
- 2 The Sixth Trumpet. —The Euphratean Angels Loosed. The Rise of Turkish Power; [9:13–21](#). a.d. 1057 to a.d. 1453.

Revival of Christianity

- 1 The Little Book and the Seven Thunders.—Symbols of the Reformation of Luther; [10:1–11](#). a.d. 1518.



- 2 The Old Paths Sought. —The Church Measured; [11:1, 2](#). From a.d. 1516 to the present time.
- 3 The Two Witnesses. —The Two Books of the Word of God. In Sackcloth for twelve hundred and sixty years. Slain in 1793. Resurrected near the beginning of this century; [11:3–12](#).

Events Yet Future

- 1 Babylon Falls. —[11:13](#). Yet Future
- 2 The Seventh Angel Sounds. —Christ comes. The Judgment; [11:14–18](#). This ends the first part of Revelation and ends the world.



Chapter XII

The Vision of the Church

Summary —*The Vision in Heaven. The Woman Clothed with the Sun. Her Offspring. The Great Red Dragon. The Conflict in Heaven. The War on the Woman's Seed. Her Seed Caught Up. Her Flight into the Wilderness. The Flood Cast by the Dragon. The Earth Helping the Woman.*

I believe that the first series of visions ends with [chapter 11, verse 18](#). The book would be complete if it ended there. This series shows the judgments inflicted upon the great opposing powers which persecuted the Church, or in any way affected its history. There is portrayed first the overthrow of the great secular power which occupied the world as known to the apostles, and then follows a symbolism which foretells the opposition from a great spiritual power, a wicked city, which is finally overthrown by the exaltation of the Witnesses, and this inaugurates the seventh trumpet, and the final triumph of Christ.

The second series of visions, in part, goes over the same ground. Its purpose, however, is to portray more fully the fortunes of the true church, its struggles with anti-Christ, the final overthrow of this wicked spiritual power, and in inauguration of the era of universal righteousness and peace.

Chap. 11:19. In my comment on this verse under the preceding chapter I have said that it ought to belong to the 12th chapter. The reader will observe that the language with which the first series opens in [Rev. 4:1](#), is quite similar to the opening words of the verse that begins the second series. "I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven" is the opening sentence of the prophecy ([chap. 4:1](#)), language which implies that the secrets of heaven are to be revealed. In [chap. 11:19](#), it is said that "The temple of God was opened in heaven." Even the Ark of the Testament in its most secret place is brought to view. There is to be a revelation of facts connected with the temple of God. We have already shown that the reference is, not to the Jewish temple, which no longer existed, but to the spiritual temple, the Church of Jesus Christ. Its door is opened; its history is foretold; the visions now beheld will relate to its fortunes, sorrows, trials, triumphs. Its history will be traced until it reaches its heavenly destiny. This is symbolized by the fact that *the holy of holies*, the type of heaven itself, is seen. *The thunders, earthquake, etc.*, foreshadow the commotions, revolutions and judgments which will take place in the fulfillment of the symbols.

1, 2. A woman clothed with the sun. A woman is used as a symbol many times in the Scriptures. "Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh." ([Isa. 62:11](#).) Here the reference is to the Church. Again Paul ([Gal. 4:31](#)) says, "Ye are not the children of the bond woman, but of the free woman." All are agreed that here the free woman represents the Church. Again ([Rev. 21:2](#)), John sees the New Jerusalem descending adorned as a bride

to meet her husband. The bride, the Lamb's wife, here and in the [ninth verse](#), indeed in every place spoken of, is the Church. Once more: Paul speaks of Jerusalem, the mother of us all, alluding again to the Church. This symbol, then, is a common one to represent the Church, and we are justified in declaring that to be its meaning in this passage. The fact that she is clothed with the sun symbolizes the fact that the true Church shines with the light of the sun of righteousness. **The moon under her feet** represents the Old Testament, or dispensation, which shone by a reflected light and is subordinate to the New Covenant of the Church. **The crown of twelve stars** is explained by the twelve apostles, lights of the Church and a crown of glory to it. **2. She being with child cried.** Again we must let the Scripture explain its own meaning. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." ([Isa. 66:8.](#)) The travail of Zion causeth an increase. See also [Isa. 54:1 and 49:20](#), where the same figure is used. The state of the woman therefore implies a Church in sorrow, a suffering Church, but out of whose suffering there cometh an increase of the saints. It is a period when the saints are multiplied in the midst of persecution.

3, 4. Behold a great red dragon. Another wonder is seen, also in the sky, a great serpent-like figure, red, with seven heads and ten horns. This figure, we learn from [verse 9](#), is a devilish manifestation. The devil uses it for his purposes. The red color implies a persecuting power. The seven heads are explained in [17:9](#), where the seven-headed beast appears again, to be seven mountains, and also seven kingdoms; the ten horns are there said to be ten kingdoms which did not yet exist. We have also this monster appearing substantially in [Dan., chapter 7](#). I will discuss it more particularly in chapter, but will here say that there is little doubt that it represents the persecuting powers of the earth which have opposed God and his Israel; the great world powers arrayed against God. This world power appears as Pagan Rome in the persecution of the Woman; the Church. The dragon was the standard of Pagan Rome in the third century, as testified by many ancient writers. **4. And his tail drew a third part of the stars.** This may indicate the great power of the dragon. Perhaps it has a more particular meaning. We have found under the 8th and 9th chapters that the old Roman world was divided into three parts, that the term *third part* was used of these divisions. In the early part of the fourth century, when the great triumph of Christianity over Paganism was about to be realized, the Roman world shows this division; in two parts toleration is shown; in the remaining *third part* there is the most bitter persecution, and finally the ruler of this part, Maximus, enters upon war with Constantine with the vow that if successful he will restore everywhere the old Pagan religion. This may be symbolized. **And the dragon stood before the woman.** This symbolizes an effort to destroy the saints, the seed of the woman, the children of the Church.

5. And she brought forth a man child. If the reader will turn to [verse 17](#) he will learn that the remnant of the woman's seed is "those who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." The offspring of the woman, the "woman's seed," then

refers to the saints. The man child is a symbol of the faithful members of the Church. But how shall they **rule all nations with a rod of iron**. The Greek says “rule as shepherds with a rod of iron.” This implies a firm and permanent, but tender and loving rule, not a stern rule. In [2:27](#) it is promised that whosoever overcometh shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. In [19:15](#) the same thing is stated of the Word of God. This is accomplished through the saints. They shall yet possess the earth. Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. The kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ. The man child, the woman's seed, the saints, shall have a complete, an undisputed, a resistless dominion. **And her child was caught up**. This figure always means a glorious exaltation. It signifies that God will protect the saints and give them victory. This was probably fulfilled when Christianity triumphed over Paganism in the fourth century.

6–9. And the woman fled into the wilderness. The flight into the wilderness is alluded to again in [verse 14](#). There it belongs in order. Under that verse the meaning will be more fully considered. **7. And there was war in heaven.** The woman had been seen in heaven, and there she is seen to be assailed. She has, however, a champion who fights her battles. It must be remembered that Michael, the woman, the man child, the dragon, the conflict, and the casting down of the dragon are all symbols. This symbolism indicates the defeat of the dragon in his attempt. He is not only vanquished, but humiliated, “cast down.” The first mighty attempt of Satan to “abolish the Christian name from the earth,” signally fails. We have already written enough to show the reader that this represents the facts of history. Pagan Rome, the dragon, struck at the heart of the Church. Blood flowed in rivers, the blood of the saints, but the grandeur of their lives and the heroism of their deaths struck fear and conviction to the hearts of their enemies. Each martyr called forth an army who were ready to die for Christ. God exalted the man child, caught it to his bosom, protected it, and Pagan Rome went down. The dragon prevailed not. Baffled, he is cast to the earth.

10–12. Now is come salvation, etc. We have next the songs of triumph sung in heaven. “Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ. For the accuser of our brethren is cast down,” etc. These songs of triumph are always heard when the symbolism portrays any great triumph of righteousness. See [7:12](#); [11:15](#). The triumphant songs here seem to exult over the overthrow of Paganism in the fourth century. **11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.** This shows how the victory indicated in [verse 8](#) was won. It was won by the blood of Christ and the faithfulness of the saints. “They loved not their life even unto death.” They were willing to give their lives for Christ. **12. Woe for the earth and for the sea.** Not an imprecation but a prediction. Satan, cast down, will take another form to do his wicked work.

13, 14. The dragon ... persecuted the woman. In some other form, not as a Pagan power defying Christ, but perhaps garbed as an angel of light, he still persecuted the woman. **14. There were given two wings, etc.** The meaning is that means were given to the persecuted



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church to flee into the wilderness, into a place where she would be hidden from view. The Church would disappear from sight. There she would be **a time, and times, and half a time**, or a year, two years and half a year, three and half years, forty-two months, 1260 days. See [verse 6 above](#), and [11:2, 3](#). This period we found under chapter 11 to begin in a.d. 533, and to extend to about the close of the last century.

15–17. And the serpent cast out ... a flood. He resorted to persecutions in order to drive the true Church off of the face of the earth. **16. The earth helped the woman.** In some way the flood of persecution was so hindered that it failed to accomplish the object. I believe this refers to the hindrances often interposed by secular powers to stay persecution. The Hussites protected themselves under Zisca by force of arms; the German princes protected Luther; the edict of Nantes gave French Protestants a rest. These were times when “the earth” drank up the flood. **17. And the dragon waxed wrath.** Was angry at his defeat. He continued the warfare by asking to destroy the woman's seed. I believe that this vision reveals the persecution of the true Church, first by Pagan, and then by Papal Rome, a persecution that results in the apparent disappearance of the true Church from the earth. Though not visible to the eye of the historian during this period, yet the true Church, fed of God, survives in the hearts of the hidden and persecuted saints. The period of her exile began about 533, in the reign of Justinian, and ends about the beginning of the nineteenth century. Before the end of the period, the Divine measure, the reed of the apostles, was used to measure the temple, altar and worshipers, and, as the result, over three-fourths of a century ago, the true Church began to appear as a visible body, once more in the world.



Chapter XIII

The Seven-Headed Beast

Summary — *The Beast that Rises Out of the Sea. Power Given to the Beast by the Dragon. The Head Wounded to Death and Healed. Power Given to Continue Forty-two Months. The Lamb-like Beast that Had the Voice of a Dragon. His Service to the Seven-Headed Beast. The Number of the Beast.*

1, 2. I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. The [12th chapter](#) has shown the relentless hostility of the dragon, “the old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan,” to the woman, a hostility that has manifested itself in changing forms. The [last verse](#) declares his purpose to make war on the seed of the woman. This chapter is intended to show the organized forms in which he has carried on this warfare. The apostle sees a *beast*, a wild savage beast, arising out of the sea. The restless ocean is a symbol of commotion. **Having seven heads and ten horns.** The beast bears the old dragon mark ([12:3](#)) of seven heads and ten horns. It must therefore be some manifestation of the same power. Indeed, it is the dragon who has called the beast forth from the sea. **On his horns ten crowns.** These crowns are diadems (Revision). They are the sign of royal authority. They represent ten kings or kingdoms ([17:12](#)). In the [12th chapter](#), the seven heads had the diadems; now the horns wear them. There is a reason for this that we shall see in the sequel. **And upon his heads the name of blasphemy.** If these heads should arrogantly claim divine honors, not belonging to them, these would be names of blasphemy. These heads are said to be seven kings. Sometimes kings have claimed to be gods, as Alexander, who asserted that he was the son of Jupiter Ammon, and the Roman Emperors, who all claimed divine honors and required men to worship their statues and to offer them sacrifices. **2. And the beast ... was like unto a leopard.** It was a composite beast which united the characteristics of the beasts seen by Daniel in his vision ([Dan. 7:1–6](#)). The animals combined are all cruel, terrible beasts of prey; a terror to man. **And the dragon gave him his power.** That is, this beast was called forth to do the dragon's work, and acted by the dragon's authority.

3, 4. I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death. The Greek says “slain.” This deadly wound of the head was a deadly wound of the beast itself. See [verse 12](#). This wound was given by the sword; that is, by war. See [verse 14](#). It is in [verse 14](#) suggested that the beast was restored after the wound by the efforts of the second beast first named in [verse 11](#). The symbolism implies that a mortal wound was inflicted on the power represented by the beast; that when it was dead, or about to perish, its power was restored by the arts of the second beast. **All the world wondered after the beast.** Gave it their wonder and admiration. **4. They worshiped the dragon.** In following after and obeying the beast they really gave worship to the dragon which had given the beast his power. Their worship was, however, directed



to the beast itself. **Who is like unto the beast?** This language implies giving the beast super-human honors. Similar language is often used of God. See [Exod. 15:11](#); [Ps. 113:5](#); [Isa. 40:18](#). The dragon, cast down, receives worship through the beast.

5–7. And there was given ... a mouth speaking great things. He would make blasphemous claims. Daniel affirms the same of the beast seen in his vision ([Dan. 7:25](#)). **Forty and two months.** The same period named in [in 12:6](#), [in 11:2](#), [in 11:3](#), and in [Dan. 7:25](#). The period referred to here, when the beast shall prevail against the Church, is one of 1260 years. This is evidently the period of the world's dominion over the Church. **6. He opened his mouth in blasphemy.** Three kinds of blasphemy are named: (1) against God; (2) against his tabernacle; (3) against those to whom God has opened his tabernacle. The first would be accomplished by usurping God's prerogatives; the second by maledictions upon the true Church, and the third by curses on the true worshipers. **7. It was given unto him.** He had power to make war on the saints and to overcome them for a long period. Compare [12:14–17](#). His dominion was also one that seemed universal, and he claimed rule **over all kindreds ... and nations.**

8–10. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him. All except the true and faithful saints, hidden in obscurity but known above and recorded in the book of life, shall give him homage. **9. If any man have an ear, let him hear.** Let him give heed. The words to be heeded are in [verse 10](#). **10. If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth.** The meaning is “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” “With what measure a man metes, it shall be measured to him again.” If the beast and his adherents lead the saints captive, they shall finally be made captive; if they slay with the sword, so shall they be slain. **Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.** The assurance that God will, in the end, right all their wrongs gives them faith and patience.

THE MEANING.

As the monster with seven heads and ten horns is introduced three times in Revelation, [in 12:3](#), [in 13:1](#), and [in 17:3](#), one explanation of the meaning of these symbols will suffice for all. Though the form varies somewhat, the ten-horned monster of [Dan. chapter 7](#) is without doubt the same. Comparing the accounts we learn that “the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth” (the harlot of [chapter 17](#)), and they are also seven kings or kingdoms. In [12:3](#), these heads have upon them diadems, the crown that always signifies royalty, but in [13:1](#) there are no diadems upon the heads. This may imply that the heads that had once worn the crowns were uncrowned in the period which is now pointed out. The ten horns, however, have diadems. In [17:12](#) they are said to be ten kings or kingdoms which had not yet, when John wrote, received power, but shall receive it in the period pointed forward to in the symbols. Still another fact is pointed out in [17:10](#). Of the seven kings five were fallen when John wrote; that is, had passed away; one of them then existed;



one was yet to come; the beast himself was composed of all the seven and yet assumed such a form that he became an eighth.

These facts will enable us to point out what is signified. It is some power that fights against God, that is a deadly enemy of the Church, that oppresses the Israel of God, that is used as Satan's instrument, that overcomes the Church for 1260 years, that is blasphemous; that has existed as seven kings, or kingdoms, for such may be the meaning of the word, and that shall reappear again to be ten kingdoms. It will be seen that the form of this beast varies at different times, and we must expect the power meant to assume various forms. Let us note the great world powers which have arrayed themselves against God in oppressing his people during their history. I. *Egypt* enslaved the Israel of God, those whom he called "My People," with a grievous bondage. At that period Egypt was the greatest of the world powers. II. Next *Assyria*, many hundred years later, carries the Ten Tribes into captivity, from whence they never returned. Assyria was the destroyer of the kingdom of Israel and the oppressor of the kingdom of Judah. III. *Babylon*, the great Empire of Nebuchadnezzar, erected on the ruins of Assyria, conquered Judah, destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and carried the people into captivity. IV. *Persia* overthrew Babylon, and succeeded to the sway over the remnant of Israel and Palestine. V. *Greece*, or rather the Macedonian Empire of Alexander, overthrew Persia, and the fifth of the great world powers became the ruler and the oppressor of God's people. Under the successors of Alexander their sufferings were terrible. Here, then, we have Five Kingdoms, or great world monarchies, which had been used by the dragon for oppression, and which had passed away before John wrote. VI. *One now is. Rome* had overthrown all before her and occupied their dominion. The Roman monarchy existed when John was on Patmos, and he was seen there by the edict of a Roman Emperor. VII. *One was yet to come*. There was to be still another of these world powers, which should appear after John's time. It is to be an anti-Christian world power. My opinion is that it refers to the Eastern or Greek Empire, the Roman Empire in the East, continuing to exist as an Oriental despotism after the fall of Rome. This Empire was a persecutor also. No Emperor persecuted more cruelly than Justinian. In 17:11 we are also told that there is an "eighth head who is of the seven." This is the beast. This means that the spirit and power of the whole beast, embracing all the seven heads, passes to an eighth kingdom or rule. Wherever we find this rule we find the beast fully manifested. This signifies the temporal dominion of the Papal power, a sway that derived its power from the kingdoms of the earth.

The beast with seven heads and ten horns is, then, the great world power in its opposition to God's people, manifesting itself in the various great worldly states which have fought against the saints. Of the heads of the beast Rome was the greatest and the most terrible of persecutors. Hence, while all the opposing world powers are generally signified, Rome, Pagan and Papal, is specially pointed out. There can be no doubt about the allusion of John to the heads signifying also seven mountains on which the harlot sitteth (17:9). No phrase was



oftener applied to Rome by Pagan poets and writers, as well as Christian Fathers than “the seven hilled city.” The eighth head (17:11) is stated also to be an embodiment of the whole beast. Hence, I believe we are justified in declaring that Rome is the seat of the beast.

THE MORTAL WOUND THAT WAS HEALED.

It is shown, however, that the beast received a wound on one of its heads that was mortal. One of the kingdoms was overcome by the sword. This blow would, in the ordinary nature of things, destroy it and the beast. In some remarkable way this wound was healed. This was wonderfully fulfilled. In a.d. 476, the last of the Roman Emperors of the West was hurled from his throne, and Italy became the prey of contending barbarian hordes. It seem as though the fate of Rome was forever sealed. Nineveh fell, but it was to rise no more. Babylon fell before the armies of Cyrus, and after a few generations it became the abode of “doleful creatures.” Tyre fell, and on the bare rock, which was once the seat of a mighty city, “the fisherman spreads his nets.” Other cities have fallen and lost their glory, their dominion, their existence, and have been converted into heaps of ruins, where wild beasts have lurked, serpents hidden, and desert winds howled; but in the case of Rome, *the deadly wound was healed*. Mysteriously, wonderfully, the captive city, by the development of a new power, binds her conquerors in the chains of superstition, and by establishing a spiritual dominion over the souls of men, she yet succeeds in holding the secular authority over a vast portion of the world. The sway of Rome under the Popes became, in spite of her conquest, mightier than her sway under the Cæsars.

FORTY-TWO MONTHS.

It yet remains to consider the period during which it shall be given this dominion to have power over the saints. We have found that this period of 1260 years, since a day is a symbol of a year, has been several times mentioned. The “Holy City,” the true Church, is trodden down by the Gentiles for forty-two months; the two witnesses prophesy in sackcloth for one thousand two hundred and three score days; the woman, or the true Church, is driven by the dragon into the wilderness for twelve hundred and sixty days, and the beast exercises power for forty-two months, which is the same period once more. There can be no doubt that the treading down of the Holy City, the two witnesses in sackcloth, the flight and sojourn of the Church in the wilderness, and the power of the beast, all take place during the same period, begin at the same time, are different parts of the same history, and end at the same epoch. It has been already found (chapter 12) that this period began in 533. The period, then, of the greatest power and glory of this “eighth head,” which is the beast himself, would end about 1793, or about the beginning of this century. At this time there is certainly an exaltation of the two witnesses, a return of the Church from the wilderness. There is also a fatal shock to the temporal power of Rome. In 1798 Napoleon Bonaparte effected the conquest of Italy, and the Pope, a prisoner, was a supplicant at his feet. In 1804, he ordered the Pope, who was now his puppet, to come France to crown him emperor of the French.

In 1805, he assumed the title of King of Italy. During the years of his power he ruled the Pope with an iron hand, broke up the old European system, emancipated the nations from the terror of Rome, and when he fell, the temporal authority of Rome had received a fatal wound. The influence of the Pope in the politics of the world was broken. Since then Rome has been occupied as the capital of free Italy, and the Pope has become “The Prisoner of the Vatican.”

THE LAMB-LIKE DRAGON.

11, 12. I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth. John sees this second monster coming up out of the earth, a beast that has two horns like a lamb, and a voice like the voice of a dragon. There is a close connection existing between the ten-horned and the two-horned beast. The latter (1) exercises the power of the first beast before him, (2) causeth the earth to worship the first beast, (3) says to the earth that it should make an image of the first beast ([verse 14](#)), (4) gives life unto the image of the first beast, and (5) causes those who will not worship the image to be slain ([verse 15](#)). These statements show that there exists a close connection between the two, and that the last is the supporter and restorer of the first. We have found the first to be a symbolical representation of the temporal power of Rome. Most Protestant commentators see in the second beast the spiritual power of Rome, the power which gave life to, and built up, the temporal dominion of the Papacy. The Papal claims are two-fold, both of spiritual and temporal dominion. St. Peter with the sword and the keys is always represented as the symbol of the Papal power; the sword of temporal sway, and the keys of the kingdom. The Pope not only claims to be the vicar of Christ, but the rightful ruler of the kings of the earth, and in this capacity, in the days of his greatness, has made and deposed kings, and granted kingdoms. **Two horns like a lamb ... spake like a dragon.** There is a similitude like the Lamb of God; a counterfeit representation; but a voice like the old dragon of pagan Rome. Both features show themselves. It professes to be Christian power. Sometimes its servants do a really lamb-like work, but then again we hear the dragon's voice. It can hardly be necessary to state that symbolism could choose no language more appropriate to represent the harsh, arrogant utterances of Rome when she puts forth her power, or asserts her authority. Whoever has heard the harsh orders of the priest to his flock, has heard the dragon's voice. How appropriately this language describes the bulls of Popes, or the fulminations of anathemas and excommunications against their enemies! **12. He maketh the earth ... to worship the first beast.** The spiritual power of Rome is exercised before, or in the presence of, the temporal power. They have dwelt together, and it is the spiritual power that has made those that dwell upon the earth regard and pay homage to the temporal. If an earthly ruler refused to heed the mandates of the Pope, his subjects were absolved from allegiance and bidden to depose him. If they refused, the whole kingdom was laid under interdict, the churches were closed, religious rites were suspended, the dead were not buried in the consecrated grounds, and a superstitious population soon



demands deliverance by submission. It was by the terrors of the spiritual power that the earth was brought into subjection to the imperial temporal sway of the Popes. The second beast has made men worship the first.

13, 14. The second beast did great wonders, pretended to perform miracles, and thus “deceived them that dwell upon the earth.” Rome has claimed the possession of miraculous power in all ages, and no fact in history is better established than that she has continually resorted to lying miracles. **14. And deceiveth ... by reason of those miracles.** The object of these false miracles was to rivet the chains of the spiritual dominion, so as to build up the temporal sway of the papacy. The dragon-lamb commanded men to make an image of the beast, and to offer it homage.

15–17. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast. The image of the beast, of the old Pagan power, this eighth head, which is the beast and of the seven, is not a lifeless image. The arts of the dragon lamb gave it life. The spiritual power built up the temporal and gave it imperial and despotic dominion. It had power to slay all who would not worship it. The awful dragonnades in Southern France, the frightful work of the Inquisition, the merciless persecution in Holland, the scenes of blood and death caused by Rome in many lands, are the fulfillment. **16. He causeth all ... to receive a mark.** The mark of the beast is some stamp or sign, by which all its worshipers should be known. In ancient days slaves were sometimes branded, as cattle are in our own age. The brand or mark of the beast would be some indelible sign which would designate with certainty those who were subject to his authority. A mark in the hand is supposed by some to represent the practice, while a mark in the forehead indicates the profession of life. It is remarkable, however, that a mark on the forehead, the sign of the cross made with water, converts a person into a Roman Catholic, and without this mark none are regarded as heirs of salvation. **17. No man might buy or sell, etc.** It has been common for Catholics to be forbidden to patronize those who were not loyal to the Pope. At least three councils are named, those of Tours, of Constance and the Lateran, which have expressly forbidden business intercourse with heretics.

THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST.

18. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast. The [seventeenth verse](#) speaks of the *name* of the beast. It has, then, a name. It also speaks of the *number* of its name. Its name, then, is some number. We wish to discover its name, and if we can count the number, we will find its name. “The number of the beast,” that is, the “number of its name” is the number of a man, and that number is *six hundred and sixty-six*. It is, then, plain that the number six hundred and sixty-six is the number of the name of the beast, and this is the man's name. Six hundred sixty-six is English. John did not write in English, hence those words in English will not give the word we seek. 666 are the Arab characters for the numbers, but they were unknown until many hundred years after John wrote, and hence afford no help. John wrote in the Greek language for readers who understood that tongue.



The number is evidently, then, to be expressed in Greek characters. The Greeks did not express numbers by figures, but by letters, just as among the Romans, X stood for ten and C for one hundred. Six hundred and sixty-six could be expressed by spelling out the words in the Greek language, or by using the letters which were symbols for various quantities. Let us try the latter method: 30=L, 1=a, 300-t, 5=e, 10=i, 50=n, 70=o, 200=s. 666=Lateinos. And what is this name? The number of a man; the Greek method of spelling the name of Latinus, the reputed founder of the Latin race. The Romans were a Latin race and spoke the Latin language. The Romish Church is continually officially called the Latin Church, to distinguish it from the Greek Church, the other branch of the great ancient schism; the Catholic sacred books are written in the Latin tongue; the worship is conducted in every country in the Latin alone, and when a Catholic council convenes, all its conferences are conducted in the tongue of the ancient Latins. There is, then, a Latin Church, whose official and sacred speech is the Latin language, which has for its seat the ancient Latin capital. That Church is the great Apostate Church, upon whose head the names of blasphemy have been written, which has claimed universal dominion upon the earth, and has slain the saints of the Most High. Its name is the number of the beast, and that name, Lateinos, the name or number of a man, is 666. It does not destroy the force of this that these numerals and letters can be so combined as to spell out other names. This name is one that at once points to a power which has displayed every mark which is assigned to the beast.



Chapter XIV

The Triumph of Christ

Summary —*The Lamb and His Saints on Mt. Zion. The New Song. The Angel of the Everlasting Gospel. Blessed Are Those that Die in the Lord. The Son of Man in the Clouds. The Harvest of the Earth. The Elect Gathered. The Clusters of the Vine of the Earth Cut Off. Trodden Down in the Wine-Press.*

The gloomy picture of the terrible foes of the Church, given in [chapter 13](#), is calculated to fill the saints with fearful foreboding. A persecuted, suffering Church, beholding these mighty enemies, their terrible work, these fearful struggles of the future, these triumphs of the wicked, might almost be led to despair of the final victory of the Redeemer's cause. Hence, for the encouragement of the saints, their eyes are turned, in the fourteenth chapter, upon a brighter vision. The dark clouds are lifted off the future, and they are enabled to look beyond and to see the glorious fruition of all the tears and sorrow, the struggles and trials of the Church. The vision of this chapter cheers the saints and encourages them to press on in the hour of darkness, by leading them forward to the final triumph of righteousness at the end of time.

1–5. And I looked, and, behold. This is the usual formula in Revelation which introduces a new vision. **The Lamb stood on the mount Zion.** In [chapter 13](#), a false lamb has been seen, one that had a voice like a dragon. Here, in contrast, is seen the Lamb of God, the same as in [chapter 5](#), taking the book with seven seals. **On the Mount Zion.** Here and in [Heb. 12:22](#) are the only places in the New Testament where this expression occurs. It is equivalent to the “Jerusalem above” of [Gal. 4:26](#) and [Heb. 12:22](#). Mount Zion, the city of the great King, the seat of the worship of God in Jerusalem, was a type, and is used as a symbol of the true Church. In [Hebrews 12:22](#), the saints who have entered into the covenant of Christ are said to have come, not to the mount that could not be touched, but to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. It is there used for the church of the saints, and such is its meaning in this passage. **With him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, etc.** In [chapter 7:4](#), the same number are spoken of as sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel. It means there, a great, indefinite number. Here, I take that the meaning is the same. It is a great multitude, a round number, who are associated with the Lamb. **2. And I heard a voice from heaven.** Whose voice is not stated, but it was a mighty voice, **the voice of harpers harping with their harps.** Always when great triumph are achieved or about to be achieved, heaven rings with the praises of singers. Compare [5:8, 9; 7:10–12; 11:17](#). **3. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne.** A song that has some new features. It was sung in the presence of the Father and the attending princes of heaven. **No man could learn that song but the hundred and forty four thousand.** None could

understand the song but them, those who had been **redeemed**. **4. These are they which were not defiled with women.** This thought is always a symbol of purity of life; of refusing sinful intercourse with the world. Spiritual adultery or fornication is being wedded to the world and partaking of its sins. **They are virgins.** This term is a symbol, and means that their lives are not defiled by the world. See [2 Cor. 11:2](#). **First fruits.** First fruits were always dedicated to God. See [Num. 18:12](#). These holy ones are set apart and dedicated to God and the Lamb. **5. And in their mouth, etc.** [This verse](#) states that their lives were holy and pleasing to God and the Lamb.

The Lamb on Mount Zion in the midst of these saints is a prophetic picture, and the thought should be, What do these symbols signify? These saints stand forth as the representatives of a class. "They are first fruits to God and to the Lamb." As the first fruits, devoted to God, were representative of the whole harvest, so these stand forth as the representatives of the harvest of souls. We are to behold in them as they stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb in their midst, a picture of the Church in some age of the world. Let us observe the facts stated of them: 1. The Lamb is in their midst; a characteristic of the holy saints. 2. They are pure, unspotted, undefiled, not fornicators, nor sullied with unholy desires. 3. They *follow* the Lamb whithersoever he goes. They are sheep that hear the Shepherd's voice. They are obedient to all his commandments. They follow his example as well as his words. They live a Christ-like life. 4. In their mouths are found no guile, and they were without fault before the throne of God. Whenever the Church of God becomes purified, ceases unholy fornication with the world, these are the marks which it will exhibit. I believe this to be a picture of the Church, yet to come, which shall have put on the white robes and have only Christ for its King.

6, 7. I saw another angel flying in mid heaven. An angel is a messenger. Any agency that does God's work or carries his message may be an angel. This angel is a symbol. (1) His flying indicates some movement or change that shall take place with great rapidity. (2) The fact that he has the **everlasting gospel** shows that the movement symbolized is the evangelization of the world. (3) That the movement will be world wide is shown in that he speaks to all races. (4) His proclamation shows that he not only offers the glad tidings, but declares the consequences of their rejection. This all implies that the purification of the Church will be followed by a mighty gospel impulse which will sweep over the world. There is a sublime missionary spirit on the part of the revived Church. Full of zeal, breathing the spirit of the Master, permeated with the apostolic spirit, as in the days of old it will go everywhere preaching the world. The old, old story told by a holy people, told with a burning zeal and overflowing love, shall exhibit its divine power in the salvation of the nations.

8–12. There followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen. As a result of the great gospel revival shown in [verses 6, 7](#), the city of sin, here called Babylon, but called "spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" ([11:8](#)) shall fall. **The wine of wrath**

of her fornication. This Babylon was a city of fornication, of unholy alliance with the world, wedded to the prince of this world instead of to Christ, and made the nations sin with her, or drink her wine. *Wine of wrath.* So called either because her wrath was manifested in persecution against those who refused to drink, or because the wine of God's wrath shall be poured on her (see [verse 10](#)). **9. And the third angel followed.** This angel proclaims God's judgment on all that **worship the beast and his image.** (See [Ch. 13](#)). **10. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.** Those who received the mark of the beast, worshipped the beast, drank the wine of Babylon, shall drink the wine of God's wrath. His judgments shall be poured out on them. **Shall be tormented with fire and brimstone.** These are symbols, just as wine and cup are symbols. The meaning is that they shall suffer bitter anguish. **11. And the smoke of their torment.** This is also a symbol suggested by fire and brimstone. The thought of this verse is the eternal unrest and pain of those who have followed the beast. **12. Here is the patience of the saints.** The thought that the enemies who oppress them and torture them will be finally utterly overcome gives the saints patience to endure.

Babylon . What is meant by this city Babylon? The term only occurs in the New Testament in [1 Pet. 5:13](#), and in the Book of Revelation. It is shown in this passage that Babylon virtually signifies the same as the "beast and his image," while in [17:5](#) Babylon is shown to be the mystical harlot who sat on the seven-headed and ten-horned beast. In [chapter 18](#) the fall of Babylon is again declared, and it is said that all the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her. Of this spiritual Babylon the old Babylon on the Euphrates was a type. It was (1) A wicked world power. (2) It oppressed God's people and led them captive. (3) It was only when it was overthrown that Jerusalem was restored. (4) In addition it might be added that it was at or near Babylon that the confusion of tongues took place. This old Babylon in some way is a type of the Babylon meant by John. The facts stated of the spiritual Babylon are that it was (1) identified with the beast; (2) a mighty oppressor of God's people; (3) that it led them captive; (4) ruled the earth; (5) is a harlot, or idolatrous church. It has been found in the preceding chapter that the beast and its image point to Rome; it will be found in [chapter 17](#), that the woman who is called "Mystery, Babylon the Great," who sitteth on the beast, is the great apostate church which has ruled the nations. This passage shows the means by which this dominion shall be overthrown. It will be done by a pure and holy Church, filled with missionary zeal. It is the preaching of the ancient gospel which shall bring Rome to destruction. When this shall be done is not revealed, but I am led to cherish the idea that it is not so far distant as some suppose.

13. I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write. We are not told whose voice, but it is a voice of authority. The words to be written are next stated. **Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.** Not all the dead, but those dead who die in the Lord. Only those die *in* the Lord who are *in* the Lord when they die. The Christian life, begun by faith and baptism *into Christ* ([Rom. 6:3](#)), is a life in Christ. To be assured of this blessed death one must live



a Christian life. **From henceforth.** Probably from the time of this utterance to John, though some have supposed that the time meant is that of the Lord's coming, which is declared in [verse 14](#). **Yea, saith the Spirit.** The Spirit confirms the blessing pronounced and states the reason. **They may rest from their labors.** Yet though they rest their labors are not lost; they follow them to eternity to speak for them.

14–16. I looked, and behold white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man. Jesus has himself said that the Son of man shall be seen coming upon the clouds of heaven ([Matt. 24:30](#)). John here sees the Son of Man sitting upon a white cloud. The Savior says that his coming shall be with great power and glory. John now sees upon the head of the Son of man a golden crown. The Savior says ([Matt. 24:31](#)) that he will send his angels to gather the elect. John hears an angel bid him who sat upon the cloud, to reap the earth, for its harvest was ripe. **15. Send forth thy sickle and reap.** There is gathered first the ripened harvest of the elect of God. It is an angel that came out of the temple of God as a messenger of God, carrying to the Son the Father's command to gather the elect from the four corners of the earth. Then a longing, waiting Church, "loving the appearing of the Son of man," shall first be gathered into the heavenly garner. The ripe sheaves are gathered. **16. The earth was reaped.** The harvest of souls is ended forever. But those who are upon the earth "shall not prevent them that are asleep." At the voice of the archangel the dead shall wake from their long sleep in the embrace of earth. Death shall be swallowed up in victory. "Blessed henceforth forever are the dead who died in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, they do not rest from their labors and their works do follow them."

17–20. Another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. The ripened harvest of the saints has been gathered first. That was symbolized in [verses 14–16](#). The gathering of the wicked to judgment is now shown in the symbols. Another angel comes forth with a sickle in his hand. Christ, by his angels, was the great reaper of the righteous harvest. They that are Christ's are gathered by him at his coming, but the wicked are gathered by another, here presented as an angel reaper. **18. Another angel came out from the altar. Which had the power over fire.** This angel, one that has power over fire, comes forth from the altar where fire was kept burning. Fire is an emblem of punishment, of destruction. He bids the angel who holds the sickle to begin his work, "to put forth his sickle and cut off the clusters of the vine of the earth, for they are ripe." Grapes are chosen as a symbol of the wicked because of their harmony with the figure that describes the fate of the wicked. "The vine of the earth" means the world that lieth in sin, "earth" being used in an unfavorable sense thus far in Revelation. **19. Cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.** They were cast into the winepress, then trodden under foot, and from the bruised and bleeding mass ran red juice like blood. The symbol implies delivery over to punishment and destruction. As the grapes were trodden and crushed in the wine-press, so the clusters "of the vine of the earth" are crushed



under the wrath of God. **20. And the winepress was trodden without the city.** The city, whenever it is not shown to be a wicked city, is Jerusalem, the Apocalyptic symbol of the Church. These judgments are *without* the church, judgments upon the world. **And blood came out of the winepress.** This is what John saw. The pressed juice of the grapes ran out red like blood, and ran in a mighty stream, deep as the bridle bits of the horses, 1600 furlongs; about 200 miles. There has been much discussion concerning what this distance signifies. Some have cited the fact that Palestine is about 200 miles long, and held that a fearful carnage in that country is predicted. Others have noted the fact that Italy is about 200 miles wide, and held that this country is to be the scene of a terrible conflict. In my opinion, the whole is symbolic of the terrible judgments of the wicked in that day. The figures, 40x40, or 4x4, multiplied by 10x10, imply the universality of the judgment. The *four* quarters, the *four* winds, the *four* corners of the earth are often mentioned, and *four* is held to be an Apocalyptic symbol of the earth, while *ten*, like seven, is a perfect, or sacred number.



Chapter XV

Another Great and Marvellous Sign in Heaven

Summary — *Seven Angels with the Seven Last Plagues. The Sea of Glass. The Song of Moses, and the Song of the Lamb. The Temple Opened. The Temple Filled with the Glory of God.*

With this chapter begins a detailed account of the closing judgments upon “the beast and its image and those who have the mark of the beast.” Their overthrow, as the great city Babylon, has been seen in 14:8–10, but in the chapters 15, 16, the Seven Last Plagues which come as judgments and tend towards the overthrow are given. The [fourteenth chapter](#) gives a summary of future events; the [fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth chapters](#) present the same events in detail. These chapters are all connected with the fall of spiritual Babylon, and open with these words: “I saw another great sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues.” The opening of the seventh seal carries the reader to the triumph of Christianity over *Roman Paganism*. The *seven trumpets* lead us onward to the overthrow of the western *Roman Empire* by the Goths, Vandals and Huns, and the ruin of the Eastern Empire by the Saracens and Turks. The last trumpet of the seven reaches to the close of secular history with the trump of the Archangel. The *seven vials* also give the history of an epoch, and, like each of the series of *seven*, bring us to the end of that epoch. They present the series of calamities that first weaken and then destroy the power of Papal Rome. Each one of three series of *seven* leads to the completion of a well-defined purpose. The *seven seals* have a definite object, and lead us to the accomplishment of that object in the overthrow of Roman Paganism. The *seven trumpets* have a definite object, and lead us to the fulfillment of their design in the overthrow of the Roman Empire. Equally definite is the object of the *seven vials*, and equally certain that the last vial will accomplish the utter overthrow of that blasphemous power, which is variously described as a “city of fornication,” “the great city Babylon,” the scarlet adulteress, and the seven-headed and ten-horned beast.

1, 2. I saw another sign in heaven. Another scene displayed, different from those just past, and startling in its character. **Seven angels having the seven last plagues.** Called the last plagues because they are the final plagues which are sent upon the beast and its image; they bring the series to a close. They “fill up the wrath of God.” The great feature of this vision is the seven angels with the seven last plagues, but they are not seen at first when the vision opens; not until [verse 7](#) is reached. The vision opens with the scene of [verse 2](#). **2. I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire.** In [4:6](#) “the sea of glass, clear as crystal,” was seen about the throne of God. It is the emblem of the calmness and purity of God's rule. Here the sea is mingled with *fire*, a symbol always denoting judgments. This shows that the



time for judgments, coming from the throne of God, has come. **And them that had gotten the victory over the beast.** These are the redeemed of 14:1, who are there seen standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. They now engage in triumphant songs over the approaching overthrow of their great enemy. **Having the harps of God.** Musical instruments wholly dedicated to his praise.

3, 4. They sing the song of Moses ... and the song of the Lamb. When Israel was delivered from Egypt they sang the song Moses as they had done on the shores of the Red Sea. Here, the spiritual Israel, redeemed, standing on the crystal sea, sings a song of deliverance, but it is the old song to a new strain; the song of the Lamb now; of the Redeemer. **Just and true are thy ways.** The salvation of the true worshipers and the judgment seat upon which the wicked beast, demonstrated the truth and justice of God. **4. Who shall not fear thee?** The judgments now given to the seven angels showed that God is a consuming fire, as well as a sun and a shield. We are left in no doubt concerning the identity of these singers. They are “them that had gained the victory over the beast and his image, and over his mark and the number of his name.” The ground of their rejoicing is also recorded. “All nations shall come and worship before thee; *for thy judgments are made manifest.*” The mighty arm of God is to be revealed in bringing to naught the powers of evil, and especially all the great enemies over whom they had been victorious. The saints who have undergone the persecution of the beast are represented as rejoicing because the day of its judgment has come.

5–7. Behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. After that I looked. The apostle looks again and “behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven is opened.” The tabernacle of the testimony was the Holy of Holies. Into it none but the High Priest entered, and he only to make intercession for the forgiveness of sins. It is the type of the Holy of Holies above, the mercy seat in the heavens where our High Priest intercedes for us, and where the smoke of the incense of prayer arises to God. **6. And the seven angels.** The angels mentioned in [verse 1](#). **Arrayed with precious stone, pure and bright** (Revision). Probably precious stones covered their garments like those of the robe of the high priest. They come out of the temple as priests of destruction. **7. And one of the four living creatures.** For notes on the Four Living Creatures see chapter 4. As the servant and agent of the Almighty he hands the seven vials of God's wrath to the angels. The Revision has “bowls” instead of “vials.” The thought is that in succession seven plagues are to be poured upon the earth.

8. And the temple was filled with smoke ... and none was able to enter into the temple until, etc. Does this mean that the heavens are shut against man during this period? Does it mean that no one can enter the true Church until the plagues are poured out? So some have mistakenly maintained. The doors of the kingdom were opened on Pentecost, and will never be closed until the marriage supper of the Lamb. The true meaning is plain. The place of intercession has just been seen. The seven *wrath* angels came forth. The smoke then fills



the temple so that no one can approach the place of intercession. The Greek original says *no one*, instead of *no man*. It means that the Divine purpose is fixed; the wrath angels *shall* pour out their vials, *there is no place longer given for intercession* to prevent the just judgments of God. The time of intercession has passed by, and the time for judgment has come. “No one can enter the temple” to the tabernacle of testimony, the place of intercession, to avert these judgments “till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.”



Chapter XVI

The Seven Last Plagues

Summary — *The Seven Angels Directed to Pour Out God's Wrath. The First Vial and the Grievous Ulcers. The Second Poured Out upon the Sea. The Third Vial on the Rivers. The Fourth upon the Sun; Its Scorching Heat. The Fifth Poured on the Seat of the Beast. The Sixth on the Great River, Euphrates. The Three Unclean Spirits. Armageddon. The Seventh Vial Poured on the Air. The Great City Falls.*

Interpreters are not agreed whether the pouring out of the vials relates to past or to future events. Almost all, except Roman Catholics and Rationalists, are agreed in the view that they refer to a series of calamitous events which were to befall the Papal power. The reader will observe that the first vial is poured upon the earth, and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon “the men which had the mark of the beast, and which worshiped his image;” phraseology that we have found to refer to the supporters of the worldly power and spiritual claims of Rome. See notes on 13:14–18. The fifth vial is poured “upon the throne of the beast,” and his kingdom is darkened. After the sixth vial, evil spirits come out of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. After the seventh, the great city, Babylon, falls. These vials, therefore, indicate a series of judgments upon the anti-Christian powers, variously styled the dragon, the beast, the image of the beast, the false prophet, and Babylon. As these have been found to symbolize the world-power which found its embodiment in Rome, and the last two to point especially to the spiritual despotism of which the Papacy is the chief expression, we must expect the great fabric to be the chief sufferer from these judgments. As, under the seven seals, Old Pagan Rome was judged and brought to an end; as, under the seven trumpets, the Roman Empire under its new form is judged and its destruction symbolized; so, under the seven vials, we have symbolized a series of judgments which weaken and destroy Papal Rome; and, with the seventh vial, the Great City, the type of the Apostate Church, falls.

There are historical events occurring within the last century which correspond so surprisingly with the symbolism that the interpreters regard them as the fulfillment. While not insisting that these are the events foreshadowed by John, and while admitting that the pouring out of the vials may be future, I incline to the opinion that prophecy is being fulfilled in “these last days,” and I will point out certain events corresponding to each vial, which may be the things signified.

1, 2. I heard a great voice. As in several more instances John hears the voice, but does not see the speaker. This voice comes from “the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven,” from the abode of God. This signifies that God's hand will shape the events symbolized. They represent his judgments. **Pour out the vials of the wrath of God.** Punishment sent

for sins. As the plagues were sent on Egypt in order to secure the redemption of Israel, so these plagues are sent in order to redeem God's Israel from the slavery of spiritual Babylon. See 18:4. **Upon the earth.** The term "earth" is still used by John in his usual meaning of the Roman world. **2. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth.** John sees the vial poured out, and marks its effect; very grievous ulcers fall upon men; that is, upon the men **which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.** Those who suffer are those who listen to the lamb-like dragon, the anti-Christ, the false spiritual power, or, as has been found in [chapter 14](#), the votaries of Rome. As the vials of the wrath of God are a series of events leading to the destruction of this false power, we must look for the first of the vials, not while it is at the zenith of its power. We have found that a number of distinct prophecies seem to point to the year 1793 as a period when its power will give signs of decay, and its hold upon the nations weaken; hence, we need not look for the first vial before this. Let the reader note the nature of the plagues to be sent. It is described as a grievous ulcer, that afflicts those who have the mark of the beast. An ulcer is not only a painful and dangerous sore, but is often malignant and foul with corruption. The term is often used to describe moral corruption, and the ulcers described may be moral or spiritual. Can we find aught in history about the end of the 1260 years of Papal dominion that corresponds with the symbolism? For many centuries France was the stoutest and staunchest of the supporters of the Romish Church. It was Charlemagne, the emperor of France, who bestowed the temporal power upon the Popes. It was to Avignon in France that, at one time, the Papacy was transferred for seventy years. The ruler of France was long styled "the eldest son of the Church." It was France that had perpetrated the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the dragonnades of the Cevennes, and the banishment of the Huguenots. The French nation had the mark of the beast to at least as great an extent as any other nation. In 1793, exactly at the close of the period of 1260 years, there breaks out in France a fearful moral ulcer that had long been festering. The French Revolution, the uprising of enslaved masses who were maddened into fury, sent Catholic king, royal families, nobles, and priests to the guillotine by tens of thousands, impelled the nation in its madness to publicly declare itself atheistic, leavened it with skepticism, and broke the hold of Rome to such a degree that she can never more control France. The ulcer was awfully corrupt and deadly. At one time 200,000 citizens of all conditions and both sexes were in prison, and often in Paris alone, fourscore were sent to the scaffold in a day. As the result of breaking forth of this ulcer, the mightiest Catholic nation was convulsed with civil war, every Catholic country in Europe was deluged in blood, and the Papal power received a shock from which it can never recover. The first vial, the breaking forth of grievous, painful, malignant ulcers, most fitly represents the breaking out of the French Revolution, its awful excesses, and irreparable injury done to the great spiritual despotism by the events of which it was the beginning and the cause.



3. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea. The first calamity has been upon the earth; the second is upon the ocean. The second angel pours his vial upon the sea. Then the waters become red as blood and in the great mortality that follows it seems to John as if every soul in the sea was dead. Again we ask if, in this series of calamities, there is one that smites the Catholic powers from the seas? Under the *second trumpet* a great and burning mountain fell into the sea. The Vandal power swept the Mediterranean, destroyed the Roman navy and then laid siege to the old imperial Rome. From the sea spiritual Rome, under the second vial, is weakened. The symbolism is fulfilled in the mightiest naval strife ever known. In 1780 France and England, upon the ocean, were nearly equally matched. Among the shores of the struggling colonies of the United States sometimes the English, sometimes the French fleets, rode in triumph. At Yorktown, the superiority of the French at sea cooped Cornwallis in until Washington compelled his surrender. With 1793 begins another contest for the mastery of the seas. It continues after Napoleon sits on the imperial throne, and did not end for twenty years. France, again a Catholic power by Napoleon's concordant with the Pope, rallies under the imperial flag with herself, Catholic Spain, Portugal and Italy, in the struggle. Protestant England and Catholic Europe strive together upon the ocean. The old Catholic powers, those which in the past have been the vile instruments of Papal wrong, the nations whose kings have committed fornication with the great spiritual harlot, suffer the loss in this long and deadly struggle of six hundred ships of the Line, the largest war vessels that then went to sea, besides the thousands of ships of war of smaller size. At the close of the contest, the naval power of Catholic Europe had been swept from the ocean. Once the Pope had claimed the dominion of the seas, and had given away newly discovered islands and continents, but now that proud claim has gone forever.

4-7. And the third poured out his vial upon the rivers and the fountains of the waters. John sees the third "vial poured upon the rivers and fountain of waters; and they become blood." This vial will symbolize another event calamitous to Rome. The seat of the disasters is described as the rivers, and we may expect some historical events, connected in some way with rivers, that result in the injury of the Papacy. There are two marks given which help us to locate the seat where the plague of the third vial is poured. 1. It must be a region of rivers and fountains of waters. 2. It has evidently been the scene of terrible persecutions of the people of God. When the judgment is inflicted the angel of the waters exclaimed, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, who art and wast and shall be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." A land of persecution is to become the scene of calamities which are justly visited upon it for its sins. (1) The river system of northern Italy, we have seen, was indicated under the third trumpet. If the reader will look upon the map he will find it crowded with rivers. The streams rush down from the Alps and haste away to the sea. The river region of Italy has always been a battle ground where the fate of Italy has been decided. Here Attila

the Hun, the “blazing Star,” the wormwood of the rivers, laid Rome prostrate at his feet. See 8:10, 11. This vial seems to point to the same locality by the use of the same language. (2) But the locality marked must have been the scene of persecutions (verse 6); none more terrible, more bloody or more continued, have been known in the dark history of Rome. This very region was the home of the Albigenses. Against them the Papacy had hurled its fanatical legions from generation to generation. The blood of the Protestants of the Alps had for centuries dyed the rocks and streams with crimson. (3) In the year 1796, a general, aged 27, led a French army across the Alps. On the river system of Italy, on the Rhone, the Po and its tributaries, he battled with the Austrians and their allies. It is remarkable that every one of his great conflicts were fought upon the rivers. The battle of Lodi was fought on the Adda, Arcola on the Adige, Marengo on the Bromida. I will briefly give the results of the struggle. In 1796 Bonaparte entered Italy. The next year his armies took the city of Rome and proclaimed an Italian Republic. Previously an armistice had been granted, for which the Pope paid 21,000,000 francs and gave up a hundred masterpieces of art to be carried to Paris. In 1798 Pope Pius VI. was carried as a prisoner into France to die. His successor was not elected in Rome, which was still in the hands of the spoiler, but in Venice. Other results that follow from this invasion will be given under the fourth vial. Ah! how triumphantly the long persecuted Waldenses, as they saw the Pope carried a prisoner into exile, must have joined in the voice from behind the altar: “*Yes, O Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments!*”

8, 9. The fourth poured out his vial on the sun. Since these vials of the wrath of God are “poured into the earth” (verse 1), the sun must be used as a symbol. It is a symbol of a supreme ruler—a ruler or king. Any one who becomes a great light and occupies a pre-eminent position, may be indicated by this symbol. The Saviour is described as the Sun of Righteousness. In the dream of Joseph, his father Jacob, the patriarchal ruler, is represented by the sun. Among the orientals it is the well-known symbol of a king or ruler. The fourth vial is poured upon this sun, and power is given it to scorch men with fire. Fire, the instrument of bitter pain, is a symbol of suffering. It is therefore evident that the ruler, symbolized by the sun, shall be the means of inflicting great suffering upon men. As we have found that these calamities are directed against the Papacy, it would follow that the sufferers are those who have received the mark of the beast. Though these adherents of Rome are in great anguish from the calamities that befall them, still they do not repent of their crimes. Like ancient Egypt under the plagues, Rome will still persist in her wicked deeds, still refuse to liberate the people from her spiritual slavery.

In 1801 Napoleon Bonaparte became the ruler of France, and soon became the virtual ruler of all Papal Europe. Spain, Belgium, Holland, Italy, and Austria were at his feet and either ruler by his satraps or at his dictation. No such scorching sun had arisen in the political horizon for more than a thousand years, and I do not know that the world has ever

seen so great a scourge of man. From 1796 to 1815 he was engaged in war without a moment's cessation. He converted Europe into a great camp and every nation was blackened and torn with wars. In his wars it is estimated that 2,000,000 men perished by the sword, and none can tell of the want and misery and despair that brooded over the bleeding and desolated lands that were tracked by his armies. This scorching sun, which parched, burnt and blackened the earth, exerted a most baleful influence on the power of the Papacy. In 1796 Bonaparte entered Italy; in 1797 his armies entered the Papal dominions, and a peace was made by which the Pope was not only shorn of half his provinces, but was compelled to buy off the invader by the payment of large sums of money. The next year the French armies entered Rome, tore the Pope from the Vatican, sent him a prisoner to France to die, and robbed Rome of its hoarded wealth. The imprisoned Pope died in captivity. The next Pope was elected in 1799, not in Rome, which was held by French soldiers, but in Venice. In 1800 he was permitted to return to his desolated capital as the dependent of France. In 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte determined to have placed upon his head the old imperial crown as emperor of the Romans, and the Pope was compelled to journey by land to Paris in order to gratify his master by serving in the ceremonial. Four years later Pius VII. was dragged from his palace, as his predecessor had been, and sent a prisoner into France. His states of the Church were confiscated. The grant made by Charlemagne nearly 1200 years before was resumed, and, until the fall of Napoleon, the Pope was without temporal possessions.

Napoleon had broken the spell of Rome. He taught the world that the power of the Popes might be successfully dared; a noteworthy service to the human race. The Pope, from that time, ceased to be a powerful factor in the control of nations. But, notwithstanding these scourgings, the Papacy has not abated its exorbitant and blasphemous pretensions. *"They repented not to give God glory."*

10, 11. The fifth angel poured out his vial upon the throne of the beast. By the throne of the beast must be meant the seat of his power. There are few students of the Bible, whether Catholic or Protestant, who deny that Italy and Rome are the throne of the great world power of which the seven-headed beast is the symbol. Then, the scene of the calamities of the fifth vial will be Italy and Rome. That has been the seat of the beast for 1300 years. In the very seat of his power the beast shall receive a blow that will fill his kingdom with darkness, and those who worship him with anguish. Something shall occur that will cause great dismay and anguish to the Roman priesthood and devotees. Have any changes occurred in Italy and Rome which have caused them to gnaw their tongues in pain?

In the year 1848 the people of Rome arose in rebellion to the Papal authority and drove Pius IX. into exile. A few months later he was restored by a French army. Nor did he dare remain when restored, save under the protection of French bayonets. With a French garrison he continued to rule his circumscribed territory until 1870. In that year France was compelled to withdraw her soldiers to defend her soil from German invasion. That was the opportunity

of Italy. The Papal army was scattered by the soldiers of Victor Emmanuel; the Pope shut himself in the Vatican, and Rome became the capital of new Italy. The temporal power of the Pope is gone forever. The Italian government has seized upon the overgrown possessions of the church. The lands it claimed have been confiscated, monasteries and convents have been closed, and universal religious toleration declared. Protestant churches and schools are founded in Rome itself, and statues have been erected under the shadow of the Vatican to martyrs whom the Papacy had slain. It is said they **blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not**. What better illustration of this than that the Pope has been declared infallible!

That the reader may see that there is beyond doubt something in the symbolism which points to such a fulfillment as has been suggested above I will quote an old work cited by Albert Barnes, written by Robert Flemming and published in 1701, nearly two hundred years ago. It is called the *Apocalyptic Key*, and contains the following on the fifth vial: "The fifth vial which is to be poured out on the seat of the beast, or the dominions which belong more immediately to, and depend upon, the Roman See; *that I say this judgment will begin about a.d. 1794, and expire about a.d. 1848.*" As a matter of fact Bonaparte invaded Italy in 1796, and in 1848 the Pope was driven from Rome. Since that date, though returned and protected by the French until 1870, his temporal power has been at an end.

12. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up. The angel of the sixth trumpet is connected with the river Euphrates (9:14). There a movement is symbolized which ends in the overthrow of the Eastern Roman Empire, the old Roman world power. Here a movement is probably signified which will work to the same end in the case of the Roman dominion revived in the Papal world power. The river Euphrates was the seat of the great city which once oppressed Israel and carried God's people into captivity. It was taken by Cyrus, God's chosen agent, and the means employed was the *drying up of the Euphrates*. Cyrus turned the river, which ran through the city, unto new channels, dried up the old bed, then marched in this bed under the walls where they crossed the river on arches, and took the city. In some way the drying up of the Euphrates shall overthrow, or tend to overthrow, spiritual Babylon. Possibly this may be accomplished by the exhaustion of the resources of that power. The nations which once supplied them have been falling away. **That the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sunrising.** In the infancy of the Christ, the wise men of the East, also called kings in the Psalms, came to offer homage to the kingly child. The prophecy implies that when this obstacle is removed, the way of the inhabitants shall be opened. The drying up of the Euphrates will, in some manner, open the way for those that are signified to come to Christ, as those of the old did to the manger.

13–16. I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon. Let the reader observe there is an alliance of three powers described as the *dragon*, the *beast*,

and the *false prophet*. From their mouths came three unclean spirits, like frogs, who go forth to the kings of the earth, rally their forces under the banners of the three allied powers, and march them to the battle of the great day of the Almighty. We have met these three powers before, and know that these are really one, animated by one spirit, but appearing in different forms. The dragon, the Satan ([chapter 12](#)), wars against the woman, in the form of old Pagan Rome; he then ([chapter 13](#)) transfers this warfare to the seven-headed beast, the political world power shown both in the form of Imperial and Papal Rome; this power was supported, reanimated when about to perish, by the lamb-like dragon who is the false prophet ([13:11](#)). **As it were frogs** (Revision). Unclean, loathsome, suggesting the plagues of Egypt. **14. For they are the spirits of devils.** The Greek is “demons.” They are demoniacal influences, and will show forth false miracles by which to deceive men. **Unto the kings of the whole world.** They will marshal their forces for the last conflict. The conflict that shall then take place will decide the fate of Babylon. The drying up of the Euphrates will prepare the way for its destruction. For an account of the battle of that great day, see [19:11, 19](#). **15. Behold, I come as a thief.** This is interposed in order to give a place for exhortation to be always ready. The Lamb comes when men do not see him. **16. They gathered them** (Revision). The three unclean spirits. **To a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.** If this is a literal conflict of arms the place where it will take place is probably indicated. Probably the conflict will be moral and spiritual. The place named is not only Hebrew, but is a famous spot in Hebrew history. Armageddon means simply the hill Megiddo. Upon the Hill Megiddo was fought the battle in which King Josiah was slain. It was in the midst of the battle-ground of Israel. The plain of Esdraelon, the depression between Judea and Galilee, was tracked with armies. If [Ezekiel 37:8–17](#) is understood literally, it signifies that Palestine will be the theatre of this struggle, but of all these passages I am inclined to believe that they have a spiritual signification. The Israel of Ezekiel represents the church, the true Israel. Armageddon, the battle-ground of Israel, is used metaphorically to describe the great conflict of the Israel of God.

17–21. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air. From [Eph. 2:2](#) we learn that the air is the region of the power of evil. The fifth vial was poured upon the seat of the beast; the seventh on the seat of the dragon. **Came a great voice.** The voice so often heard but not seen. Whether the divine voice or not, it speaks the divine will. **It is done.** It is finished. The work is complete. The seventh vial brings the work to an end. **18. There were voices, and thunders, etc.** See [8:5](#); [11:19](#). These features accompany the tremendous movements of the divine will. **A great earthquake.** A mighty agitation, and rupturing such as was never seen before. Society will be upheaved to its very foundations. **19. And the great city.** The great spiritual Babylon, the woman that sitteth on the beast ([17:5](#)). **Was di-**

vided into three parts. It was broken asunder, and shaken into pieces by the great upheaval. It is difficult to settle what is meant by *three parts*. Perhaps the three “evil spirits” ([verse 13](#)), which represent the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, are henceforth parted from each other. If this should be signified, it would mean that worldly government would henceforth be rescued from Satan's influence, and that spiritual powers would never henceforth give homage to the world. **Great Babylon came in remembrance.** The wrath of God is poured out because of her sins. **20. And every island fled away.** Islands and mountains denote earthly powers. Perhaps the meaning is that the old lines between states and nations shall pass away, and that henceforth there shall be one nation, one kingdom, one people, that of Jesus Christ. **21. There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven.** Upon the men who were judged and punished. Hail is a symbol of God's judgment. Hailstones of such weight signify awful judgments. **The men blasphemed God.** Not all men, but the men punished. In [verse 9 and 11](#) it is declared that they repented not, and here it is again implied that they were incorrigible. The thought is that they perish in impenitence.

It might be added that Robert Flemming, who in 1701 so accurately forecasted the fate of the Papacy (see statement in notes on the fifth vial) places the seventh in a.d. 1900.



Chapter XVII

The Judgment and the Great Harlot

Summary — *The Woman Clothed in Purple and Scarlet. Her Name, Mystery, Babylon the Great. The Beast on Which She Sat. The Meaning of the Seven Heads and Ten Horns. The Victory of the Lamb.*

The [sixteenth chapter](#) presents the series of historical events that lead to the overthrow of spiritual Babylon. The interpretation of these has been for the most part determined by the facts of history which have already transpired. The sixth vial brings to the present date. Concerning what follows the seventh vial I speak with diffidence, as it is yet future, but of this we can be certain, that it foreshadows the final overthrow of the anti-Christian powers. In [chapters xvii., xviii., and xix.](#), the downfall of these powers, the overthrow of the Apostate Church, the triumph of the Word of God, and the victory of Armageddon, are described with greater detail. [Chap. 17:1-6](#) describes spiritual Anti-christ under the figure of a great harlot. The true Church is described throughout Revelation as a pure woman, the Bride of Christ; the false church as a harlot. That this harlot refers to the same wicked power already described as Babylon is evident from the words on her forehead.

1-3. There came one of the seven angels. These angels had symbolized the overthrow of Babylon by their vials. This one will now show John the events of her overthrow in greater detail. The next three chapters relate to her fate. **Sitteth upon many waters.** Is supported by many nations. See [verse 15](#), which explains the meaning of “waters” when used as a symbol. **2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication.** There has been an unholy relationship between this false church and the rulers and kingdoms of the earth. **Were drunken with the wine of her fornication.** The nations have received her spirit and partaken of her sins. **3. He carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness.** It is not explained why she is seen in a wilderness. Perhaps the thought is that her development was in obscurity and almost unnoticed until she had reached supreme power. **Sitting upon a scarlet colored beast.** Supported by this beast. In chap. 13 I have discussed at length the meaning of this beast and of its seven heads. See that chapter. **And ten horns.** The significance of these will be considered under verse 12.

4-5. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color. The color of royalty. **Decked with gold, etc.** Her jewels and gold indicate enormous wealth. **Having a golden cup in her hand.** A golden censer in the hands of an angel represents by its incense the prayers of those who belong to the true church. This symbol of the false church has a cup full of abominations instead. See [Jeremiah 51:7](#). **5. Upon her forehead was a name written.** A title which told who she was and explained her character. **Mystery.** Making pretensions that the world cannot understand. (See [2 Thess. 2:7](#).) **Babylon the Great.** Another name is



given. She is the wicked city that carried the true Israel into bondage and persecuted them. See notes on 14:8. **The Mother of Harlots.** Not only a harlot, but the mother of harlots. In connection with Babylon, the two horned beast, and the scarlet woman, Revelation points out fornication, or harlotry, as one of their most prominent characteristics. In order that there may be no mistake about what is meant, it is well to determine the use of these terms in the Bible. “Harlotry symbolizes *uniformly* the apostasy of God's church.”—*Auberlen*. “The word harlot is used at least *fifty times* to describe spiritual fornication; that is, the *corrupt doctrine and practices* of the churches of Israel and Judah.”—*Bishop Wordsworth*. “In eighteen out of twenty places where the figure occurs its import is that God's church and people had forsaken him.”—*Alford*. “There are only three places in the whole Bible where the figure is applied to heathen cities or nations; twice to Tyre, and once to Nineveh.”—*Williams*. The fact that uniform use (with the rarest exceptions) is to describe a falling away from God shows that the Scarlet Harlot is the symbol of a faithless, apostate church. One is signified, too, that is the mother of other false churches which have followed her ways.

6. I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints. This implies that she had been a great persecutor and had slain multitudes of the people of God. There is only one body claiming to be the Christian Church to whom this will apply. There have been some harlot daughters of the harlot mother who have also engaged in persecution, but there is only one self-styled Christian body on the earth of whom it can be said she “was drunk with the blood of the saints.”

7–11. I will tell thee the mystery of the woman. This is told in the [latter portion of this chapter and in the next](#). **And of the beast that carrieth her.** For a full discussion of this seven-headed beast, see notes on chap. 13:1–10. **8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not.** See notes just referred to. The beast that existed then, when John wrote, was to receive a deadly wound, and to appear again in a new form. **They whose name hath not been written.** Are not of God's spiritual children. **From the foundation of the world.** The meaning of this expression is to be sought in 13:8. Their names were written in the book of life which had existed from the time referred to in 13:8, when the plan of redemption was prepared in the counsels of God. **9. Here is the mind which hath wisdom.** The mind that hath wisdom can interpret what follows. **The seven heads are seven mountains.** Since just one city in the world was called the city of seven mountains (*septem montes*) in John's time there must be a reference to that city. **10. And there are seven kings.** We have found that a mountain is a symbol of an exalted man, or power. In 13:1–8 I have explained the kingdoms or powers, symbolized by these heads. **11. The beast that was, and is not, is the eighth.** I have explained in chapter 13 this eighth power, which was a revivification of the beast, and which had the characteristics and strength of all the seven.

12–15. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings. In 12:3 there are seven diadems on the heads, but none on the horns; in 13:1 there are no diadems on the heads,

but there are on the horns. The diadem signifies royal power. The first reference points to a period when the powers existed of which the heads were a symbol; the second reference points forward to a time when these had mostly passed away, and when the ten royal powers signified by the horns had existed. The horn is a symbol of power, and often is used for a kingdom in prophetic language. See [Dan. 7:24](#). This, then, implies ten powers which sprang out of Rome and supported the false church. These are given by Sir Isaac Newton as follows: 1. Kingdom of the Vandals in Spain and Africa. 2. Kingdom of the Visigoths. 3. Kingdom of the Suevi in Spain. 4. Kingdom of the Alans in France. 5. Kingdoms of the Burgundians. 6. Kingdom of the Franks. 7. Kingdom of the Britons. 8. Kingdom of the Huns. 9. Kingdom of the Lombards. 10. Kingdom of Ravenna. The Roman empire was broken up into these kingdoms, and they were all supporters of the Papacy. These ten kings or kingdoms did not exist in the time of John, but should afterwards receive authority and do the will of the beast. **For one hour.** For a short time. A part of these kingdoms soon passed away. **14. These shall war against the Lamb.** They aid the false church in its war on the saints. **The Lamb shall overcome them.** They shall finally turn away from the false church. **15. The waters which thou sawest.** These are symbolical of the many nations and races which support the scarlet woman.

16–18. The ten horns ... shall hate the harlot. At a later period still, the ten horns shall hate and desolate the harlot. We have seen this fulfilled in the fact that the kingdoms that have been developed from these have in the last three centuries either become Protestant, or have broken with Roman rule. The historical facts given under the seven vials show how they have waged war on Rome. **17. For God did put in their hearts to do his mind.** He used these as agents to carry out his own will. First they gave their support to the false woman, until his words were accomplished, and then turned from her and assailed her. **18. The woman ... is the great city.** The city named in [16:19](#). See notes there.

Note. —In [chap. 16:19](#) it is declared that when the seventh vial is poured out the great city Babylon shall be divided into three parts. It is there suggested in the notes that this may refer to the separation of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet from each other. In the present chapter ([17:16](#)) it is stated that the ten horns, which become the strength of the beast, shall be turned upon the woman who is *Mystery, Babylon, the Great*. This implies a separation between the beast and the woman, between the secular power that had supported the Papacy and the Papacy itself. This seems to have been already fulfilled. The temporal dominion of the popes, “the states of the church,” has been taken from them, the powers of Europe have ceased to obey the popes, even the Catholic powers, such as France and Italy, have shut up monasteries and appropriated the overgrown possessions of the church to the uses of the state. The passages referred to imply that the Papacy will continue to exist after



it has ceased to receive the support of the secular power, since the woman still lives after the support of the beast is withdrawn.



Chapter XVIII

The Doomed City

Summary — *The Fall of Babylon Decreed. The People of God Commanded to Come out of Her. The Kings of the Earth Lament Over Her Fall. The Merchants and Traffickers Also Lament. The Millstone Cast into the Sea.*

The fall of the great city, Babylon, otherwise represented as the woman who sat upon the beast, has been symbolized in the pouring out of the seven vials. The [seventeenth chapter](#) describes her, shows her general character, points out the sources of her support, and how these shall finally become her destroyers. The [eighteenth chapter](#) borrows language and imagery from the destruction of the ancient Babylon, the oppressor of Israel, especially from the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, in order to describe the overthrow of the spiritual Babylon. Since in [17:16–18](#) it is shown that the horns of the beast upon which the woman sat have been turned upon her, the present chapter refers to a period of desolation which shall precede her final overthrow. The Papacy is to exist for a period after the support of the secular power is withdrawn. How strikingly the state portrayed in chapter 18 is fulfilled in the lamentations over evil times that are found in all the encyclical letters of Pope Pius IX. and Leo XIII!

1–3. After these things. Those described in [chapter 17](#). **Another angel.** Some have urged that this is Christ. There is no proof of their correctness. **Having great power.** There was assigned to him great authority. **And the earth was lightened with his glory.** This was a proof of power proceeding from God. **2. And he cried ... Babylon the great is fallen.** Compare this description with [Isaiah 21:9; 14:23 and 13:21](#). The fall of Babylon has been already declared ([16:19; 17:16](#)) but now it is developed. This picture is intended to portray her utter desolation. **3. For all the nations have drunk.** Partaken with her in her sins. **Fornication.** See note on [17:5](#). **Merchants of the earth are waxed rich.** Her luxurious living had made great markets.

4–8. Come out of her, my people. This invitation is given to the people of God yet in captivity, lest by remaining they should be involved in her destruction. As God once had a captive people in the old Mesopotamian Babylon, so he has a people in the spiritual Babylon. Ever since the Reformation began his voice has called on them to come out of her. Nor can it be doubted that he has many true and earnest worshipers still who have found enough of Christ in the mazes of the Papacy to have given him their hearts. The condemnation of the great spiritual despotism is not a declaration that all whom she has enslaved are the children of the devil. **5. Her sins have reached unto heaven.** They call therefore for God's remembrance of her iniquities in judgments. **6. Reward her even as she has rewarded you.** This



is addressed to those who have meted out her judgments. The divine principle of judgments is that every one shall be rewarded *according* to his works. What they sow, *that* shall they reap. This power shall have returned upon it in double portion what it has meted out to others. **7. I sit as a queen.** This verse describes her former pride. Compare [Isaiah 47:8–9](#). **8. Therefore shall her plagues come.** Notwithstanding her pride and exultation. **Burned with fire.** See [17:16](#). When an ancient city was taken and destroyed it was burned with fire.

9–14. The kings ... shall bewail her. There will be mourners. Those who have sinned with her, or profited by her will bewail her fall. **10. Standing afar off.** The picture represents these mourners looking from a great distance, afraid to approach nearer. **For in one hour is thy judgment come.** It has come suddenly. **11. And the merchants of the earth shall weep.** All who had made gain in any way from the sins or the luxury of Babylon shall mourn. There follows, then, an enumeration of the articles in which there was traffic. **13. Slaves and souls of men.** The Greek reads, “the bodies and souls of men.” The first seems to refer to the traffic in slaves, a common traffic until modern times and sanctioned by the Papacy. The latter expression seems to me to refer to a spiritual traffic. What is the whole system of masses for the dead, paid for out of the money drawn from mourning relatives, but a traffic in the souls of men? **14. The fruits.** These things for which Babylon so lusted are all gone from her forever.

15–19. The merchants of these things ... shall stand afar off. The lamentation of the kings over the fall of the city has been given in [verses 9–14](#). The lamentation of the merchants is now given. They are also represented as standing afar off. With them join the shipmasters and mariners who have been engaged in her trade. These all mourn because their profits from her are brought to an end.

20. Rejoice over her, thou heaven. While there are mourners, another company is called upon to rejoice. She had exalted herself against God. All who have been for God, and who have suffered from her, are called to rejoice.

21–24. And a strong angel took up a millstone. See [Jeremiah 51:61–64](#). This symbolical act implies an utter destruction. In Jeremiah the stone is cast into the Euphrates. Now it is cast into the sea, because another Babylon is designed. **22. And the voice of harpers.** It is this third angel who declares the silence and desolation of the city now. **And the sound of the millstone.** In the mills grinding food for the people. The mills were hand-mills, usually worked by women as a domestic duty. **23. For with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived.** This accounts for the fact that all nations poured their treasures into her lap. **24. And in her was found the blood of the prophets.** It is because she has slain the saints of the Most High that these judgments come upon her. As Jerusalem in the time of Christ filled up the measure of the sins of Israel (see [Matt. 23:29, 35, 36](#); [Luke 11:51; 13:33](#)), so the spiritual Babylon, the great persecutor, fills up the measure of the sins of the beast and false

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prophet, and is required to account for the blood of slaughtered prophets and saints of all ages.



Chapter XIX

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Summary —*Rejoicing in Heaven. The Bride Preparing for the Bridegroom. The White Horse and the Word of God. Conquering the World for Christ. The Great Battle. The Beast and the False Prophet Taken. Cast into the Lake of Fire.*

The [nineteenth chapter](#) of Revelation describes some of the events that precede the full acknowledgment of the reign of Christ among the children of men. These have been partly described in preceding chapters. In [chapter 14:6](#) the apostle points out the mighty strides of the gospel of Christ. In succeeding verses he announces the fall of Babylon, a mighty event is more fully described in succeeding chapters. In [chap. 16:13](#) the gathering of the united hosts of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, to the battle of Armageddon is pointed out. This is the battle in which shall take place the final overthrow of the allied powers which have exerted so malign an influence on the earth. But before this catastrophe is fully explained the apostle brings in an delineation of the great spiritual apostasy under the form of a Harlot, then changes the symbol to a city, alludes to its fate, and in an episode, pictures the mourning over its destruction. In chapter 19, the opening part is a picture of heavenly rejoicings over the great victory about to be won, and then the events that lead up to the great battle are introduced.

1–5. After these things. Following the preceding scenes. **I heard a great voice of much people.** These songs of rejoicing and thanksgiving are seen in Revelation whenever any great triumph or blessing is about to come. See [5:13](#); [7:12](#); [11:15](#); [12:10](#). **2. For true and righteous are his judgments.** This is shown by the judgments on the spiritual Babylon. **4. And the four and twenty elders.** See chap. 4:4, 6, and notes at close of that chapter. **5. And a voice came forth from the throne.** Not “out of the throne,” as in the Common Version. The speaker is not indicated. It is a call to praise the Lord.

6, 7. I heard ... a great multitude. This is in response to the call from the throne. **The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.** This is demonstrated in the overthrow of the wicked. **7. For the marriage of the Lamb is come.** The blessed union of the Lord with his chosen Bride, the Church. The consummation of this marriage is described in [21:2](#). **His wife hath made herself ready.** The Church has to prepare herself for this event before it can take place. The Lord will not accept a bride who is not purified and fit for the Heavenly Bridegroom.

8, 9. To her was granted. By divine grace. **That she should be arrayed.** She must be arrayed in spotless white. What this white raiment is not left in doubt. It is woven by the pure and holy lives of the saints. **9. And he saith unto me, Write.** This always implies a very important message. **Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of**



the Lamb. The blessing is upon those who have a part in the blessedness of this holy union. Those will be called who have wedding garments pure and white of fine linen. See [verse 8](#).

10. And I fell at his feet. In this passage and in [22:7, 8](#), the apostle offers worship to a fellow creature, an angel. In each place the prohibition is prompt. This episode is introduced in order to teach the sinfulness of all creature worship. It is likely that the fact that the fate of a great apostate church, in which worship is offered to its human head, is being declared, is the reason why here this symbolical act occurs. Man created in God's image is to worship only that which is divine. **The testimony of Jesus.** The angel declares himself **of thy brethren**. In [22:9](#), he adds, "of thy brethren, the prophets." Here the explanation is added that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. In testifying of Jesus the angel became one of the prophets.

11–16. And I saw the heaven opened. This implies the opening of a new vision. See [4:1; 11:19](#). Where a former vision is continued the formula is "After these things." We now have a series of pictures symbolizing the closing events that inaugurate the Millennium. The first of these is the one before symbolized by the angel that flies through heaven with the everlasting gospel, but now presented in a grand vision of the triumphant march of the Word of God. **Behold a white horse.** Always the symbol of conquest and triumph. See notes on [6:2](#). **He that sat upon him called Faithful and True.** It is the Lord, who comes as the Word of God. His conquests are effected by the word, but the march is really the march of Christ. **12. His eyes were as a flame of fire.** See note on [1:14](#). **Upon his head were many crowns.** Diadems. All kingly authority is concentrated in his hands. He is King of kings. **A name written that no man knew.** Probably the new name of [chap. 2:17](#), a name which will be disclosed to those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb ([3:12](#)). **13. He is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with.** See Revision. The word in the best Greek MSS. is not *Bebamemnon* ("dipped"), but "sprinkled." The usual idea is that the sprinkled blood is that of his conquered enemies. I believe that the thought is the sprinkling of his own blood, the blood through which he conquers. **14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him.** These armies are the armies of the saints, purified, holy, a conquering host, led by Christ to victory. **15. Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword.** See note on [1:16](#). This symbolizes the word by which he achieved his conquests. **He shall rule them with a rod of iron.** See notes on [2:27](#) and [12:5](#). This implies not a stern, but a firm and lasting rule. **He treadeth the winepress.** He shall inflict God's judgments on the sins of the earth. See notes on [14:17–19](#). **16. He hath on his vesture and on his thigh.** This probably signifies that the name was written on his vesture, *even* on his thigh. The Greek may be so translated. **King of Kings.** Of the various titles given to Christ in this passage this is the highest and marks him as supreme. There are four titles given in the passage: (1) in [verse 11](#); (2) [verse 12](#); (3) [verse 13](#), and (4) in [verse 16](#).

The sublime imagery of this passage portrays the spiritual march and conquest of Christ. A purified church, following Christ, holy and true, shall carry the word in triumphant power to the nations. The armies of the saints, all united under Christ, led by him, strengthened by him, hence invincible, are marching to the great final conflict with the hosts of evil.

17, 18. And I saw an angel standing in the sun. And riding with the sun in his course. From this position in the heavens and riding through the heavens he can call all the fowls of heaven together. **Unto the great supper of God.** Unto the feast for birds of prey caused by the carnage of God's judgments on his enemies. **18. That ye may eat.** The picture drawn is that of the terrible slaughter of a mighty defeat, which leaves the earth covered with the slain of every degree. The conflict meant is that named in [next verse](#).

19–21. I saw the beast. See notes on 13:1–10. This beast represents the world power opposed to Christ under its changing forms. The Roman Pagan Empire, and the Roman Papal secular power, are two forms. But it continues even after these forms pass away. The form in which it will manifest itself in this conflict will be better known when the fulfillment takes place. The beast marshals **the kings of the earth** as his supporters to oppose the Lamb and his armies. **20. And the beast was taken.** It is the beast's last appearance. He is now finally overthrown. **And with him the false prophet.** The false prophet, the beast, and the dragon have been named in [chap. 16:13](#) as calling the kings of the earth to the battle of Armageddon. See notes there. This is the same conflict. Here the result of the conflict is given. **That wrought the signs.** This description identifies the false prophet. He is the lamb-like dragon of [13:11](#), the false spiritual despotism, the apostate church. This false prophet is now taken. **They twain were cast alive into a lake of fire.** In [18:8](#) it is said that Babylon shall be burned with fire. Here the false prophet, both symbols of the same power, is cast into the lake of fire. The symbol indicates utter destruction. What is cast into this lake is seen no more. **21. And the rest were killed with the sword of him, etc.** This is probably symbolic. If these who had been sinners and supporters of the powers of evil were incapacitated for that support longer, it would be their death (separation) from that cause. It may be that this remnant were converted by the word. **And all the birds were filled, etc.** If this is a symbol its signification is that the victory was complete.

THE COMING OF CHRIST.

The coming of Christ, pictured in his chapter, has been seized upon by the advocates of his visible coming before the millennial period which is described in the next chapter. They insist that the passage embraced in [verses 11–16](#) describes a personal coming which shall be visible to the eyes of all men, and which is the coming so often referred to in the Scriptures. To this it might be objected: (1) That the language of this description is all the language of symbolism. None expect that, when the Lord comes, he will be riding on a white horse with an army following him riding on white horses, and having a name “written on his vesture and on his thigh.” The language is undoubtedly symbolic. (2) If this be his

coming to judgment of which he spoke in [Matt. 24:30](#); [Luke 21:27](#); [Matt. 25:31](#) and described by Paul in [1 Thess. 4:16](#), Revelation does not rightly describe it. He declares that he shall come on the clouds of heaven preceded and heralded by the trump of the archangel. The coming described in Revelation is not evidently the one meant by our Lord. (3) This personal, visible coming of the Lord is always associated with the Last Judgment. See [Matt. 25:31–34](#); [1 Cor. 15:23](#); [2 Thess. 2:8](#), etc. The Scriptures only recognize *one visible* Return or Coming of Christ. Now, the Last Judgment is not reached in Revelation until we come to [chap. 20:11](#). Here it is placed after the Millennium. Hence, we must conclude that the *Visible* Return of the Lord does not take place before the Millennium, and that [chap. 19:11–16](#) describes a coming in power, the power of his Word, but not a visible coming. (4) Is it objected that in [20:11](#) nothing is said of the coming of Christ? It is said ([Matt. 25:31](#)) that when the Lord comes he shall be seated on the throne of judgment and in [Rev. 20:11](#) John sees this throne and the Lord sitting on the throne. He does not describe here his coming, but shows him already come and engaged in judgment.



Chapter XX

The Millennium

Summary — *Satan Bound for a Thousand Years. Thrones and Saints Reigning with Christ. The First Resurrection. Satan Loosed at the End of a Thousand Years. The Gathering of Gog and Magog and of the Nations. Their Attack Upon the Saints. Their Destruction. The Devil Cast into the Lake of Fire. The Great Judgment.*

After the mighty conflict, the crisis of the fate of the world, the apostle beholds the results of the glorious victory. Spiritual Babylon and the beast, the Papacy and its secular allies, overwhelmed in the battle of Armageddon, have disappeared from earthly history. The old serpent, the dragon, the devil, who under so many forms, as pagan Rome, as the imperial power, as the kings of the earth, has persecuted the Church, yet exists, but his power is broken, and he is now to meet the results of his disastrous failure.

1–3. And I saw an angel come down from heaven with a chain, and the key of the abyss. The abyss is named in [Rev. 9:1, 11; in 11:7, and 17:8](#). It is the present abode of Satan and his evil spirits. The things seen by John are symbolical. They imply that in some way the power of Satan shall be virtually destroyed upon the earth. **2. He laid hold on the dragon ... and bound him a thousand years.** The chain I suppose to be the Word of God. At this period of the triumph of righteousness the gospel takes such hold of the hearts of men that Satan loses his powers over them. We can easily see how this is accomplished by what takes place under our own eyes. A man may be drunken and lawless, but if he repents under the influence of the gospel he ceases to serve Satan. The devil loses his power over that man. When that period shall come for which the saints in all ages have wistfully looked, when the laws of God shall be written upon every heart, then Satan, bound with a chain, the chain of truth, shall be deprived of influence on the earth. **3. And cast him into the abyss.** During this millennial period the chained enemy of man is cast into a prison house, but not the lake of fire. Had he gone there he should never more return. He shall go there as his ultimate fate (see [verse 10](#)), but after the thousand years, he is to return to the earth for a little season, and until the final effort of his long struggle against God he shall be confined in the abyss, from whence there is the possibility of escape, instead of being cast into the *lake of fire*, which is an eternal doom. In the bottomless pit the great deceiver shall remain till the thousand years are ended, when for a little season he shall regain his power.

4–6. And I saw thrones and they that sat upon them. These thrones are symbols of rule. It implies that they who sit on them shall have sway. **And judgment was given to them.** They shall exercise a moral judgment over humanity. **I saw the souls of them.** Of the martyrs. Note that it is the *souls* that he observes. **And they lived and reigned with Christ.** John saw that those who sat on the thrones reigned with Christ a thousand years. “In the last days the

mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it." [Isa. 2:2](#). Will Christ come visibly to reign in person as an earthly monarch? The personal coming of the Savior is placed by all the sacred writers as the last event before the great judgment day. This great epoch is placed after the millennial period, and also after the overthrow of Satan in his last conflict. If the Savior, then, during the millennial period, is not visibly present upon the earth, how can he reign? Just as he reigns over each saint now. Those who know the Lord accept him as king, but in this period "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the channels of the sea." All men shall hear and obey the gospel, and all shall submit to the beneficent sceptre of Christ. **Souls of them that had been beheaded.** These are they "who lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." Is this a literal resurrection from the grave? I answer decidedly in the negative. (1) The apostle does not say one word about the resurrection of the *bodies* of the martyrs, nor does he say that he saw the martyrs themselves. He is particular to say that he saw the *souls* or *spirits* of the martyrs living and reigning with Christ. (2) They had been put to death in the body, and their souls were unseen upon the earth, but there is no intimation in Scripture that their souls had ever ceased to exist. They were alive with Christ, but now they live in some sense different from that existence which they had before. It cannot mean that their souls came to life, for they had never ceased to have existence. (3) What, then, does the affirmation mean? That as Christ reigns upon the earth during the millennial period by his truth, so the spirit of the martyrs is revived and lives in the Church. The souls of the martyrs live because the Church is composed of those who love Christ better than goods or liberty or life. This glorious reign of Christ pervades the earth because the souls of the martyrs are resurrected and live in all who name the name of Christ, and who are filled with the spirit of ancient martyrs. (4) If any should think such an interpretation of symbolical language far fetched, let him compare Scripture. This explanation is not forced nor the interpretation of the language unusual. It was predicted by the prophets that Elias must come again before the Messiah. He did come in spirit and power, not in person, but as the stern, fearless, upright reformer of the wilderness of Jordan. In the same sense Ezekiel speaks ([chap. 37:12-14](#)) of the return of the captive Jews to their own land: "*I will open your graves, oh my people, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.*" When Martin Luther was engaged in deadly struggle with the Papacy, Pope Adrian sent a brief to the German Diet at Nuremburg, which contained these words: "*The heretics Huss and Jerome are now alive again in the person of Martin Luther.*" **A thousand years.** I am not prepared to say that this blessed period shall be limited to a thousand years, but am rather disposed to believe that a thousand years, a round period of great duration, is chosen to show to the longing student of the prophets that there shall be a long, long period of righteousness upon the same earth that has been reddened with blood, filled with crime, and made foul by sin. The characteristics of this golden period of

the human race are clearly pointed out by the prophets. **5. But the rest of the dead lived not.** If “the souls of the martyrs” live again spiritually and morally upon the earth in the millennial period, as I have explained, then this statement is to be explained in harmony. The rest of the *dead lived not* until the end of the thousand years. The sublime faith of the martyrs pervades the saints during this period, and other men, wicked or less noble, sleep in silence, unseen and unknown, without influence upon the earth, until the millennial period is ended. They have no part of the first resurrection, of the spirits of the martyrs. **6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.** In this great moral and spiritual resurrection that brings in the Millennium. **On such the second death hath no power.** The second death is the sad doom of eternal death. See [verse 14](#).

7–10. When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed. The earth shall have its golden age but it shall not last forever. Satan shall, when many ages have rolled away, be loosed for a little season. From some cause, that is wrapped in the darkness of the future, righteousness shall wane; wickedness shall revive; the great adversary shall in part regain his influence over our race. But it is cheering to know that his triumph will be short. He shall be loosed only “for a little season.” **8. And shall go out to deceive the nations.** Again he shall marshal the hosts of sin and renew his old conflict. **The four quarters of the earth.** From the whole earth. **Gog and Magog.** See [Gen. 10:2](#) and [Ezekiel 38:2](#). Josephus says that Magog represented the Scythians, a great race spread over the country now occupied by Southern Russia. **9. And they went up over the breadth of the earth.** They spread over it. **Compassed the camp of the saints and the beloved city.** Assailed the true Church and sought to destroy it. How the Church shall be assailed cannot now be told, but there will be a determined attempt to extirpate it. The beloved city, the spiritual Jerusalem, the Church, shall be surrounded, but in the day of her extremity the Lord will hear her cry for help. Fire from heaven will descend on her enemies. Christ shall come. “As the lightning flashes from the east unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.” Then shall the Lord consume the wicked “with the spirit of his mouth and the brightness of his coming.” “The day of the Lord shall come, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and all its works shall be burned up.” **Fire came down from God and consumed them.** For a comment on this read [2 Thess. 1:7–10](#). They shall come in flaming fire to destroy his enemies. The time will have come for the arm of the Lord to be revealed in might. **10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire.** This is Satan's last battle. His time has come. The great deceiver is not cast into the bottomless pit now. The lake of fire is opened, and we discover there the beast and the false prophet, but they have gone whence none ever return. There the devil is cast in and locked up to abide with his allies in wickedness forever.

11–15. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it. This is one more act in the great drama. The throne of judgment is set. The nations, living as well as dead, are

called to stand before God. The white throne indicates purity, triumph, and glory. It is the color of the light. **From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.** See 21:1. There is to be a new heaven and earth. The old ones are destroyed to be reconstructed. **12. And I saw the dead, small and great.** As we learn from the [next verse](#) the dead of every land, of earth, and sea and *hades* deliver their dead and all come to judgment. **The books are opened.** The records that contain all the deeds of men. **Another book.** The book of life in which the names of the saints are recorded. From these books all are judged according to their works. **13. The sea.** A symbol of the lost dead of whom no man knoweth. **Death and Hades.** The unseen world which hides from our view those who have departed from earth. The thought of the verse is that *all* the dead shall be judged. **14. And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire.** After this judgment day “death and hades” also, death and the unseen land of the dead, disappear forever. This is the significance of being cast into the lake of fire, the eternal prison house. Until the end of the Millennium and the final judgment men shall die, but after the grand epoch in the history of the Universe, there shall be no more death. The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed. Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, “O! death, where is thy sting? O! grave, where is thy victory?” **15. And whosoever was not found written ... was cast into the lake of fire.** Into the same lake of fire, that prison house to which have gone the false prophet and the beast, to which has been consigned the dragon, “that old serpent the devil,” the “eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.” There shall also be banished those whose “names are not written in the book of life.” This is the second death. As far as Inspiration throws its light upon the sad lot of those consigned to that “lake of fire,” theirs is an eternal fate. When some one has shown that doors of this final prison of the Universe have opened to permit the escape of those who have been consigned to its keeping, then we may perhaps indulge some hope that its prisoners will, in the lapse of endless years, escape from their sad environment.



Chapter XXI

The New Jerusalem

Summary — *The New Heaven and New Earth. The Bride, the Lamb's Wife. The City Coming Down out of Heaven. Its Walls, Gates, Foundation. The City of Gold and Gates of Pearl. The Light of the City. Its Holiness.*

The [last verses of the last chapter](#) have portrayed the terrors of the eternal judgment and the fate of those who have not served God. There ends the history of the godless world. As far as inspiration has revealed the future state the godless disappear forever from the history of the Universe in the prison house called the Lake of Fire. If the prophet's eyes had not been opened to see beyond these scenes, dark would seem the fate of our race. After a thousand years of purity and triumph history would seem to end in the terror of the judgment day and the darkness of the second death. But our Lord has mercifully lifted the curtain beyond and revealed to us the glorious final destiny of man. After a long and weary struggle, and a history full of dark and eventful episodes, mankind will reach a goal of happiness and splendor that it is vain to attempt to describe or even conceive. When the last battle is ended and the author of evil with all his works, the curses that he has wrought, and the servants that have promoted his ends, are cast into the eternal prison house, and their power to do evil forever broken, then will dawn the bright morning of eternal bliss and glory. This chapter describes the eternal home of the saints.

1–4. I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments point to the destruction of the old earth when the Lord comes to judgment. See [2 Pet. 3:10](#). It is to undergo a purification and a renewal to fit it for the home of the saints in glory. The “old heavens and earth,” which I understand to comprehend the old world and its order, so sadly out of joint, pass away at the time of the great judgment, and the old state of things shall be succeeded by a new order, both physical and moral. **And the sea is no more.** Whether this is to be understood literally, or whether it means that there shall be no barriers between the peoples, such as the sea interposes, is not certain. **2. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem.** The glorified and heavenly Church, pure and beautiful as a bride prepared for the bridegroom. This chapter presents a vision of the final condition of the redeemed and triumphant church. This vision points out the contrast between the beginning and the final condition of our race. The career of man began in a garden, the fitting home of a race few in numbers. It ends, as revealed by the prophet, in a city, the home where multitudes gather. Of this city Jerusalem was a type. The redeemed and holy Church, washed by the Savior's blood, and obedient to his will as a faithful bride to her husband, is the new Jerusalem. **3. Behold the tabernacle of God is with men.** Of old the Shekinah, the emblem of God's presence, dwelt in the tabernacle between the Cherubim. In this glorious city of



the future, God shall make his tabernacle and dwell with men. They shall recognize his presence, his protection, his fatherly and omnipotent care over them. **4. And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.** No sorrow or travail of any kind shall ever enter within the walls of the city. The cry of anguish shall never be uttered, hearts shall never be broken, no tear shall ever dim the eye, and, most glorious of all, death shall be unknown. Death began his sway when man was expelled from Paradise; he ends it when the final judgment condemns Satan, death and hades to enter the lake of fire. The new Jerusalem will be painless, tearless, deathless, because it will be a sinless city. “The former things have passed away.”

5–8. Behold, I make all things new. See note on verse 1. **Write.** This is the third time in this book, in addition to the epistles to the churches in [chapters 2 and 3](#), where John receives the special command to “write.” The other examples are in [14:13 and 19:9](#). See also [1:11](#). **6. It is done.** All things are come to pass. **I am the Alpha and the Omega.** See notes on 1:8. This shows that the speaker is Christ. **7. He that overcometh.** Here for the first time, after the close of the seven epistles of [chapters 2 and 3](#), do we have the promise to him who overcomes. **8. But the fearful and unbelieving.** Those wedded to sin have no place in the glorious home prepared for the saints. “The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars,” have undergone the second death, the death that has no resurrection, and can never enter or disturb the holy peace of the glorious city.

9–14. There came unto me one, etc. This is one of the angels of the vials of the wrath of God. See [chap. 16](#). They did their work as wrath angels before the judgment, and are now seen engaged in other work. **I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife.** The glorified church henceforth to be united with her Lord. **10. He carried me away in the spirit.** He seemed to be stationed on a high mountain and there to see a mighty city descending out of heaven. The angel said, “I will show thee the Bride,” and he showed him a beautiful city. The harlot of [chapter 17](#) was a great, wicked city, “Mystery, Babylon the Great,” while the Bride is a great city also, the “holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven.” **11. Having the glory of God.** Lighted by the divine presence and glory. We cannot follow all the details of its splendor, but they are designed to show that it exhibited a splendor such as mortal eye has never seen. The walls are of jasper, the gates of pearl, the foundations of precious stones and the streets paved with gold. The dimensions are immense, beyond even human conception, and its gates stand open night and day. The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are written upon its foundations, and of the tribes of Israel upon its gates. **12. Twelve gates.** As many as there were tribes and apostles. **Twelve angels.** As gate-keepers to prevent the unclean from entrance. **Names written thereon.** The names of the twelve tribes of Israel. These were typical of the true Israel, the saints, and shows that all who belong to the true Israel will enter. **14. The wall of the city had twelve foundations.** The twelve apostles of the Lamb are foundations of the Church, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone.



15–21. And he ... had a golden reed to measure the city. The reed is a divine measure and the city is to correspond to the measure. In [chapter 11](#) the church is measured with a reed. Both the earthly and the heavenly church must agree with the divine plan. **16. And the city lieth foursquare.** It is regular and symmetrical. **Twelve thousand furlongs.** I suppose that these vast dimensions, a number twelve times one thousand, both favorite Hebrew numbers, are intended to indicate the vastness of the city, rather than its exact size. **17. The wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits.** Again we have twelve times twelve, the square of a favorite and sacred number. The city has twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve foundations, and a wall twelve times twelve cubits high. **That is, of the angel.** The measure of a man and of an angel will be the same in the New Jerusalem. **18. The wall of it was of jasper.** A brightly radiant stone. See [verse 11](#). **The city was pure gold.** The symbols indicate that the city is beautiful and rich beyond conception. The costliest materials known to mortals are named in order to give us some idea.

19, 20. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished. They were adorned with precious stones. The twelve apostolic foundations present every spiritual grace and beauty. The various stones named are among the most precious known to the ancients. **21. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls.** Each gate composed of a single pearl. **And the street of the city.** The streets were paved with pure gold. **As it were transparent.** Transparency is the symbol of purity.

22–27. And I saw no temple therein. John saw no temple in the city, such as at Jerusalem. It was all temple. God and the Lamb were present in it everywhere and every spot was holy. Wherever the knee was bowed the Lord was present to see and hear. The whole of the New Jerusalem will be an abode of praise. **23. And the city had no need of the sun.** Night never settles down to shut out its splendor, and eternal light, springing from the brightness of God and the Lamb, precludes the need of a sun or moon. **24. And the nations ... walk in the light of it.** The redeemed of all nations enjoy the light of the city. **The kings.** The idea is that all who have earthly dignities and honors shall make them offerings to the New Jerusalem. **25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day.** The gates were never shut. This implies, first, that the city has no fear of any foes. These have all been conquered and subdued. The struggles have been ended forever and no enemies remain to invade its happy precincts. It implies, in the second place, that “the nations of the saved” can always enter. There is always admittance freely to those “who have the right to enter in through the gate into the city.” **26. They shall bring the glory and the honour.** All nations are represented as contributing to increase its glory, as the nations pay tribute to an earthly capital. **27. There shall in no wise enter.** Nothing sinful or unclean shall ever enter, “neither whatever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.”

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Chapter XXII

The New Jerusalem (Continued): Epilogue

Summary — *The River of the Water of Life. The Tree of Life. The Divine Light of the City. Its Heavenly Purity. The Lord's Promise to Come. The Church Says Come. The Curse Upon Those Who Add to or Take from this Book.*

1, 2. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life. A symbol of the eternal life flowing from the Son of God as a fountain, which has been bestowed upon all who dwell in the heavenly city. **Bright as crystal.** Radiant with glory. The shining light which comes from the river shows the glory of the heavenly life. **Proceeding.** The fountain of this life is the throne of God and it has been bestowed by the Son. **2. In the midst of the street of it.** In the Revision this is attached to the [preceding verse](#). It is the river of life that runs in the street. On each side of the river, watered by it, stands **the tree of life ... yielding its fruit every month.** The thought is that it is always fruitful, not limited to certain seasons of fruit bearing. **The leaves of the tree were for the healing, etc.** We are not to conclude that there were diseases to be healed, but that in the city were the means which banished disease and death. The student cannot fail to trace the correspondence with the home of the sinless race in Eden. There was there “a river that went out of Eden to water the garden.” Here there is a river, “bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” There was a tree of life in Paradise. In the New Jerusalem, on either side of the river stands the tree of life bearing twelve manner of fruits, or rather fruit twelve times a year, every month. The river and the tree are symbols of the life bestowed by the grace of God. The river flows from the throne of God and the Lamb; from the fountain whence life and immortality come. The tree yields its fruit at all times, so that the supply never fails. Everything about the tree is healthful. Even the leaves are for the healing of the nations. There is a book, a river and a tree of life. Christ is the life, and all refer in some way to Christ. Trees and rivers presented most attractive features in an oriental city, and are beautiful emblems of the full supplies of life, grace and bliss that shall pervade the heavenly city.

3–5. And there shall be no more curse. The curse came upon those in Paradise on account of their sins. *There shall be no more curse*, for no sin shall ever enter the New Jerusalem. Every curse that has ever blighted the life of man, must be ascribed to sin. Not a throe of pain has ever been felt by the human body, not a pang has ever pierced the human heart, or a shadow of sorrow passed over the human spirit, which was not due, either directly or indirectly, to transgression. As sin can never pass the gates of the Celestial City, there will be no more pain. **4. They shall see his face.** See [Matt. 5:8](#). They shall enjoy the visible presence of the Lamb. **His name shall be in their foreheads.** Written by God's finger. It shall always be seen and known that they are his. **5. And there shall be no night there.** The

city is a city of light lighted by the divine presence, but the meaning goes beyond this. The soul shall have no nights of sorrow there. **They shall reign forever and ever.** They shall be Christ's assistants in the rule of the glorified earth.

6, 7. These sayings are faithful and true. The Visions of Revelation have now ended. What remains is intended to emphasize the "sayings" of the preceding chapters. **7. Behold, I come quickly.** These words are repeated in [verses 12 and 20](#). It is the coming of Christ that is meant. It may be that the reference is to his coming to work out "the things which must shortly be done," or he may refer to his final coming, which was not far away according to the divine measure. **Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings.** Such an one will be found faithful when the Lord comes.

8, 9. I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel. See on these two verses the notes on 19:10. There John attempts to worship the angel and is prevented. Among the idolatrous tendencies that early showed themselves in the church was angel worship. This not only rebukes it, but the worship of any being, earthly or heavenly, who is not divine.

10–12. Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book. To seal them would mean to conceal them and store them away. But they are not to be hidden. The time had come for the fulfillment to begin. **11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.** This is not a command, but a warning. He that is fixed in injustice and unrighteousness, let him go on. The future judgments revealed in the preceding visions show that he shall reap that he has sown. But the holy and true, let them be encouraged to press on; they have their reward. The reason that the saints may be sure of this is next given. **12. Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.** Then the unjust and the holy shall each be rewarded according to his works.

13–16. I am Alpha and Omega. See notes on 1:8. The three titles given here have a similar signification. **14. Blessed are they that wash their robes.** See the Revision. Those who have their robes washed are those whose sins are forgiven, and who obey Christ. These have the right to enter the city, for no sinner can enter there. **15. Without are dogs.** In an oriental city the dogs, an unclean animal, are seen in great numbers in the streets, and are a disagreeable feature. These are taken to represent one type of sinners. Others with different characteristics are also given. All are *without*. None of them ever pass through the portals of the New Jerusalem. **16. I Jesus.** The Lord is still *Jesus*, that is the Savior. **Have sent mine angel to testify.** See [1:1](#). Here at the close where the Lord speaks in personal communication to John, he speaks of himself by the name Jesus. **I am the root and the offspring of David.** See [Chap. 5:5](#).

17–20. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. Twice ([verses 7 and 12](#)) the Lord has said, "I come quickly." In [verse 20](#) John repeats that the Lord saith, "Surely I come quickly." The subject of these verses is the coming of the Lord. The Bridegroom has promised to come, and in [verse 17](#) the Bride responds to the promise of the Bridegroom by inviting him

to come. The church, filled with the Spirit, stands with hands extended, “loving his appearance,” inviting the coming, and eager for the coming of the Lord. **Let him that heareth.** Let all who have heard the gracious promise join in the invitation and say, “Come.” **Let him that is athirst come.** Let all thirsty for the water of life come and partake of it freely. **Who-soever will.** To *will* to come is the essential thing in order to coming to Christ. **18. If any man add to these things.** See [Deut. 4:2, and 12:32](#). The whole spirit of the Scripture is against adding to or taking from the Lord's words. This is a warning against spurious revelations. **19. If any man take from.** This could be done by denying, or explaining away the words of prophecy. To do either is a deadly sin. Indeed, to tamper with the Divine word in any way is sinful. **20. He which testifieth.** It is John who now speaks and exults that the Lord has promised soon to come. He adds his prayer for the coming. **21. The grace of our Lord.** The usual apostolical benediction.



Key Thoughts of the New Testament Books

The key thought, or primary object of each New Testament book, according to Dr. George F. Pentecost, is as follows:



- Matthew —Jesus the Son of God and Lord according to Old Testament promise.
- Mark —Jesus is the Savior who Meets Man's Needs.
- Luke —The Son of Man in his Service among Men. The World's Savior.
- John —The Son of God in the Moral Glory of his Person and Life.
- Acts —Christ in Heaven, and the Energy of the Holy Spirit on Earth. What Christ Continued to Do and to Teach by His Spirit in the Apostles. How the Church was Gathered and Built. The Progress of the Kingdom.
- Romans —Christianity Unfolded in its Doctrine. Righteousness; How Man can be Justified before God.
- I Corinthians —Church Order and Discipline. Our Relations to Each Other in the Church.
- II Corinthians —Christian Ministry and Superiority over Circumstances. Our Relation to the World and to Them.
- Galatians —Christian Blessing and Liberty contrasted in the Law. Stand Fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made you Free. The Spirit in the Beginning, Middle, and End of Christian Life and Power.
- Ephesians —Christ the Measure of Christian Standing and Blessing. Together with Christ.
- Philippians —Christian Experience. In the Face of Christ. Perfection that is not Perfect. One Thing to Do.
- Colossians —The Church's Glories and Fullness in Christ her Head.
- I Thessalonians —Christ coming *to* and *for* the Church, and her Eternal Blessedness.
- II Thessalonians —Christ coming with His Saints. The Eternal Judgment of Unbelievers.
- I Timothy —Church Order according to God.
- II Timothy —Church Disorder and the Individual Pathway.
- Titus —Christian Qualification for the Ministry and Godly Conduct.

- Philemon —Christian Love. Counting upon Love between Brother and Brother.
- Hebrews —Our Apostle's Priest, Sacrifice, and Witness.
- James —The Common Sense of Christianity, or Christian Morality in and out of the Church.
- I Peter —God's Righteous Government in Relation to Saints.
- II Peter —God's Righteous Judgment upon the Public Christian Profession.
- I John —Christ the Eternal Life and Power of Communion with God.
- II John —Christ and the Truth the Safeguard against Heresy.
- III John —Christian Hospitality to the Saints and especially to Laborers.
- Jude —Apostasy Traced down to the Last Days.
- Revelation —Christ Assuming the Government of the World. Things to Come.

Quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament

The close connection between the Old and New Testament is shown by the number of times the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament. Bagster's Bible gives 889 quotations and allusions. George F. Pentecost gives the number at 885, a few of the allusions given by Bagster's Bible being disputed. Every book of the Old Testament is quoted except Obadiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Esther. There is only one quotation from the Song of Solomon. According to Dr. Pentecost the number of the Old Testament quotations and allusions in each New Testament book is as follows:

Book	Times	Book	Times
The Gospel of Matthew		96 1 Thessalonians	2
The Gospel of Mark		34 2 Thessalonians	2
The Gospel of Luke		58 1 Timothy	6
The Gospel of John		40 2 Timothy	2
Acts of the Apostles		57 Hebrews	86
Romans		74 James	16
1 Corinthians		41 1 Peter	20
2 Corinthians		13 2 Peter	10
Galatians		16 1 John	6
Ephesians		11 Revelation	249
Philippians		3	———
Colossians		3 Total	855 Times

NOTE.—The occurrences as given by Johnson total to 845.—Ed.

Chronology of Acts and the Epistles

(From the Bible Hand-Book)

Descent of the Holy Spirit	a.d. 30	Paul's Imprisonment at Rome	a.d. 62
Setting Up of the Church	" 30	Paul Writes Ephesians	" 62
First Persecutions	" 35	Paul Writes Philippians	" 62
Philip at Samaria	" 35	Paul Writes Colossians	" 62
Conversion of Saul	" 36	Paul Writes Philemon	" 62
First Gentile Converted	" 40	James Writes his Epistle	" 62
Founding of Church at Antioch	" 43	I Peter Written	" 63
Writing of Matthew's Gospel	" 43	Acts Written	" 63
James Killed by Herod	" 45	Paul is Acquitted	" 63
Paul's Call	" 47	Paul Visits Various Places	" 63
His 1st Miss'y Journey Begun	" 48	Paul Writes Hebrews	" 63
Council at Jerusalem	" 50	Paul Writes I Timothy	" 63
Paul's 2nd Miss'y Journey Begun	" 51	Paul Writes Titus	" 63
Writing of I Thessalonians	" 52	Writing of Mark's Gospel	" 64
Writing of II Thessalonians	" 53	II Peter Written	" 65

Third Miss'y Journey " 54 Begun	Paul's 2d Imprison- " 65 ment at Rome
Writing of I Corinthi- " 57 ans	II Timothy Written " 66
Writing of Galatians " 57	Martyrdom of Paul " 66
Writing of II Corinthi- " 58 ans	Destruction of Jerus- " 71 alem
Writing of Romans " 58	Jude's Epistle Written " 75
Writing of Luke's " 59 Gospel	Writing of John's " 85 Gospel
Paul's Arrest at Jerus- " 58 alem	Writing of John's " 90 Three Epistles
Paul at Cæsarea " 59	John's Visions at Pat- " 96 mos
Paul Starts for Rome " 60	Revelations Written " 97
Paul Reaches Rome " 61	Death of John " 100

Cities and Towns Named in the New Testament

(From the Bible Hand-Book.)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>I. In Judæa</i> | <i>II. In Samaria</i> | <i>III. In Galilee</i> | <i>IV. In Peræa</i> |
| <i>V. Decapolis</i> | <i>VI. In Phoenicia</i> | <i>VII. In Syria</i> | <i>VIII. In Asia Minor</i> |
| <i>IX. In Macedonia</i> | <i>X. In Greece</i> | <i>XI. In Isles of the Sea</i> | <i>XII. Italy</i> |



I. In Judæa

- 1 **Azotus:** Near the Mediterranean; the ancient Ashod, visited by Philip ([Acts 8:40](#)).
- 2 **Bethlehem:** Six miles south of Jerusalem; the birthplace of Jesus ([Matt. 2:1](#)).
- 3 **Bethany:** Near Jerusalem, on a slope of the Mount of Olives; the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus ([John 12:1](#)).
- 4 **Gaza:** Near the Mediterranean, to which a road led from Jerusalem ([Acts 8:26](#)).
- 5 **Emmaus:** Four miles south of Jerusalem; the place to which the two disciples were walking when joined by Jesus ([Luke 24:13](#)).
- 6 **Joppa:** On the Mediterranean; the port of Jerusalem where Peter saw a vision ([Acts 11:5](#)).
- 7 **Jericho:** In the valley of the Jordan, where Jesus restored sight to Bartimæus ([Mark 10:46](#)).
- 8 **Jerusalem:** The Holy City where all the great feasts were held ([Luke 2:41](#)).

II. In Samaria

- 1 **Antipatris:** East of Shechem; the place to which the guard conveyed Paul by night ([Acts 23:31](#)).
- 2 **Cæsarea:** On the Mediterranean, where Paul made his defense before Agrippa ([Acts 25](#)).
- 3 **Sychar:** In the valley between Ebal and Gerizim; the site of Jacob's well ([John 4:5, 6](#)).

III. In Galilee

- 1 **Bethsaida:** A village on the Sea of Galilee; the native place of Peter, Andrew, and Philip ([John 1:44](#)).
- 2 **Cana:** A village four or five miles northeast of Nazareth, where Jesus performed his first miracle ([John 2:11](#)).
- 3 **Capernaum:** A city on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus lived, and performed many miracles ([Matt. 4:13](#)).
- 4 **Chorazin:** A city on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, against which Jesus pronounced woes ([Matt. 11:21](#)).
- 5 **Magdala:** A village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, visited by Jesus ([Matt. 15:39](#)).
- 6 **Nazareth:** A town among the hills, about midway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean; celebrated as the place where Jesus was brought up ([Luke 4:16](#)).
- 7 **Nain:** A village on a hill southeast of Nazareth, where Jesus raised to life the widow's son ([Luke 7:12](#)).
- 8 **Ptolemais:** On the Mediterranean, north of Mount Carmel, where Paul landed on his way to Jerusalem ([Acts 21:7](#)).
- 9 **Tiberias:** A city on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, visited by Jesus ([John 6:1](#)).



IV. In Peræa

- 1 **Bethabara:** A place east of the Jordan, nearly opposite Jericho, where John baptized ([John 1:28](#)).
- 2 **Machæus:** East of the Dead Sea; the place where John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded. Not named in the Bible.

V. Decapolis

- 1 **Bethsaida:** On the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee; the place where Jesus fed the five thousand ([Luke 9:10–17](#)).
- 2 **Gadara:** A city south of the Sea of Galilee, which gave its name to the district—“the country of the Gadarenes” ([Mark 5:1](#)).
- 3 **Gergesa:** A little village east of the Sea of Galilee; the place near which the demoniacs were cured, and the swine drowned ([Matt. 8:28–34](#)).

VI. In Phoenicia

- 1 **Tyre:** The celebrated commercial city of antiquity, on the Mediterranean; on “the coasts” of which Jesus cured the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman ([Matt. 15:21–28](#)).
- 2 **Sidon:** A city on the Mediterranean, about twenty miles north of Tyre, in a region once visited by Jesus ([Mark 7:24](#)).

VII. In Syria

- 1 **Damascus:** On a fertile plain, watered by the Abana and Pharpar, east of the Anti-Libanus mountains; the place of the Apostle Paul's conversion ([Acts 9:1–25](#)).
- 2 **Antioch:** On the river Orontes, seventeen miles from the Mediterranean, between the Tarsus and Lebanon ranges of mountains; the seat of the first missionary church ([Acts 11:19–30](#)).

VIII. In Asia Minor

- 1 **Antioch:** A city in Pisidia, east of Ephesus, visited by Paul and Barnabas ([Acts 13:14](#)).
- 2 **Ephesus:** A celebrated city one mile from the Ægean Sea, where Paul preached for a long time, ([Acts 19](#)) and one of the seven churches of Asia ([Rev. 2:1](#)).
- 3 **Derbe:** A town in Lycaonia, visited by Paul and Barnabas ([Acts 16:1](#)).
- 4 **Iconium:** Sixty miles east of Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas preached ([Acts 14:1–5](#)).
- 5 **Lystra:** Not far from Derbe, also visited by Paul and Barnabas; the home of Timothy, ([Acts 16:1](#)) and where the two missionaries were thought to be gods ([Acts 14:8–12](#)).
- 6 **Laodicea:** The capital of Phrygia, and the seat of one of the churches to which a message was sent by John ([Rev. 3:14](#)).
- 7 **Miletus:** The port of Ephesus, where Paul delivered a farewell address ([Acts 20:17–38](#)).
- 8 **Myra:** An important town of Lycia, where Paul changed ships on his journey to Rome ([Acts 27:5](#)).
- 9 **Patara:** A sea-port of Lycia, where Paul took ship for Phoenicia ([Rev. 2:12](#)).
- 10 **Pergamos:** A city of Mysia; the site of one of the seven churches of Asia ([Rev. 2:12](#)).
- 11 **Perga:** A city of Pamphylia, visited by Paul and Barnabas, and where Mark left them ([Acts 13:3](#)).
- 12 **Philadelphia:** A town on the borders of Lydia; the seat of one of the seven churches of Asia ([Rev. 3:7](#)).
- 13 **Smyrna:** On the Ægean Sea, forty miles north of Ephesus; the seat of one of the seven churches in Asia ([Rev. 2:8](#)).
- 14 **Sardis:** An important city of Lydia; the seat of one of the seven churches of Asia ([Rev. 3:1](#)).
- 15 **Troas:** The ancient Troy, on the Ægean Sea, where Paul in a vision received the call to Macedonia ([Acts 16:8–10](#)).
- 16 **Tarsus:** A city of Cilicia; the birthplace of the Apostle Paul ([Acts 9:11](#)).
- 17 **Thyatira:** A city of Lydia, and the seat of one of the seven churches of Asia ([Rev. 2:18](#)).



IX. In Macedonia

- 1 **Amphipolis:** Thirty-three miles from Philippi, and three miles from the Ægean Sea, visited by Paul ([Acts 17:1](#)).
- 2 **Apollonia:** A city thirty miles from Amphipolis, where Paul remained one day ([Acts 17:1](#)).
- 3 **Berea:** A small city on the eastern side of Mount Olympus, where Paul preached, and where the people examined the Scriptures to see if his preaching was true ([Acts 17:10–13](#)).
- 4 **Philippi:** A flourishing city nine miles from the Ægean Sea, celebrated as the first foothold of the gospel in Europe ([Acts 16:12–40](#)).
- 5 **Thessalonica:** At the head of the Thermaic Gulf; an important commercial centre, and the scene of Paul's labor ([Acts 17:1–9](#)).

X. Greece

- 1 **Athens:** One of the most celebrated cities of the world, situated five miles northeast of the Saronic Gulf, a part of the Ægean Sea. It was the seat of Grecian learning, and the place where Paul delivered one of his most famous discourses ([Acts 17:15-34](#)).
- 2 **Corinth:** An important city forty miles west of Athens, where Paul preached, and the seat of one of the leading churches ([Acts 18:1-18](#)).

XI. In the Isles of the Sea

- 1 **Fair Haven:** A harbor in the island of Crete; a place where the ship on which Paul was sailing anchored ([Acts 27:8](#)).
- 2 **Mitylene:** On the island of Lesbos, in the Ægean Sea, where Paul's ship anchored for a night ([Acts 20:14](#)).
- 3 **Paphos:** On the western shore of Cyprus; visited by Paul and Barnabas ([Acts 13:6](#)).
- 4 **Salamis:** On the eastern shore of Cyprus; visited by Paul and Barnabas ([Acts 13:5](#)).
- 5 **Syracuse:** A celebrated city on the eastern shore of Sicily, where Paul stopped on his journey to Rome ([Acts 28:12](#)).



XII. Italy

- 1 **Rhegium:** A city on the southern extremity of Italy, where the ship in which Paul was journeying touched ([Acts 28:13](#)).
- 2 **Puteoli:** The leading port of Italy, where Paul disembarked ([Acts 28:13](#)).
- 3 **Appii Forum:** A village on the Appian Way, forty-three miles from Rome, where Christians met Paul ([Acts 28:15](#)).
- 4 **Three Taverns:** A place eleven miles from Rome, where another band of Christians met Paul ([Acts 28:15](#)).
- 5 **Rome:** The great city of Italy, the capital of the Roman Empire, where Paul was taken for trial before Cæsar, ([Acts 28:16](#)), and where he was afterwards put to death.



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1 Thessalonians

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2 Thessalonians

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1 Timothy

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2 Timothy

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James

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1 Peter

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2 Peter

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