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THE WEDDING GARMENT.

MATT. xxii. 1-14.

“**A** CERTAIN king made a marriage feast for his son.” In this parable we get in figure God’s intention regarding His Son looked at as man. The grandeur of the occasion necessitated everything being in keeping with it. All things being ready, and the time having arrived, the guests had to be brought in. The servants were sent to announce to those *already bidden* to come; but they would not. Then other servants were sent with a description of the preparation (ver. 4). But then the guests made *light of it* and went their ways to things they thought more of, while others even ill-treated the messengers, and slew some of them.

This pictured the Jewish nation, who when the long promised Messiah came, rejected the call to honour Him, and even slew some of those who announced the time had *arrived* and the blessings were *provided*. They stoned Stephen (Acts vii.), and did many other acts of violence and wickedness. The king was wroth; “and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city” (ver. 7). This set forth the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which set aside the whole Jewish system. God then opened the way for the gospel to go into the highways; that is, outside the sphere of Judaism, to the world, who had no former invitation to the wedding. No doubt the gospel began to go

out before the *actual* destruction of Jerusalem, but not before the Jews had killed the servants, and so fully rejected the invitation. In the parable the servants finished their work, and the king *came in* to see if all the guests were suited to the occasion. If the king's son was the greatest consideration to the king, then everything must be measured by what was suitable to him.

The *king* evidently sets forth God acting in regard to Christ; the *king's son* sets forth Christ as man in relation to the kingdom; *the supper* sets forth the provision to meet man's need, and *the wedding garment* that which fits the guests for being in the place of privilege in relation to Christ and the kingdom. Therefore the first object is Christ, and then those who are to be with Him in His kingdom. When the king came in to see the guests He immediately saw one unsuitable person, and demanded of him, "How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" (ver. 12). The man was speechless, and the command was given, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (ver. 13).

In this parable we get truth which began when Jesus was on earth, which was further developed after He had died and risen, and which has been continued ever since; but the judgment at the close is *still future*. Thus it is a complete picture. The work of Jesus on the tree, not only made *the supper*, but also provided *the wedding garment*.

The supper was in figure to meet the need of the guilty conscience; while the garment was something in figure put on to suit the person for the occasion. Jesus bore the sins of His people,

which meets their inside need, like the supper ; while the righteousness of God is upon all those who believe, and is the wedding garment. These two provisions went together at the first preachings by the apostles, and *still go together*. "Grace reigns through righteousness." God does not pass over sins as if He thought little of them, but He can righteously forgive on the ground of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Men may have thoughts of their own *now*, but they will be speechless in that *coming day*, if found without the wedding garment. The man might have said he had accepted the supper, but he could not say he had the wedding garment on, while he had on only his own. So persons often say they have accepted Jesus as their Saviour, but there having been no exercise about their sins and need of righteousness, proves they have not on the wedding garment. *They are strangers to righteousness*, and so have only deceived themselves by supposing that *saying they have accepted Jesus* is sufficient.

The supper and the wedding garment are *still* to be had, and the gospel proclaims both to "whosoever will" ; and persons are availing themselves of these provisions of grace. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation *to every one who believeth* (see Rom. i. 16). The parable and every detail of it are of vital importance to every person. Many were called by the servants, but few were chosen for the king's son ; only those who had on the wedding garment. So now many are called by the gospel preachers, but only those who have believed unto righteousness have on the true wedding garment, and are thus fit for the presence of the King's Son.

A GREAT SHEET.

(Read ACTS x.)

THE angel who appeared to Cornelius of Cæsarea, instructed him to send for Peter, and he would tell him words whereby he and all his house should be saved.

Jesus, while on earth, had given Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xvi. 19); so on the day of Pentecost, he opened the door, and three thousand persons from amongst the Jews passed out of Judaism into the new sphere of blessing which was available and made known through the preaching.

Now Peter seemed to have forgotten that he had another key, to open a door for the Gentiles to enter into the same blessings as the believers from amongst the Jews; so in this chapter the first lesson was given to the *preacher*, to instruct him in the mind of God.

Peter had gone to the housetop, away from the bustle of the house, to speak to God, and God took that opportunity to speak to him. Peter became unconscious of outward things, and was by a vision brought face to face with God's purpose.

A vessel like a sheet was let down by the four corners, and it came to Peter. He fastened his eyes on it; then, he considered; then, he saw. These expressions are full of instruction for us. If we desire to be enlightened, we must be in earnest, and fasten the eyes of our mind on whatever God brings before us; we must consider or meditate, and then we shall see.

Peter saw what to a Christian amongst the Jews was a strange mixture ; but he had to learn there was no mixture, for in the eyes of God all of them had been cleansed. In this vessel were "four-footed beasts, and wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air." What did they represent ? The Jew had been under law, and had been restrained, and was like the tame "four-footed beast" ; while the Gentile had been unrestrained, and was like the "wild beast." The publicans and sinners were like the "creeping things," grovelling in sin and ignorance ; while the moral and intellectual men were like the "fowls of the air," that looked down on their fellows with a feeling of superiority.

Thus every condition of mankind was represented to Peter as being in the vessel. To Peter's eye they were in the state of nature, but to God's eye they were in grace. God had cleansed them ; for the truth was, whether Jew or Gentile, moral or immoral, all needed cleansing. This had been done, and those who were cleansed were drawn up into heaven. All this was instruction for Peter, who, although he was converted and had been used for the conversion of very many Jews, was unprepared to believe that God was going to do just the same for Gentiles. After the vision, Peter had to go to carry out the truth which he had learned, and use the other key to admit believers from amongst the Gentiles to the same circle of privilege as the Jews were already brought into.

Thus Peter started, with words whereby his hearers should be saved. But how could words save any one ? Words mean testimony, and the gospel is God's testimony in words to men. All

who have been saved in this dispensation have been saved by words. The Holy Spirit works through the words, which thus become living to the heart of every one who believes.

Peter bore testimony in words, "that whosoever believeth on him (Jesus) shall receive remission of sins." Now Cornelius had waited for Peter four days (see verse 30), and both he and his household were prepared for the blessing which the words were to convey to them. For while Peter spake the words, the Holy Spirit fell on them. The dew of heavenly grace came on them in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In this day, which is but the continuance of the day which began at Pentecost, the words whereby Cornelius was saved, have the same power, and all who believe God's testimony concerning His Son, receive the forgiveness of sins, and the same gift of the Holy Spirit. In those early days of Christianity, those who received the Holy Spirit immediately began to speak with tongues they had never learned, which was a sign for that particular time, but which was not continued when Christianity was established.

Cornelius had evidently been born again, and *saw* the kingdom of God; but he needed words with the Holy Spirit's power to enable him to *enter* into that kingdom.

The keys were, however, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and so when Peter knew by the tongues that they had the Spirit, he asked the six Christians from amongst the Jews who had travelled with him, if they could forbid these persons the water of baptism? Then by virtue of the position he held, which the figure of a key

implied, he commanded them to be admitted. Thus these believing Gentiles were by Peter admitted into the same outward circle of Christian privilege along with the believing Jews.

The assembly was thus composed of all kinds of persons who had been cleansed by God's testimony concerning His Son. The sheet seen in the vision stretching to the four corners of the earth, had received persons from the east, west, north, and south (see Luke xiii. 29).

The antitype of this vision is not yet complete. For near two thousand years the sheet has been filling, and when it is full it will be drawn up into heaven. Nothing of God's purpose can fail.

THE PRESENT GOSPEL.

LUKE iv. 16-21 ; 1 PETER i. 12.

THERE is a striking contrast between the gospel which Jesus preached when on earth and the gospel which was afterwards preached "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." While Jesus was on earth He was not free to unfold very much to His hearers. He said, "I have a baptism to be baptised with ; and how am I *straitened* till it be accomplished !" (Luke xii. 50).

This indicates, no doubt, that His gracious heart was straitened and pained, and that he felt it much when He charged His disciples, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not" ; and when the Syrophenician woman cried after Him, and He had to say, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It all showed the limited extent of the testimony that He was bearing. We are too apt to look at scripture as if it referred to the same time. In order to understand the scope of any scripture, we must understand the circumstances of the time in which that particular scripture was written. The Old Testament saints had a very limited view of the truth, but as time went on God was pleased to increase the view.

In Luke iv. Jesus preached His first gospel sermon ; and if it had been received, would have set man up on the earth in blessing. When Christ was rejected, the testimony as to earthly things was closed for a time, and heavenly things came

out. We are living in the time when heavenly things have been opened up.

The gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—give beautiful pictures; but these pictures could not be understood unless the explanation were given in the epistles.

Suppose we were to put a picture before a very little boy, he might enjoy the picture, but he would not be likely to understand the object of it; while an older and a more intelligent lad would first read the explanation generally given under the picture, and then study the picture.

If we are intelligent Christians we shall read the epistles, and then we shall read and understand the gospels in the light of the epistles.

The disciples had faith in Jesus, but had little understanding, for we read that when Jesus was on earth, two of them asked Him for the two best places in the kingdom (Mark x. 37); and even after He had died and risen, they asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6). Their thoughts never went beyond earth, until they received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. There is no doubt we can understand now, what to them must have been most difficult, as we read, "They understood not what things they were which he spake unto them" (John x. 6).

The cross has disclosed God's hidden counsel of a new order of blessing in the last Adam, the second Man. The Lord Jesus took that place in resurrection. This is most important. The first man had been tried from the garden of Eden to the cross, and the trial proved there was no good in man. In John's gospel this was borne witness

to during the Lord's life. John spoke from the first chapter of his gospel of Christ's rejection. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John i. 10, 11). Thus the testing was all over with man after the flesh; so the brazen serpent was introduced in chapter iii., and the springing well in chapter iv.

If we look at Numbers we see that the brazen serpent and the springing well were brought in at the end of the wilderness journey (Numbers xxi). But John starts with what the Book of Numbers ends with, because of the fact of Christ's rejection; the other gospels trace the rejection, but John starts with it.

The gospel does not now come from a humbled Christ, but from a glorified Christ, so it is called "the gospel of the glory." It is of immense importance to see the difference between what Jesus preached during his lifetime, and what has been preached since He died, rose, went on high, and the Holy Spirit came down from heaven; so wonderful is this, that we read, "which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter i. 12).

This is the present testimony which comes from Christ in glory to make us fit for the place where He is, but not to give us blessings connected with the earth. The Christian who knows his calling is the only one who knows how rightly to value God's temporal mercies, for he learns to use them without abusing them. All the blessings that come to us through the gospel are spiritual blessings, and not one of them can be taken away. We are to use our creature mercies, which we daily

receive, in such a manner that when we render the account of them, we shall not have to be reproved for our misuse of them.

In 2 Corinthians iv. we get the apostle describing the character of the present gospel, the good news of a *glorified* Christ.

The most wonderful sight in heaven is that a Man has gone there and is crowned with glory and honour. Jesus lived here as a man ; He died and was raised again, and was carried up into heaven as man (see Luke xxiv. 51). Now His place is above angels ; He has been taken to the highest point in answer to the fact that He went down to the lowest point. What took him to the lowest point was God's glory and man's need. Thus there was the necessity for His death, or else He would have had to abide alone.

On the tree Jesus took all the judgment of God that His people's sins deserved, so that judgment is a thing of the past. This is an immense point for a person to see. *Not only are my sins forgiven* (that was spoken of in the Old Testament), but my sins are *gone*.

Suppose a mischievous boy going along the street broke your window with a stone. The policeman's hand is upon him ; he leads him to you. You have it in your power to forgive him, and you do so, and of course the boy is glad ; but every time he goes past your house and sees the broken window, he is reminded of his fault ; his fault is not gone until a new pane is put in the window.

Sins FORGIVEN means that they will never come back to us ; sins GONE means that there is no trace of them left. God says of His people, " Their

sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." What we learn in the death of Jesus is that our sins have gone. They have all been judicially settled according to the balances of the sanctuary. Every trace of the judgment they deserved has been endured and borne by Another.

We get many an allusion in the Old Testament to the fact that there was something beyond the act of Jesus dying. In the type of the passover, the lamb was *slain*, then it was *roasted* with fire. Roasting would signify the searching judgment of God. So not only did Jesus die, but in dying He suffered the judgment of God. Again, a further illustration, in the sin-offering after it was killed, it was taken outside the camp and burnt with fire. In both types death came *first*, and the consuming *afterwards*. In the fulfilment of the type, the consuming came *first* and death *afterwards*. That is, on the tree the Lord endured all the consuming judgment of God against the sins he bore, and having completed all could say, "It is finished," then He passed off the scene by death. We need to learn the moral value of the death of Jesus, not only for ourselves, but in order to be able to help others.

How often we have a nice opportunity to speak of Jesus, but we have nothing to say, nothing to give away. It is a poor man who has nothing to give away; but a believer should not be a poor man in spiritual things, but like a man who is well off, who is always able to give. To give spiritual help is greater than to give temporal help. The more we give away the more opportunities shall we have of giving.

How good it is when one can tell another, "You

go to that person, and you will get spiritual help."

The gospel of the glory of Christ! How did He reach the glory? "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26).

He is in heavenly glory; having died, risen again, and taken His place definitely there. Paul records four times over in Hebrews that He is sitting at rest in the highest place through death and resurrection.

God has brought the gospel down to sinners, and is making those who receive it heavenly men, and at the same time pilgrims and strangers on earth.

What is a pilgrim? A person travelling to another country. What is a stranger? A person who does not belong to the country in which he is.

That is the true christian character, and if we have not that character, we are false witnesses, for we live a lie if we are living as those who belong to this world, when we do not.

The gospel is objective, while the effect of the gospel is subjective. What is the effect? That we are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." If we are real believers, and the Holy Spirit has been working in us, the truth is written on "the fleshy tables of the heart."

Where do we know the truth best? Is it only in our Bibles? Or can we say that through grace we know it in our hearts?

The holy scriptures have been likened to a seal. If we press a seal on a hard board, it makes no impression; and the natural heart of man is like the board. If we press it on a piece of indiarubber,

it will leave an impression, but as quickly as it takes the impression it loses it. But if we have a piece of warm sealing-wax, *that* will take the impression and retain it. We read of some who "having heard the word, keep it."

The wax is like the prepared heart—prepared by God. Every right desire of the heart is of the Holy Spirit.

We want preparedness of heart; otherwise, if we are not like the board, we are like the india-rubber, and lose the impression as quickly as it is made. If we were more in earnest, and looked to the Lord, we should get more the impressions and keep them.

The light of the gospel shines down from where Christ is; it is moral light, for we cannot see it with our natural eyes.

We read, "For God who commanded the light, to shine out of darkness (as in Genesis i.), hath shined in *our* hearts" (2 Cor. iv. 6). Notice that it is in the plural. But, then, we must always get clear about the *singular* before we can truly speak in the *plural*. The singular is one—myself. The plural is more than one. The apostle used the plural because he was clear about the singular. But, alas, many now take up the plural, while they are not at all clear about the singular.

Have you learned the singular? If you have learned the singular—"Who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*" (Gal. ii. 20), you will soon find some one else who is also clear about the singular, and the *two* make the plural. Then you will be able to sing, "Unto him that loved *us*, and washed *us* from our sins in his own blood," etc. (Rev. i. 5).

In Colossians i. we read, "And be not moved

away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard." The gospel always carries hope with it. This hope lies entirely in the scene into which Christ has gone. We must have hope, or we shall not be steady; although we may know our sins gone, that will not by itself make us steady; we must have the hope of the gospel. And what gospel? Not that which was preached in the Lord's life-time, but the gospel that is preached from the glory. We have not now to ask a man to what nation he belongs; the gospel is to every creature: "Which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I, Paul, was made a minister" (Col. i. 23).

The Lord give us a better understanding of the gospel, a better understanding of what the hope is, and we shall be more steady, and grow up in the truth, and then we shall want to know about the church.

DANGER AND PROTECTION.

THE necessity of protection for believers so long as they remain on earth is evident from the many allusions to danger in the holy scriptures. Very serious results follow the absence of it. Let us consider first,

Our dangers. The blessed Lord told of the wolf scattering the sheep (John x. 12).

The Apostle Peter wrote: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter v. 8).

The Apostle Paul, of grievous wolves entering in amongst the saints, and not sparing the flock (Acts xx. 29). We read of false teachers, and of many following their pernicious ways (2 Peter ii. 2). Also of some young women who had turned aside after Satan (1 Tim. v. 15); and in 1 John iii. 7 the exhortation "Let no man deceive you." These will serve to mark out some of the *dangers* from which we need to be *protected*.

In thinking of the dangers, let us be clear that on the Lord's side there are none whatever. He has overcome Satan, and Satan can never overcome Him. His present position at the right hand of God is the guarantee that nothing can fail which He has undertaken to effect. He only waits the Father's time, when He will manifest the blessed and only Potentate (1 Tim. vi. 15).

But on the believer's side there is danger, and therefore he needs protection, so that rather than be overcome with evil, he may overcome evil with good. Next let us consider

Our protection. For protection we are exhorted to cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light (Rom. xiii. 12). That is, to refuse everything in ourselves which is unsuitable to Christianity, and then, to put on the armour of light—the light which God gives His people through the holy writings and the indwelling Holy Spirit. There is no greater protection than light, because it enables those who have it to avoid the pits and traps of the enemy, which otherwise they would fall into.

The psalmist wrote (and Israel when restored will confess): “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. cxix. 105). Surely a word suitable for our meditation to-day!

Men of business need light regarding the things they are engaged in, and so read the newspapers, which supply light as to the state of the various markets, and by attention to such light they avoid losses which those in the dark often make

As believers the Lord’s business should be more important to us than our own daily calling, because the former is connected with eternity, the latter only with time.

The daily calling is indirectly the Lord’s work, because He has enjoined us “with quietness to work and eat our own bread” (see 2 Thess. iii. 12). God’s light helps us to keep each in the proper place. When Paul made tents (see Acts xviii. 3 and xx. 34, 35) it did not interfere with the more direct work of caring for souls.

The “armour of light” has the first place in protecting us, but should be accompanied by “the breastplate of faith and love” (1 Thess. v. 8). If saints walk in the light, they will have to meet with

much opposition to the truth, and will need the protection which faith and love afford. There will be firmness in faith, and gentleness in love. While "the helmet, the hope of salvation," gives confidence that the Lord's second coming will remove us from the scene of opposition, when He will reward every bit of faithfulness He has approved of.

In the present day, when the truth of the heavenly calling of all believers has been well-nigh lost sight of, and worldly religion has become popular, there is great danger of young believers becoming entangled in some of the many forms of corrupted Christianity.

Thus the need of each individual looking more to the Lord and to the holy scriptures which are His voice at the present time; while those who are strong are exhorted to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please themselves (see Rom. xv. 1).

GOD'S SCHOOL.

GOD has only one school, and every believer on earth is a scholar in it. This school has only *one Teacher* and *one lesson-book*. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher, and the holy scriptures the lesson-book. God would have all His people taught the same truth, so that they should all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among them (1 Cor. i. 10).

Whatever help believers may be to each other in the things of God, they possess no given authority. Being learners, they gladly impart to others what they themselves have learned. They are like pupil teachers in a school: they are both learners and subordinate teachers at the same time.

The Holy Spirit only can teach "*all* things," and lead into "*all* truth" (see John xiv. 26; xvi. 13). The Lord's people are responsible to prove all things spoken or written by those who are, according to our figure, only in the place of "pupil teachers," and to receive only that which is according to the holy scriptures (see 1 Thess. v. 21). Pupil teachers are warned not to domineer over the faith of God's people (see 1 Peter v. 3).

It does not follow because all believers have a place in God's school that they all profit by it, for we read of some who were "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. iii. 7).

God has always taken account of His people's

conduct, and has written a good report of many of them who were under the first covenant (*see* Heb. xi.) ; and He does the same concerning those who walk in the light of the second covenant, of which the blood of Christ was the seal. This has superseded the one given by Moses, and is the basis of all the present teaching in the school of God.

When Jesus was on earth, He gave as a proof of persons being taught of God that they came to Him. "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John vi. 45). Later on, when Jesus was glorified, the mark of a spiritual man was that he was subject to apostolic teaching. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. xiv. 37) ; and again, "We are of God : he that knoweth God heareth us ; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John iv. 6).

Thus all the scholars who have been taught of God recognised the persons through whom God was giving His mind, whether through the *prophets* of old, or through *Jesus* when on earth, or the *apostles*, after Jesus had gone to heaven.

In the days of the apostles there were those who, while belonging to the school of God, yet had not learned the truth of the *new* covenant (*see* Gal. iii. 1). This state of ignorance has continued, and many of God's people to-day are uninstructed in the teaching of the New Testament (or covenant), although it was made in the blood of Jesus. He said, "This is my blood of the

new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28).

The holy scriptures—the lesson-book—are of the greatest value to God's people, who are taught by the one Teacher—the Holy Spirit. By them they learn sound doctrine, and refuse what is false; those who do not *learn* in God's school find but little in them, and therefore value them but little, and, as a consequence, when false teachers take them away or ignore them, they quietly submit.

Moses began the scriptures, which were added to by other writers, as God was pleased to give additional light. These writings were given during a period of about 4,000 years, but they refer at least to a period of 7,000 years, for they speak of 1,000 years yet to come (Rev. xx. 5, 6). From the time of Moses all the scholars taught in God's school acknowledged what was written by inspiration as binding upon them. *They never called in question the holy scriptures.*

After the new covenant was made, in the blood of Jesus, the subsequent writings were all based on accomplished redemption, and unfolded the various truths which were consequent upon it. The predictions of the old covenant writers, which remain yet to be fulfilled, are referred to by the new covenant writers as confirmatory of their own writings. Thus all the inspired writings are woven together, making one beautiful whole, and those who are taught of God are taught from them, and learn to love and treasure them up in their hearts, that they may not sin against God.

TRUE LIBERTY.

LIBERTY carries two thoughts with it: there is liberty *from bondage*, and liberty *of access* into privilege; the first must be known before the second.

There are many believers on Jesus who know they will never go into judgment, which is a great thing to know, but they do not know what it is to be out of the *place of judgment*. One Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, has entered into judgment on behalf of His people, and He is now out of judgment, and when we know our association with Him, we find we are out of judgment too. Naturally we are all associated with the first Adam, and the links of moral association have to be broken one by one before we can enjoy true liberty.

In Romans vi. 11 we read: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God."

If a man who has believed on Jesus is still under the power of sin he is in bondage, and cannot enjoy the liberty of the gospel.

What does sin mean? Sin is that principle which entered into the world by one man, which we have all participated in, and when it brings forth its fruits, then we get what God calls sins. Suppose I came into a man's garden at apple time, and said, What trees have you in your orchard? He says, Walk round, you will see they are all alike—apple trees. I go and see one tree, which has on it a bushel of fruit, the next

only half a bushel, the next only a quarter of a bushel, and there is one tree with only one apple on it. I come back and say, The trees are all different. He replies, No they are not, they are all the same. I begin to tell him the quantity of fruit. He says, But you did not ask about the quantity of fruit, you asked what trees they were ; and he repeats, They are all apple trees. Now God says there is no difference in mankind ; they are all alike—all born in sin.

One boy might be brought up by a wicked father, and might learn his wicked ways, and commit many sins ; another boy might be brought up by a godly father, and might learn his godly ways, and thus be kept from committing many sins, but they were both born in sin, and in this respect there is no difference. The definition of sin is "lawlessness." Now what is a lawless person ? A man who does not regard law. If a man comes into this town, and is lawless, he will soon get into prison. A lawless man is one who does not regard the rules established by the Government ; the *Police News* is a record of lawless persons. Sin entered by one man—Adam (Rom. v. 12) ; and all his children have partaken of his nature. Although the sins are gone for the believer in the blood of Jesus, yet sin is still in him. We were born with it in our constitution, therefore it is called sin in the flesh. We all have this principle in us, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Take a baby which has never heard a wrong word or seen a wrong sight, and surround it with everything that is good ; yet before twelve months are over, you will see that that child

wants to have its own way ; it is lawless ; and the good mother has to correct it. See, again, that child when it is four or five years old, and it actually goes and does things which it was told not to do.

Sin then is lawlessness. If Christ had only cleared away the fruit, what about the tree ? But He was "made sin" and went under death, which was the penalty of sin. Sin when spoken of in the abstract in the New Testament means the *nature* ; while sins mean the *fruits*—the productions of the nature. Christ died *for* sins and Christ died *to* sin. The result of sin was death ; Christ annulled death and took the sting out of it. The sting of death is sin, and that is what makes mankind afraid to die. Christ has been through death, and do you think that the believer should be afraid of death ? When a bee has once stung a person it cannot sting a second time, because it has lost its sting ; although the bee looks just the same, it is perfectly harmless. That is the difference between death coming to a sinner and to a saint. To the sinner it is the bee *with* the sting ; to the saint *without* the sting. If you know what it is for Christ to have died to sin once, you will see where deliverance from sin comes to the believer.

Believers ought always to have something very good to give away. A poor man has only just enough for himself ; a rich man has more than enough, and can give away. As believers we ought so to enjoy the truth that we have always something to give to others—better than money. We should minister truth we have enjoyed ourselves to persons, which they will be able to keep themselves, and also hand on to others.

Romans vi. 6. The word "knowing" supposes an intelligent person; scripture never supposes that the world knows anything about divine things; "the world by wisdom knew not God"; it crucified the Lord of glory. The world is in the dark; believers are always supposed to be in the light. "Knowing that our old man," etc. What does "our old man" mean? "Old" has two meanings—one is *ancient*, the other is *worn out*. I might have a sovereign made in the reign of king George the First; that would be ancient, but not necessarily worn out; it might be just as good to-day as the day it was issued. Jesus said, you cannot put new cloth on an old garment; that is something *worn out*. The old man is the Adam race, that to which we all belong by our first birth. The last dealing of God in connection with the Adam race was to send His Son to see if man could be recovered; but the life of Jesus on earth proved that the Adam race could not be recovered, it was utterly worn out, so God set it aside by death, and brought in a new race, of which Christ is the Head. In the Old Testament you will remember that after the children of Israel went through the Red Sea (which was a figure of Christ's death and resurrection, in the reality of which He was alone), they went three days' journey in the wilderness and found no water, and when they came to Marah the water was bitter. They were very thirsty, which signified they had a great inside craving, but they could not drink that water, and cried out about it. Moses was instructed to put the tree into the water, and it was made sweet, and they drank it. If we desire to be associated with Christ *where*

He is, then we have to drink the truth of death ourselves, and the water was a figure of death. What enables us to drink the bitter water of death? The bitterness of the water was taken out by the tree being cast into it, which made it sweet. When we see Christ dying to sin and living to God, we say, We accept death, because He died, and then we find ourselves on resurrection ground; it is to be known in the inward parts; that is why the figure is "drinking." There are two thoughts in being free from sin, *viz.* free from its *power*, and free from its *presence*. In dying *with* Christ to sin we become free from its *power*; but when we leave the world we shall be free from its *presence* as well as its *power*. So long as we are in this world, we have the presence of sin in us continually, but it need not have any power over us, if we reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God." If we think of Christ as Man living to God, we should like to experience something about living to God. Should we be content with getting the blessing of deliverance when we die, if we may enjoy it while we live? Christ has really died to sin, and now lives to God. We participate in His death, in order that we might live unto God.

Now look at Romans vii. 4. There is another thought altogether: "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." The law is mentioned many times in this connection in this chapter. What was the law? It was God's rule of life for man while in the flesh, but it gave him no power. Suppose a master builder has men working for him on a building, he goes round to see the work, he has a plumb-line in his hand and

holds it against the wall. Does that make the wall straight or crooked? Neither, but it shows which it is. The law was the plumb-line, and always proved man crooked, there was never a natural man who was not crooked. Man's will is contrary to God's will; the law entered that the offence might abound; that is, the law proved this fact. Sin was obnoxious to God, though man thought but little of it. The law gave God's mind for men, but that only brought out that man had a will opposed to God, and in the case of a pious man, the law brought sin home to his conscience. The law never gave man power to do the will of God, only proved that, try as he would, he could not do it. The scripture says of believers, ye have died; then if we have died, we are dead to law. This is how we are free from law; but, if free from the law, shall we do what we like? No, we are "married to another"; the thought of marriage here is that the woman has passed out of subjection to her parents, into subjection to her husband, who controls and supports her. Married to Christ means that believers have passed from Adam associations both of sin and law, and are now subject to Christ, who controls, as well as supports them in their journey to the rest of God.

If we are under law we are not under Christ; we cannot serve two masters. We are made free from law, in order that we may be subject to Christ. We shall not talk about being subject when in heaven. Subjection will not be necessary there, because there will be no unholy will in any of us. Everything there is supremely happy, and every saint there delights only in the will of

God. Do we know what it is to have become thus identified with Christ in His death so as to be free from law? If so, we are then subject to Christ, and guided *by* Him.

Romans viii. 5: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." Mark the contrast in this chapter is between flesh and Spirit. Those who are in the flesh belong to the order of the first man, and they mind the things of the flesh; while they that are after the Spirit belong to the order of the second Man, and they mind the things of the Spirit. To be carnally minded is death; the end of man's will is only death. To be spiritually minded is life and peace; saints while still on earth should live in the atmosphere of life and peace. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Christians often try to improve the flesh, but even if it were improved it is flesh still. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Maybe we say the subject is very difficult. So it is, because it is truth we have to accept about ourselves, while we have so much in ourselves that contradicts it. Let us learn what it is to be in the Spirit. Why does it say in the Spirit? Till the Lord Jesus comes we can only enter into these things in the power of the Spirit. It is as we enjoy these things that we sigh for the Lord's coming; if a believer is not looking for the Lord's coming, it is because he is not in the enjoyment of the present grace, for if he were, he would rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is not that we should be restless or complaining, for we

should not wish Christ to move till the will of God is accomplished, and we should be delighted that He is sitting at God's right hand, for if He had come fifty years ago we should not have been converted. However, we long for Him to come for all that, and till then we are in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. He is sitting until the time appointed by the Father; then He will come, and will not tarry. So in these chapters in the Romans we learn how we are dead to sin; dead to law; not in flesh, but in Spirit; these three subjects are subjective truths, which should be realised in every believer. It is a part of the gospel. We do not get beyond the gospel in the teaching of Romans. We must first know that Jesus died for our sins, so that we shall never come into judgment for them; then we have to learn the truth of these three chapters as the Spirit of God has placed them. Dead to sin, and alive to God; dead to law, and married to Christ; not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. We need not be ashamed of being ignorant, but we ought to be of remaining so. May we know what it is to be made free by the truth, and thus be prepared to enter into all that which Christ has given us access into. We shall find what a range of light and truth lies before us. Christ has entered into the presence of God for us, as our Forerunner, and we are privileged to follow Him in faith to where He has gone, and even now to have part with Him. What do we know of having part with Him? Do we say, like Peter, "Thou shalt never wash my feet"? Remember Jesus' answer to him was, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." So, unless we are morally free

from our Adam associations, we cannot, as a present thing, enter into the new associations of the last Adam. Christian growth lies not merely in knowing certain truths, but in heart identification with Christ where He now is. We then seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Thus liberty *from* our associations with the first Adam opens the way for the Holy Spirit to draw us on into the consciousness *of* all the blessed associations with the last Adam, who is declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.

“TILL I COME.”

TOWARDS the close of the Lord's ministry on earth, He spoke much about going away and coming again.

He likened Himself to a nobleman going into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return; but before He went, He called His ten servants and delivered to them ten pounds, and said unto them, “Occupy till I come” (Luke xix. 13). The particular servants mentioned in the parable have passed away. Thus it is evident that in the Lord's mind, this responsibility was to continue beyond the particular ten, for the line of servants will be in service when He actually returns.

The pounds He left with His servants were for them to trade with. The light of the gospel, which He placed in the hands of His servants, was to be carried to every creature, and which, when received, increased, as we read, “And the word of God increased” (Acts vi. 7). This went on with much energy in the apostles' days; but very feebly in the dark ages; now again with some revival and sense of responsibility. But, alas! a great mixture of human ideas have been introduced, which hinder souls coming into the liberty of the truth.

The original gospel, which the Lord commissioned His servants to trade with, always meets the need of anxious souls, and brings a good return for the heart of Christ, which will be manifested when He comes again. To be faithful with

His goods during His absence, and not mix any opinions with them, is the obligation of every one who has an ear to hear His word, "Occupy till I come." This evidently holds good, for the Lord has not yet returned, so the faithful servant occupies during his Master's absence, and does not give up any of his Master's goods to the enemy. "Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3 is his authority for so doing.

The Lord also spoke, after He rose from the dead, of His coming again. In reply to Peter's question in reference to John, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" He gave the mysterious answer, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John xxi. 22). This was wrongly interpreted by those who heard it, for they thought that the Lord meant that John would not die. It would seem that the Lord referred to the testimony which He committed to John, and not to John's lifetime.

John bore testimony of things which will be continued when the Lord comes again, things which do not pass away but abide. Peter had to follow the Lord, and continue the care of the lambs and sheep after the Lord had ascended. Peter's two epistles take up God's ways of government in connection with what is *passing*; those ways do not refer to what is *abiding*. Peter had to put off his tabernacle. John makes no reference to his death; and in the Acts there is no mention of his preaching the gospel. He accompanied Peter, but we do not get any of his *words*. The gospel as addressed to men is dispensational, and will cease in its present form when the Lord comes.

John carried on a testimony as to that which has an abiding character, that which will be more fully entered into when the Lord—the subject of all testimony—comes. Now the Holy Spirit is maintaining John's testimony by the Lord's servants.

The testimony which will pass away when the Lord comes will be no more needed. All guidance for the church on earth, or for the individual service of the saints of the heavenly calling, will then close; but there is truth which will be continued, as for instance, “part with me” (John xiii. 8); “my Father's house” (John xiv. 2); “another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (chap. xiv. 16). Thus there is that which remains, and those who are faithful should esteem it a matter of great importance to be in the enjoyment of that which is abiding. John's testimony to these abiding truths tarries till Christ comes, but they are placed in contrast to that which passes away when He comes.

After the Lord had ascended, decline set in amongst the assemblies in Asia, and He had to address them in very serious terms.

In Thyatira a remnant is acknowledged in the words, “but unto you I say, the rest in Thyatira” (Rev. ii. 24, N.T.). This separation from the mass was justified by the Lord, and He exhorted them, “Hold fast till I come.” He did not give them any fresh truth to maintain, but said, “I will put upon you none other burden”; thus He encouraged this remnant to maintain their place of separation, although the mass had fallen into association with evil, which He would judge.

The Lord has given us no fresh instruction, so

what He gave holds good for to-day. His words are as sure a guide as when the Holy Spirit first gave them to *the rest* in Thyatira.

When the church had failed to maintain the truth committed to it by the Lord, through the apostles, then a remnant is acknowledged, and also encouraged to maintain their separation. However, there is the danger of not continuing to the end, but in some way yielding to the power of evil. Therefore the Lord added, "He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end."

Thus from three positions, on earth, in resurrection, and from the glory, the Lord urges, "Till I come." May the truth of this *intention*, and not the *words only*, be greatly before the minds of the Lord's people, so that they may be able to say, as led by the Spirit, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

HOW AND WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME.

THE coming of the Holy Spirit from heaven, as a pouring out upon the people of God, was promised long before it took place.

About one thousand years before Christ was born, Solomon, the son of David, wrote, under the figure of Wisdom, "I will pour out my spirit unto you" (Prov. i. 23); and later it was said, "Until the spirit be poured upon us" (Isa. xxxii. 15); again, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (Joel ii. 28). Before John the Baptist came there appears to have been a period of prophetic silence, since Malachi, of about four hundred years, and when the voice of the prophet was again heard in Israel he testified of Jesus, saying, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Matt. iii. 11).

During the three and a half years of the public ministry of Jesus, He taught nothing to His disciples about the Holy Spirit* except as to the then future time of His absence, as in Matthew x. 20 and Luke xi. 13; but when He was about to leave the world, He took His disciples apart, and communicated to them very much about the Spirit. How that Divine Person would come from heaven and take up all the interests of Jesus on earth during His absence, and maintain them till His return.

The importance of the coming of the Holy Spirit was impressed on the disciples by the way Jesus

* Spirit and Ghost have exactly the same meaning.

spoke to them about it in the following passages : "I will pray the Father, and he shall *give* you another Comforter" ; "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will *send* in my name" (John xiv. 16, 26) ; "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father" (John xv. 26) ; "If I depart, I will *send* him unto you" ; "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is *come*" (John xvi. 7, 13).

Thus the Holy Spirit was the *gift of*, and *sent by*, the Father. He was sent also by Christ, and lastly He came Himself as a Divine Person. These passages show the importance Jesus attached to the period during which the Spirit would be on earth. When did He actually come as a Person ? On the day of Pentecost, which signified fifty days. Those fifty days followed the resurrection of Jesus. Fifty days made seven weeks and one day. According to the type in Leviticus a sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest was to be waved before the Lord by the priest on the morrow after the sabbath, which was the first day of the week. The sheaf was a type of Jesus risen from the dead on that day, and who thus became the firstfruits of the great harvest of resurrection.

From the time that the priest waved the sheaf the Israelite was to count "seven sabbaths complete : even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath, shall ye number fifty days" (see Lev. xxiii. 9-17). Seven sabbaths made forty-nine days, and the counting was to be reckoned to the morrow after the seventh sabbath, which made the fifty days, and that brought them to the first day of the week.

Thus the fulfilment of the day of Pentecost fell on the same day of the week as the resurrection of Jesus had already done. This showed that both the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit were connected with the forming of the new system of Christianity. The first day of the week was not regarded in Judaism as a religious day, save as a foreshadowing of Christianity, while the sabbath day is not regarded in true Christianity.

"When the day of Pentecost was fully come . . . suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting " (Acts ii. 1, 2).

It would seem that the disciples were in the upper room, where they had eaten the passover with Jesus, but the number had become by that time about one hundred and twenty (Acts i. 15).

The day according to Jewish time began at six o'clock in the morning.

The Holy Spirit came with unmistakable evidence of His arrival, and so immediate was the effect that the disciples at once began to speak in languages which they had never learned, which was a sign to those in Jerusalem that God was speaking, as He had said more than seven hundred years before by His prophet, "For with another tongue will he speak to this people " (Isa. xxviii. 11). A multitude were soon gathered together to hear these preachers, who were relating by this new power, which had just come from heaven, in every language, the wonderful works of God. Some of the Jews began to mock, and said the preachers were full of new wine ; but Peter

declared that they were not intoxicated, seeing it was but the third hour of the day, which was nine o'clock in the morning. He further told them that what had happened was in keeping with Joel's prophecy.

Mark that, although the Holy Spirit came to Jerusalem, He did not go to the temple, nor to the priests. Jesus had rejected the temple, and the priests had rejected Jesus. Jesus had chosen the disciples, and the disciples had received Him, therefore the Holy Spirit came to them, and they were at home under His sublime influence, as they had been before under the influence of Jesus. The Spirit knew that the interests of Jesus were centred in these disciples, and therefore He took charge of them for Jesus, and continues to do the same to-day, and to hold everything faithfully till Jesus comes and takes up His own interests Himself once more.

Thus Christ's assembly was formed by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the fiftieth day after Christ's resurrection, on the first day of the week, just after six o'clock in the morning. This serves to show how all scripture is linked together; or although Moses wrote Leviticus fifteen hundred years before the event, yet every detail was fulfilled, and happy it is for those who can trace them out. "Whoso is wise will observe these things" (Ps. cvii. 43).'

The assembly having been formed began to bear a living testimony through its members, and especially through the Apostle Peter; the result was, there were added to that assembly about three thousand persons on the first day.

These persons had all belonged to the Jewish

system of religion, but they outwardly left that by water baptism, and were received by those who had already been formed into the assembly.

Later on in the history of this wonderful event, when the Samaritans had received the gospel through Philip preaching unto them (Acts viii. 5), we find Peter and John went down from Jerusalem to Samaria, and they prayed that these Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit.

The scripture had related the history of the rebellion of the ten tribes from the rule of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon (see 1 Kings xii. 16). And this separation had been kept up, as we read, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John iv. 9).

This may have been the reason why the Holy Spirit did not come directly on the believing Samaritans, but waited for Peter and John to arrive on the scene. It is beautiful to see these two men praying God to give this *great gift* to those whom naturally they despised, but whom by grace they now loved. They then laid their hands on them, and the Holy Spirit followed. The Holy Spirit had descended at first on the believers at Jerusalem, and in the wisdom of God the unity of the testimony was maintained by the Spirit being given through two men from Jerusalem, thus linking the work at Samaria with what had preceded it at Jerusalem. The Spirit was given as a witness to the work of God in the Samaritans, not *because* of hands being laid on them—but merely at that time, to keep all in unity.

Still later, when Peter was preaching to the Gentiles for the first time, and telling them that "to him [Jesus] give all the prophets witness,

that through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts x. 43, 44). What was remarkable in this event was that the Holy Spirit went outside the previous order, and sealed these Gentiles before they had been baptised with water. No hands were laid on them in order that they should receive the Holy Spirit. When it became manifest that they had received Him, then Peter, after he had consulted with the six brethren, commanded them to be baptised (see *vv.* 47, 48). Peter was the only person who could open the door to the Gentiles, because Jesus had given him the keys of the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. xvi. 19). Thus these believers from amongst the Gentiles obtained entrance to the company which at that time formed Christ's assembly on earth.

Three expressions were used in regard to the Holy Spirit in this account of the work at Cæsarea.

First, "The Holy Spirit *fell* on all them which heard the word."

Secondly, "was *poured* out the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Thirdly, "who have *received* the Holy Ghost."

The *falling*, was like the dew or rain, and might answer to the *sealing*.

The *poured* out, was like the ointment which was poured on the head of Jesus, and might answer to the *anointing*.

The *receiving*, was what the persons did—they received the gift, and this might answer to the *earnest*.

When Paul had been converted by the Lord Himself and he had been blind for three days, Ananias was sent to him, who put his hands on him that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts ix. 17).

The next historical allusion was when Paul arrived at Ephesus (Acts xix.), where he found twelve disciples who were Jews, who had received John's baptism, perhaps by Apollos; but when Paul told them that John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, they readily received his testimony, and by christian baptism moved off the ground on which John's baptism had placed them, on to new ground opened up by the resurrection of Jesus, where they became subject to Him as Lord. After this baptism Paul laid his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came on them.

Thus there were two occasions on which apostolic *hands* were laid on persons for the Holy Spirit to come on them, but there is *no record* of it being *continued*. The wisdom of God at the beginning linked the work all together and manifested it as one work, forming one assembly, one body.

At the commencement of Christianity we find the Holy Spirit very active in guiding the servants of the Lord, with regard to both persons and places where the testimony of Christ was to be established. The following passages make this clear:—

“Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” “The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip” (Acts viii. 29, 39).

“The Spirit said unto Peter, Behold, three

men seek thee. . . . Go with them, doubting nothing : for I have sent them " (Acts x. 19, 20).

" And were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, . . . they assayed to go into Bithynia : but the Spirit suffered them not " (Acts xvi. 6, 7).

These special instances were connected with the spread of the gospel—a matter of great importance in the mind of the Spirit of God.

First, the man of Ethiopia, who was a proselyte to the Jewish religion—for he had been to Jerusalem to worship—was returning to his own country, but was seeking by reading the Jewish scriptures to find something for his heart to rest on. The temple worship had not helped him, for Jehovah Jesus had given it up to destruction, and so he was reading aloud from Isaiah liii. and wondering who it referred to. On receiving Philip's testimony he was baptised, and by that being done for him, he was cut off from the Jewish system of religion and received by Philip into the Christian system. There was no mention of this man receiving the Holy Spirit, but it may be implied by the writer saying, " He went on his way rejoicing " (Acts viii. 39). Thus the gospel was carried into Ethiopia by one of her own sons. The treasurer of Queen Candace's riches became for the time the treasurer of the gospel. He had been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, and true riches were committed to his trust (see Luke xvi. 11).

Secondly, Peter had the privilege of first giving the gospel to the uncircumcised Gentiles and opening the kingdom of heaven to them ; and the Spirit was active in instructing Peter to go

with the three men, as He had been in giving Cornelius a vision, and instruction to send for Peter. All this was of great moment in the history of the assembly. The wisdom of God in using Peter to do this is apparent in chapter xi. 2, 3, 18. From that time the assembly contained believers from both the Jews and Gentiles by the act of Peter.

Thirdly, the time came when the gospel had to be planted in Europe, and although Paul had the Spirit indwelling him, yet he had not perceived the Lord's mind about that part where, as a wise master builder, he was to lay the foundation of Christianity (1 Cor. iii. 10). Hitherto most of the gospel testimony had been in Asia, but for a little while the provinces of Asia and Bithynia were closed to Paul, and he had to go over the sea into Europe, where he found great opposition, for the enemy had full possession; but the testimony of Christianity was planted, and has remained there to this day, while what had been planted in Asia was in subsequent years all swept away by Mahomedanism.

These three cases stand thus:—

Christianity sent into Ethiopia by one of her own sons.

The door opened to the Gentiles into Christianity by Peter.

Christianity established in Europe by Paul.

The importance of these instances is self-evident. Doubtless the Spirit in those early days guided in a very special manner the notable servants of the Lord, because the foundations of Christianity were being laid, but being the same Spirit, He would guide the Lord's servants

to-day if they were as willing and subject as those servants already mentioned were.

TEACHING CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Having traced through the Acts of the Apostles the historical account of the coming and operations of the Holy Spirit, we must now turn to the Apostolic Epistles to see the teaching which is connected with the presence of this Divine Person.

Each apostolic writer mentioned the Spirit in connection with the particular line of truth which was given him to communicate.

In the inspired writings we have a compilation of instruction which is able to make the man of God wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (see 2 Tim. iii. 15), and thus escape the errors which are so rampant to-day.

The Apostle Paul was made minister of the assembly, according to the dispensation which was given to him to complete the word of God (see Col. i. 25, N.T.), so he speaks more than any other writer of the operations of the Holy Spirit. He mentions three operations in one passage. "Now he who . . . hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. i. 21, 22).

Thus as the *anointing*, the *sealing*, and the *earnest*, the Holy Spirit maintains the interests of Christ in all believers, during Christ's absence from the earth, until He returns and resumes them Himself.

In the scripture quoted these three operations are not mentioned in the order in which they are to be realised, but the writer dwelling on the

line of truth connected with the anointing, added the others by saying, "Who hath *also* sealed us, and given the earnest." The order in which they must be learned is, sealing, anointing, and earnest.

SEALING. The Spirit is given to every believer on his receiving the forgiveness of sins (see Acts x. 43, 44), and He becomes the seal of this great fact. It takes place immediately on the person believing with the heart that Jesus was delivered for his offences, and was raised again for his justification.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians and instructed them in this matter in the words, "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13).

The divinely appointed shelter from the coming judgment is the blood of Jesus, while His resurrection is the proof of the efficacy of His death. The Spirit seals those who have believed in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is the token of God's approval of all such persons, and they are by it permanently distinguished from the world, because they belong to the kingdom of God. Jesus is Lord in God's kingdom, and all who belong to it are under the authority, as well as the security of it. After the believer has peace, his portion is to have the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit which is given to him (see Rom. v. 5).

The work of Jesus was so *complete*, and its efficacy so *abiding*, that the Spirit sealed all believers immediately, as we read, "By one offering he hath perfected for ever the sanctified. Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us"

(Heb. x. 14, N.T.). The Holy Spirit could not be here for Christ without sealing every one who has believed the gospel; and this sealing is permanent until the day of redemption, when Christ will come to take His own into the Father's house, where the seal is not required.

Thus the sealing is due to Jesus and the value of His blood, and none could be left unsealed without making little of both.

Some believers might ask, How am I to know that I am sealed? We would reply, Just in the same way that you know your sins are forgiven, which is by believing God's testimony concerning Christ risen. In the same way we have a testimony that we are sealed; and if we have believed the testimony of forgiveness, we should believe the testimony of sealing, because *both* are of God, and both revealed to faith. Both depend on the work of Jesus, for that work has effaced the sins of all believers from *before* God, and it has also secured all believers *for* God, and the Spirit is the seal of this so long as believers are on earth.

The interests of the Divine Persons, known as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are so bound together that no part could be lacking without the whole failing.

It is well to notice that Christianity is a spiritual system, and, consequently, there is very little that could be called material in it. There are two memorials which are kept up by Christians which are material, *viz.* the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's supper. The former is done *for* the person once, while the latter is done *by* the person till he leaves this

world. While both these acts are material, the meaning is entirely spiritual, and only in this way is the meaning conveyed to the heart and profit really gained.

The teaching about the Holy Spirit is wholly beyond the material mind of man, and can only be spiritually discerned.

Let it be understood that scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit is on earth, but, being invisible, faith is needed to discern His presence and His guidance. If we are but willing to renounce our own wills in the things of God, we shall realise the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit, who always leads those who are willing into subjection to the holy scriptures.

Sealing is thus in connection with Jesus as Lord, and the kingdom as the sphere where this is recognised. Thus "joy in the Holy Spirit" is a feature of the kingdom of God (see Rom. xiv. 17); "filled with the Spirit" is placed in contrast to "filled with wine." Whenever the early preachers were giving special testimony, it was said of them repeatedly, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. This was for special occasions, and only while the occasion lasted, but was repeated when needed. This distinction marks it off from the sealing, which never needs repeating.

It is well to note that every error in doctrine or practice which has prevailed amongst God's people since the departure of the apostle was foreseen by the Spirit, who, by the apostles, warned the saints against the wiles of Satan.

THE ANOINTING. The Holy Spirit as the anointing connects believers with Jesus, as Christ ;

so that in God's things they live in the life of Christ and not in the life of Adam. The title "Christ" signifies, the Anointed; so the Spirit is the anointing in order to connect all believers with Christ.

This anointing abides in believers for ever, and by it they are suitable, while on earth, to be the companions of Christ.

There are three passages where this word occurs (2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20, 27), but there are others where we judge it is referred to, such as Ephesians ii. 18, Hebrews x. 15.

Romans viii. 2: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death," and this leads on to, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of him" (v. 9, N.T.), which answers to the Spirit as the anointing. In apprehending the anointing we understand that we have the Spirit of Christ, and thus are suitable for His company. We belong to the One who has taken the place of Head. In this new association we apprehend that old things have passed away, so then we refuse every suggestion for improving the flesh, as that would only be the reformation of the first Adam, while the anointing connects us with Christ as the last Adam. Alas! many men who can preach the way for sinners to be saved from the coming wrath, spoil their testimony by mixing up with it the improvement of the first man. They fail to recognise the power of the gospel which connects all believers in living association with Christ as the last Adam.

This living association can only be apprehended by separation from the world, but if believers

refuse to take the ground of association with Christ, they can have no power for godly walk through the world. Some believers may walk blamelessly before men, but in their experience are nothing beyond Old Testament saints. They make no progress because they are taken up with the first man and his improvement. They establish "good endeavours" and "leagues" of various kinds, which are but efforts to keep down evil and improve the flesh. This is not true Christianity, for scripture says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8). When this truth is known, then the counterfeit is exposed. The way of practical holiness is not found by improving the flesh, but by learning that all believers who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit are also connected with Christ as the last Adam by the anointing.

THE EARNEST. The Spirit as the earnest of sonship is connected with the Son of God. He is called the Spirit of God's Son, and as such is sent forth into believers' hearts, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.

The fulness of sonship can only be realised when Jesus at His second coming brings in the new condition of body which is necessary for the enjoyment of this position, but we have the Spirit as the earnest for a *present portion*. In the meantime the gifts mentioned in Ephesians iv. were given to promote the growth of believers "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man."

We have already noticed that the Spirit as the seal is limited to our sojourn on earth (Eph. iv. 30), and the same is said of the earnest—it is

until the day of redemption. The reasons are very simple ; we shall not need the seal in heaven to distinguish us from the world, for the world will not be there ; and when we have the fulness of sonship we shall not need the earnest of it.

The Spirit of sonship is but little known to-day except in the words which we have in our Bibles, and often repeated without knowing much what the words imply. The very name Father, which implies sonship, although so often used, is but little apprehended.

Sonship began, in the way we are looking at it, on the morning of Jesus' resurrection, when He said, "My Father and your Father." This coupling together Himself with those He called His brethren was something quite new. He had been *one with them* in earthly associations for about three years and a half, but in resurrection He would have them know that they were *one with Him* in heavenly associations. The Son had opened those inner circles of intimacy which He and the Father enjoyed together, and the Spirit became the earnest of them.

THE SCOPE OF THE SPIRIT'S ACTIVITIES. From the outset of God's dealings with this world the activities of the Spirit were constantly alluded to in the Old Testament writings, as we read, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. i. 2) ; "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. vi. 3).

Jesus, when on earth, taught that no one could see the kingdom of God unless he were "born of the Spirit," which showed the necessity of a new beginning being wrought in man before he could receive any blessing from God, and this

had been taking place with regard to all believers from the time sin entered into the world.

Thus, new birth, which signified a new beginning, did not in itself go beyond earthly blessing, and the prophets had borne witness to this. When God's special dealings began with the seed of Abraham—called the children of Israel—then we find the Spirit's activities connected with them, as Stephen charged the Jews in the words, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts vii. 51). After this testimony had been borne to the Jews, we find the activities of the Spirit were all connected with Christianity, and they have been ever since, and will be until the church is removed to heaven, when again Israel will be the scene of the Spirit's work (see Isa. xxxii. 15).

Wherever and whenever God has purposes, there the Spirit is active to give effect to them, and also to frustrate every effort to hinder them, as we read, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa. lix. 19).

Thus the Spirit acts outside in the sphere of the world, as well as in the narrower sphere of the assembly and individual believers.

What chiefly concerns believers to-day is the part the Holy Spirit is taking in true Christianity. When He came down from heaven at Pentecost He at once baptised believers into one body. We read: "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 13). This operation was to draw all believers together, and constitute them one body. They were

formed into one body by the baptism of the Spirit, and were made suitable to each other by drinking into one Spirit. When Christianity began to decline, the presence and work of the Spirit was proportionately lost sight of, and materialism gradually took its place, and now it is so far recognised that many do not look upon it as being strange.

From the days of Israel's departure out of Egypt as a typically redeemed people God had a dwelling-place among them, for Israel sang on the victorious side of the Red Sea in their song—"I will prepare him a habitation" (Exod. xv. 2). The tabernacle was built by Moses, and the temple in Solomon's day took its place; then when Jesus was on earth He was the temple of Jehovah, as He said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up . . . But he spake of the temple of his body" (John ii. 19, 21).

At the present time, Jesus having gone to heaven, the Holy Spirit has formed believers into a habitation, as we read: "Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22). This shows the continuity of God's ways, and we further know that when the present dispensation closes, by the removal of the heavenly saints, again a temple will be in Jerusalem which will be Jehovah's dwelling-place, proved by the presence of the visible glory (see Ezek. xliii. 1-5).

So we see that the tabernacle, the temple, the Person of Jesus, and the assembly have been successively the habitation for God on earth.

Another activity of the Spirit is found in the

word of God being the sword of the Spirit, the only weapon which is used by the saints in conflict with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. As we read: "Take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. vi. 17). The assembly is looked at as standing for the rights of Christ against the combined powers of spiritual evil. Thus clad with the whole armour of God, in the strength of the Lord, the assembly stands in the inheritance and holds the ground during the absence of Christ, while the Spirit helps the saints by making the word of God active as a sword in their hands.

In the prophetic book of Revelation we see the assembly looked at in another way. Seven different local meetings were brought forward to show how believers on the ground of responsibility had failed. In chapters ii. and iii. we read: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," and this was repeated seven times over. The individual was addressed because the company had failed, and the voice of the Spirit was raised in holy indignation against the serious decline because the sword had not been used. The Lord Himself, in various characters, made the charges, while the Holy Spirit wrote them and called the attention of every opened ear. This showed the assembly had departed during the Apostle John's days from the original truth, and was no more united against evil. The Spirit pressed this failure on the hearts of all who had an ear to hear. The body of the Book of Revelation is an unfolding of God's future dealings with men after the church has ceased to be His witness on earth. But in

the wisdom of God the saints are taught beforehand what is coming on the earth, so that they may not be carried away by the deceptions of false teaching and false expectations. At the close of the book the church, as the bride, again comes into view, and the Spirit is in company with the bride. All the failure of the assembly has not altered the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit, according to the early type in Genesis xxiv. Eliezer conducted Rebekah the whole journey till they met Isaac ; so we read, " The Spirit and the bride say, Come " (Rev. xxii. 17). The bride is a figure of the assembly as a whole, viewed as being in the grace of Christ her Head, with no question of her failure. The Spirit thus takes part in all the interests of Christ in whatever direction those interests may lie.

So that from the beginning the Spirit has always been active in carrying out God's purposes, and when necessary frustrating the work of the enemy, which has always been antagonistic to the testimony which was suitable to the particular time in which it was borne.

Real power for testimony has always been of the Spirit, and in the days of Israel's history it was a power nothing could resist (see, for example, the history of Samson).

Jesus instructed His disciples to rely alone on the power of the Spirit when they had to speak before hostile councils (see Mark xiii. 11), which instruction will guide the faithful Jews in the last days of testimony, after the assembly has been removed. The moral instruction holds good for all times.

GOD'S TESTIMONIES TO MANKIND.

ALL persons know something of natural faith concerning the affairs of this life, but natural faith cannot profit by a testimony about God. The Lord spake in the parable of the sower of some who received the seed, but "because they had no root withered away" (Matt. xiii. 6); and later on we read: "Simon himself believed," but afterwards the Apostle Peter said to him, "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts viii. 21). There was no work of God in these cases. Thus God must either give man up altogether or He must impart living faith to him. This faith is the gift of God (see Eph. ii. 8) and produces works (see James ii. 26). It comes by hearing (see Romans x. 17), and is a divine operation in the soul. The new birth is a new beginning formed in a man, and then he becomes responsive to God's testimony in whatever way that testimony may be borne. The testimony which God gives is always regarding Himself, but He has varied the manifestations of it according to different periods.

In Hebrews xi. we have a list of persons from the outset of man's history, to each of whom some fresh testimony was given, and they proved their faith by responding to it. They were pioneers in the path of faith, because each one was called to follow some fresh light which had never been given to any one before. The special truth God gave to each of them, tested them as to whether they had faith to respond to it. Each of the persons as they came on the scene had the

light of what had gone before, but it was the fresh testimony which brought out their faith.

With Abraham's seed (the children of Israel) a *special* testimony began, the chief privilege of which was that they had committed to them the oracles of God (see Romans iii. 2), which advantage was continued to them till they rejected their long-promised Messiah. When the Holy Spirit came down as a divine Person from heaven at Pentecost He formed the church, which became the depository of the testimony of God, and then the gospel of Christ was sent out into all the world. There were no restrictions placed on the gospel—it was to be preached to every creature.

Wherever this gospel was preached it tested the hearers, because it brought to them more light than had hitherto been given to them.

This testimony was very exclusive, for the apostles said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). It allowed of "*no other name*" but the name of Jesus; and *no other terms* than faith on Jesus.

Thus it remains as the testimony for to-day wherever the gospel of Christ is proclaimed.

The apostles wrote in their various epistles of the privileges into which believers in this gospel were brought, and all this continues, because it has not been withdrawn, nor any additional revelation given.

Thus God gave special testimony of Himself to certain individuals, as recorded in the Book of Genesis; then to a company of men who were to be blessed on earth, called Israel, the beginning

of whose history is found in the Book of Exodus ; and, later still, to a company who are called the Church, formed on the day of Pentecost, who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, the records of which are found in the apostolic epistles of the New Testament.

There still remains a question of great interest. What about the masses of mankind who have been without the privilege of *special light* ? " God is no respecter of persons " (Acts x. 34), and has from the outset of man's history maintained a universal testimony to His wisdom and goodness. We read : " The heavens declare the glory of God . . . day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge " (Psalm xix. 2). In this way God calls the attention of men to Himself in His wisdom and goodness. Further, when men had turned to idolatry and God allowed them to walk in their own ways ; " He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness " (Acts xiv. 17). Again, " That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us " (Acts xvii. 27 ; see also Romans i. 20 and 32).

Thus for some 6,000 years God has had to do with those who departed from Him, beginning with Cain and his family, but after the flood with the descendants of Noah. These turned to idolatry : they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever (Romans i. 25). Nevertheless, during this long period some turned to the Lord.

The Apostle Peter testified that in every nation "He that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him" (Acts x. 35). So we read of such persons as: Abimelech, king of Gerar (Genesis xx. 5); Jethro, priest or prince of Midian (Exod. xviii. 12); Hiram, king of Tyre (1 Kings v. 1); the queen of Sheba (1 Kings x. 1); the wise men (Matt. ii. 1); the Ethiopian treasurer (Acts viii. 27); Cornelius (Acts x. 4). These persons were all born outside the circle of *special* testimony, but they evidently used the light they had, and God gave them more by bringing them into contact with His favoured people. The last two obtained the light of Christianity, and no doubt got the full blessing of it.

There are millions of the human race who are to-day outside the present testimony of the gospel, but they still have the light which has shone during God's past dealings with men. It is written, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 3). With the testimony of the heavens and the fruitful seasons alone, no one could know anything about the salvation which faith in the gospel brings, but God counts every one righteous who believes. Those reckoned righteous from the dark places of the earth will be a witness to the faithfulness of God in giving them a testimony which has always been *clear enough for faith*. Faith has always pleased God wherever it was found. Two notable instances of Gentiles having faith are given in Matt. viii. 10 and xv. 28, and Jesus called attention to them. He further announced that "many shall come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. viii. 11).

When God intends such persons to have the *further* light of the gospel of Christ, He either brings them to it in some providential way, or causes some of His servants to carry it to them.

Into which of the many families in heaven or earth (see Eph. iii. 15) God may place these persons, scripture does not say; any more than where those who have died in infancy will be placed.

No man can help being born in the darkness of idolatry, but God has provided that wherever man is born he shall have some testimony regarding Himself, both from the heavens above (Psalm xix.) and the earth beneath (Acts xiv. 17). And this testimony is loud enough to test him and demonstrate either faith or unbelief.

The privilege of being born in the full light of God, as revealed in Christ, cannot be overestimated, and while those in the place of this light may not value it any more than those who are in less light, yet in the day of judgment each will be dealt with according to his works.

The basis of God's actings with men has always been the same, that Christ "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. ii. 6), and redemption is by "the precious blood of Christ—who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter i. 18-20). So before Christ came to do the actual work on the tree, God acted towards men on the ground of *that work which was yet to come.*

Faith has always pleased God, in whatever degree of light it was found, because God had Christ in view, whatever ignorance there was on man's side.

Faith is the same whether found in connection with God's testimony of Himself in creation and providential goodness, or in connection with the clearer testimony in Israel in days gone by, or in the clearest testimony of the gospel of Christ.

The beginning in each person is the same, but the *development* depends on the light God is pleased to give, at each particular time.

One result of receiving the light of the gospel is that the receiver is brought into the spiritual enjoyment which the gospel proposes; and another is, there is a great desire that relations and neighbours should know it too. Some think of the heathen who are ignorant of the present gospel, and who have only the light of creation and providential goodness, and they desire to carry to them the light of the gospel of Christ.

In this matter special guidance is needed, for while the *commission* was, "Preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15), and again, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke xxiv. 47), yet *direction* both where and when to preach was special, as we read: "Go, stand and speak in the temple" (Acts v. 20); "Arise, go toward the south" (Acts viii. 26); "Arise therefore, and get thee down" (Acts x. 20); "Come over into Macedonia" (Acts xvi. 9).

In the matter of *direction* even restrictions were at times given, as: "Were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia" (Acts xvi. 6); "They assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not" (Acts xvi. 7).

Thus, in going to the heathen, direction is of the greatest importance. The devil is worshipped

in idolatry, and he will not give up his place as ruler of the darkness of this world unless obliged to do so by the Holy Spirit causing men to be born anew. The Spirit directed the servants in the Acts to where He was working, and there were mighty results. We do not find conversions recorded in the Old Testament writings, although there can be no doubt persons were converted, but they came to the light in a very gradual way. The dispensational darkness had not then passed, and the true light was not then shining. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, with the subsequent descent of the Holy Spirit, has brought out light so strong that those who received it at the beginning of Christianity were suddenly converted. The apostolic writers frequently refer to the manifest results of believing the gospel in the day in which they lived (see Rom. i. 8; 1 Thess. i. 8). This was plainly seen when converted Jews gave up Judaism, and the converted heathen gave up their idolatry. The work of God to-day is more amongst those who *outwardly* confess Christianity, so that when they believe with the heart the change is not so manifest *before men*, although as real before God as at the beginning.

Where the bright light of the gospel of Christ has not reached, there remains still amongst the heathen the same light which shone before Christ came. That light when received by any man in faith is counted for righteousness, but that does not of itself bring the person into new covenant blessings, nor into the church, but rather into one of the other families mentioned in Eph. iii. 15 (read "every family"). The church was

formed by the Holy Spirit on the testimony of the gospel of Christ; but God is sovereign, and may still work outside this particular testimony, as He did before it came.

God may frequently have ordered it that some one who had faith in God as Creator, and in His providential goodness, should be brought into the further light of the gospel, and so into peace and entrance into present grace, with hope of the coming glory. Such persons would belong to the church.

Since the apostles' days the gospel of Christ may have been presented in a feeble and even corrupted form, yet it has brought light beyond the testimony of creation, and this additional light has tested the hearers.

When once the gospel of Christ has been presented, men cannot go back to a former testimony; they either receive the gospel by faith and come into the present blessings of it, or they refuse it in unbelief and turn to what they like better.

Thus God's ways are past finding out, but as we know more of Him so we understand some of the wisdom of His ways: and "Wisdom is justified of all her children."