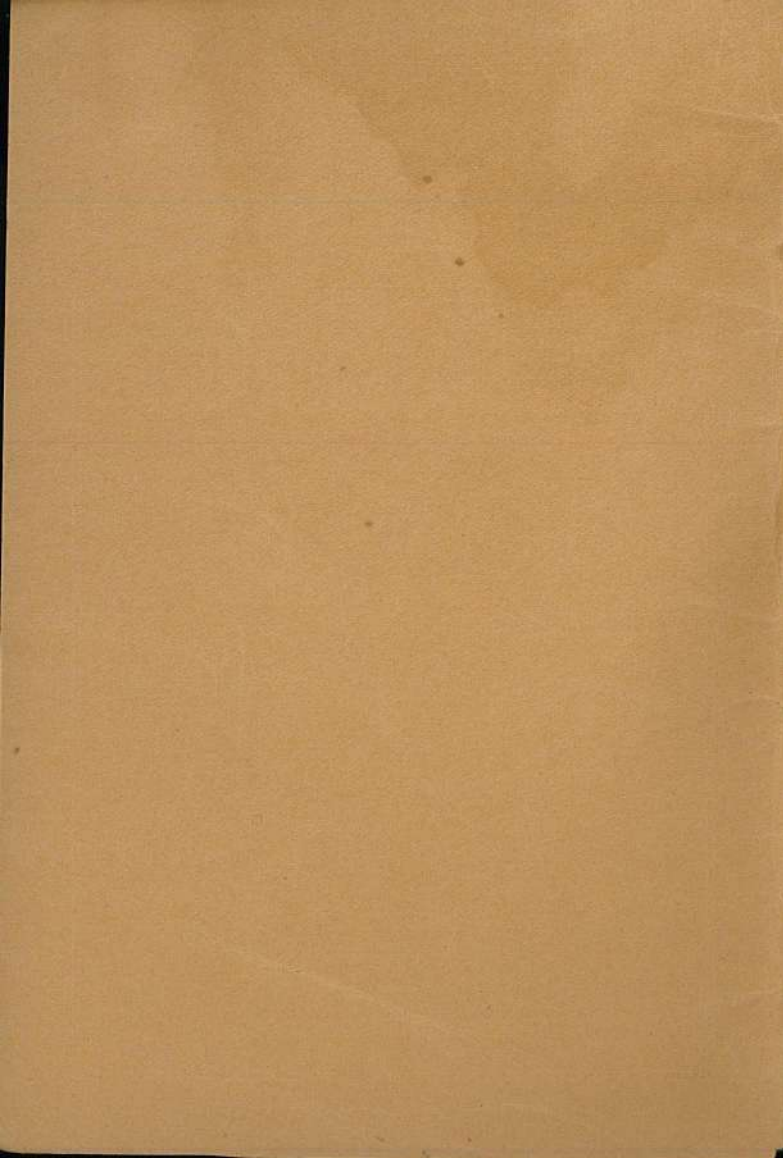


THE GOSPEL
OF THE
GLORY OF CHRIST

BY

C. F. HOGG

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FOREWORD

The addresses reproduced in this pamphlet were delivered in the United States of America. The stenographer's report has been revised by the speaker. It has been thought well to retain the original form of unconventional exposition and appeal, since this seems to conform to the New Testament model. It may seem presumptuous even to suggest a comparison between such a slender and inadequate treatment of its theme and the source from which alone our knowledge of the Lord is drawn. But it will be readily perceived that the more closely Holy Scripture is followed, the greater the possibility of profit to reader or hearer.

In the New Testament—and this is true also of the Old Testament—theology is not systematized. The revelation of the mind of God is always made in order to produce a moral or spiritual effect in the persons to whom the revelation is given. The description of the eternal dignity of the Lord, of the depth of His voluntary humiliation, and of the new dignities which are His in virtue of His obedience unto death, were written to the Philippians to save them from the divisions that threatened them. And the remedy is sole and sovereign. Let the mind that brought the Lord from Heaven dwell in us and all who belong to Him will inevitably be drawn together to manifest their oneness in Him in mutual love and esteem.

While the mind is occupied with Christ we are conformed to His likeness. "We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror (and only that reflects that beholds) the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3,18.

The writer is very conscious of the meagreness of these pages, they are nevertheless issued and commended to the gracious care of God who is pleased to use weak things to the glory of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

—C.F.H.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST

By C. F. HOGG

Shall we read together two brief portions, the first from the Epistle to the Philippians, the second from the Book of Revelation. I read from the Revised Version of 1881, called the English Revised Version,—I am not sure why, for it owes not a little to American scholarship and piety.

Phil. 2:5-11: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who being originally (margin) in the form of God, counted it not a prize (or a means of self-aggrandizement) to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the Name which is above every name, that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things on earth and things

under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Rev. 1:12-18: And having turned "I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the midst of the lampstands one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow: and His eyes were as a flame of fire: and His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace: and His voice as the voice of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

It is my privilege this morning to speak to you concerning the glories of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in so devoting our time we are responding to the exhortation of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews when he said, "Consider Him," and the human mind can have no higher occupation, the human heart no truer devotion, the human tongue can have no loftier task imposed upon it than to speak of the glories of our Lord Jesus Christ. May His Holy Spirit not only enlighten our understanding, but may He move our hearts to a fresh purpose to be found following Him, in the way, and waiting for His coming again.

A Unique Biography.

The biographies of men are usually introduced with some brief reference to parentage and descent; they often conclude with a brief chapter of regret at the too early close of a useful life, the biography itself lying between these points. When we come to consider the Lord Jesus Christ, however, we discover that His birth and His descent cannot be dismissed with a

brief reference, and that His history has not been brought to a period by the hand of death. It is strangely divided, indeed—strangely, that is to say, when compared with the biographies of men—for upon thirty of His three and thirty years a veil of almost unbroken silence is allowed to drop. In all we learn a little of His activities during about forty selected days of His last three years, but the bulk of the Gospels is occupied with the last week of His life, and of that last week, two days demand a larger space than all the rest of that week. There is something, then, at the very beginning that attracts our attention,—that the life story of the Lord Jesus Christ should be recorded in a way so dissimilar from that of every other subject of biography.

Let us take, to begin with, a statement, made by the Apostle Paul, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, I refer to 2 Cor. 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich."

When?

Here we are at once challenged to ask a question. When did He, being rich, become poor? During His public ministry He had not where to lay His head. Matt. 8:20. Of those silent years this at least we know, that He was the eldest son of an artisan's widow. In the circumstances of His birth there was no room for His mother in the inn, so He must be born in a stable-yard and cradled in a manger. Not at any time during His life here on the earth could it be said of Him, in any sense whatever, that He was rich. When, then, did He become poor?—for poor He was from the manger to the Cross. An answer to this question must be sought elsewhere. He stands before Pilate, and His testimony is: "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world." Many men lived under a deep conviction that they were born for a purpose, but alone among men this Man could say, "I came." Others came whether they would or no, but here is One Who declared that He came into this world of His own unconstrained will.

When Herod would learn where the Messiah should be born, the scribes referred him, and rightly, to Micah 5:2. Alas for them, they set a bad example to modern students of the Scriptures, for they were content with a partial quotation. Now we must beware of partial quotations; we have to consider context as well as text. They found it written that out of Bethlehem Ephratah One should come forth Who was to be ruler in Israel. There they paused; had they gone on they would have read, "Whose goings forth are of old, from everlasting."

His Own Testimony

We are permitted to listen to some part of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and on one occasion to hear Him say: "Before Abraham was, I am." Not, "Before Abraham was, I was;" not, "Before Abraham was born, I was born," but, "Before Abraham was, I am." He was talking to men familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures; men who knew that the "I am" was an exclusive title of Jehovah, the God of Israel, and of the whole earth, yet to such

an audience He used words implying a claim to that distinctive title of Deity. John 8:50.

Listen to Him again as He prays in the hearing of His disciples, the prayer recorded in John 17. He anticipates His death, resurrection and ascension. It is the intercessory prayer of the "great Priest over the house of God." There are two expressions in it to which I draw your attention now. Long ago through Isaiah God had said, "My glory will I not give to another." Isa. 42.8; 48.11. Now the glory of God belongs to His own peculiar essence and is not communicable. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ addresses His Father saying, "Glorify Thou Me with the glory that I had with Thee before the world was." Thus, you perceive He claims to share the incommunicable glory of God, once again making an implicit claim to Deity.

Toward the close of the same prayer He speaks thus, "Father . . . Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." What do these words signify? Love is not something that can be isolated, or that can exist *in vacuo*. Love is an activity, it exists only as it is in exercise, as it passes

from one person to another person. Therefore, when the Lord speaks of the love wherewith in eternity the Father loved Him, His words suggest that there is in the Godhead a distinction of Persons, and that He Who shared the incommunicable glory of God was at the same time the object of the love of the Father. Thus He is to be distinguished from the Father, but is not thereby in any sense, made less than, or subsidiary, to, the Father in His Godhood.

Progressive Revelation

In the First Epistle of John there is given a definition of God, in three very simple words: "God is love." Not infrequently the christian preacher is exhorted to lay theology aside and come back to 'the simple gospel'; "God is love." Let us examine the proposition for a moment and consider how we are to preach that "God is love." Now notice, first of all, the peculiar place in which this alleged 'simple' truth is found. We are accustomed to go to the Book of Genesis for simplicities, but we do not find there that God is love. We look to the Book of Psalms for the expres-

sion of the profoundest experiences of religious men, but not to them was it given to discover that God is love. We turn to Isaiah, with his lofty flights of imagination, the majesty and the glories of his visions, but not to him was it given to perceive that God is love. We come down to the Gospels, and listen to the words of grace that fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, but not even He declared that God is love. We turn to the writings of that great exponent of the Cross, the Apostle Paul, nor does he tell us that God is love. He touches the fringe of it, indeed, when he says in the eighth verse of the Fifth chapter of Romans, that "God commendeth (that is, gives proof of) His own love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We turn to such Epistles as those to the Ephesians and Colossians and read there indeed of "the Son of His love," but not even in these do we read that God is love. It is only when the revelation of God has been completed, broad based in history, culminating in the Cross, that at last the character of God is finally expressed in

words that are, so to speak, the capstone of the pyramid: "God is love."

The Courage of the Cross

It requires some courage to go out into the world and declare to men that God is love. Do you doubt that? Have you tried it? Have you ever put your hand on the shoulder of some wretch who has marred himself, and said to him, 'My friend God loves you, God is love'? Or have you said it to some decrepit, maimed person, some person the victim of calamity brought upon him not by any fault of his own, to some mother whose heart is breaking over a child born into the world entirely unfitted for the battle of life,—have you been able to go to such a person and say, "My friend, God loves you, God is love"? It takes courage to say that God is love in a world constituted as ours is. There is only one justification, and that is more than a justification it is a dynamic. It becomes a power in a man's soul when he grasps the fact that since the Lord Jesus died on the Cross we have irrefragable proof that God is love. A heavy cloud hangs over human life, but

the cloud has its silver lining; and that silver lining it takes on from the Cross of the Lord Jesus. So with Calvary in our hearts we may go to men and women, without fear, and without hesitancy, and may say to them that God loves them, that God is love, since Christ died for them.

I am sure you have long since been emancipated from the wrong notion that Christ died for us in order to constrain God to love us. The charter of our faith is that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." God is love; the love of the Father who gave, the love of the Son who came, the love of the Spirit who led Him to the cross, the love of the Triune God, is focused at Calvary in order that from Calvary it might illuminate the universe.

The Father and the Son

There used to be in London a Unitarian congregation of an aggressive character; they advertised their Sunday services in the weekly press and always they headed their advertisements in this way: "Glory

be to God the Father only, as it was in the beginning." Plainly the purpose was to exclude the Lord Jesus Christ from the worship due to God, and to deny His claim "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." But you cannot honor God as the Father unless you honor the Son and for this reason; fatherhood and sonship are co-terminous. A man begins to be a father when he has a son, not before. So God is the Eternal Father, because there is an Eternal Son. If the Lord Jesus is deprived of His title to Eternal Sonship, coincidentally God is deprived of His title to Eternal Fatherhood. John 5:23.

But love is not something that can be isolated and considered in itself. If God is love, and eternally has been love, then there must eternally have been an object, an adequate and appropriate object, of His love. This object of the Father's love, then, is the Son, to whom the heart of the Father goes out eternally. Thus we may think of God in the self-contained activities of His tri-personality: the Father, loving, and the Son, loved, the Spirit binding both together in the holy unity of the Godhead.

Thought fails us and language imposes limitations even to the expression of such thoughts as we have, and we remember how the Apostle Paul said, 'I know in part, and I can only tell you a part of what I know,' but, thank God, the day is coming when these limitations will be broken down and swept away, and 'we shall be known thoroughly even as we have been thoroughly known.' The Lord Jesus Himself said (I quote the familiar words recorded in the Eleventh chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew), "no one knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." But the statement that follows, "No one knoweth the Father, save the Son," is absolute; for the full knowledge of "the mystery of God even Christ (Col. 2.2) is the Father's, and the Father's alone. We have been called into the fellowship of His Son. Are we therefore disappointed because we know that the absolute knowledge of the Son is within the competence of the Father alone? Nay verily, but rather encouraged to think that there is before us the possibility of infinite progress in fellowship with God in His Son,

and when that which men fear, the barrier we call death, is broken down, we shall be liberated from the bondage the body of our humiliation imposes upon the soul, and brought into a larger and fuller knowledge of Him in Whom, by Whom, and for Whom, all things have their being.

First-born of all Creation.

Now I will ask you to consider for a moment this text just mentioned, the First chapter of Colossians, from the end of the thirteenth verse: "The Son of His love,"—not "God's beloved Son", the thought is different, the Son here is the expression of the love of God, not the object of it. Consider the meaning of this passage, from the thirteenth to the eighteenth verses. It has been made the subject of a variety of expositions. I can only speak to you as one who would be found faithful, and commend to your judgment what I am about to put before you. When we read here that "the Son of His love" is "the First-born of all creation," I do not understand that He Himself is included in, but rather that these words are intended to exclude Him from, the

realm of creation. In the First chapter of John's Gospel you will remember that John the Baptist tells us, "He was before me." Now, that expression is, literally, "He is first of me." Plainly "first of me" means 'to be before me'—'external to me', 'preceding me.' Milton tells us that Adam was 'the goodliest of men since born.' But that excludes Adam from the category of men who were born of Adam. And Eve he calls, 'the fairest of her daughters,' but plainly Eve was not her own daughter; she is excluded from that category. Xenophen speaks of 'the greatest of battles since fought,' making that one battle the standard of comparison for all subsequent battles. With these analogous expressions before us it seems clear that the words "the First-born of all creation" are to be understood in the sense that the Lord is excluded from the category of created beings, not included in it.

Take, for example, one of your great buildings. You are asked, 'How did this building come into existence?' 'Why,' you answer, 'the builders came along and built it up, stone upon stone, beam upon beam.' 'But how did the builders know where to

put the stones and the beams?' 'Well,' you reply again 'the architect provided the plan.' 'And where did the architect get the plan?' Is not the answer to that question this: before a stone was put on a stone, before a line was put on the paper, that building already existed in the mind of the architect. It was there complete, in whole and in every part, in the architect's mind.

The Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the Architect and Builder of the universe. Now, every building is built for some purpose, or for some person. For whom, then, was this universe brought into existence? For the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that in it, through it, and to it, His glory, which is the glory of the Godhead, might be displayed.

But every building requires to be maintained, or the fabric will perish. Who maintains this universe? "In Him all things are held together."

The Eternal Word

In these verses, then, is declared the relationship between the Lord Jesus and the old creation; the subsequent verses tell us

of His relationship to the new creation, but with those we are not concerned this morning. Let me remind you of the first verse in the First chapter of John's Gospel, where we read, "In the beginning was the Word." You know the difference between the active verb and the passive verb "to be." Verbs that signify action, the doing of things, refer necessarily to certain points or periods of time, but the unqualified verb "to be" is independent of time. "In the beginning" then, not something was done, but someone "was"—existed. Think back through the centuries, the millenniums, the ages, until your brain reels with the attempt to grasp eternity, and when you have exhausted your power to think backward, you are met by this word in its undiminished fullness: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God (indicating that distinction in the persons of the Godhead to which we have already referred) and the Word was God." The Lord Jesus Christ, then, the Word become flesh, is not God in any derived or subsidiary sense; He is God in all that pertains to Godhead, God in all that is essential to Deity.

The Days of His Flesh

Passing now from eternity to time, we consider, for a few minutes, the Lord Jesus Christ as He moved among men. When we read the Four Gospels and see One therein showing forbearance and gentleness, let us never forget that this is He who was pleased to lay His glory aside; Who was pleased to come forth from the Father into this world. Let us never for one instant forget the majesty and the glory that are His by right, lest the very grace displayed in His incarnation, should betray us into unworthy thoughts of Him Who in the hour of His deepest humiliation was never less than God.

I am going to ask you to consider now that lengthy section of the Gospel according to Matthew which is called the Sermon on the Mount. What is its significance? Luke offers us the key to it in the opening words of the Book of Acts, where we read of "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." Now the doing precedes the teaching; what He taught, He first Himself practised. It was the peculiar glory of the Lord Jesus as a teacher that He was the living exemplification of the words He

spoke. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. It is not uncommon for men, under the pressure of its difficulties, either to relegate the Sermon on the Mount to the past, or postpone it to the future. We should rather consider it as the portrait of the Lord Jesus drawn by His Own hand. This is surely just what the Lord Jesus was among men; this is the character He displayed through the silent years. The Sermon on the Mount is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Love Incarnate

Turn now to the Thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Let me remind you that the morality of the Apostle Paul is not only higher than, it is different from, the morality of any teacher that preceded him. Whence did he obtain his marvelous conception of love? The answer may very well be made that the Holy Spirit revealed it to him. True, but how? The Lord Jesus tells us the method of the Spirit: "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come . . . He shall take of Mine (the things that pertain to Me) and He

shall declare it unto you." Thus we perceive that to enable the Apostle to write this account of what love is, made visible in what love does, the Spirit presented Christ to the man's heart and he wrote down what he saw. Now notice how readily the name of the Lord can be substituted throughout these verses.

"The Lord Jesus suffered long and was kind; the Lord Jesus envied not; did not vaunt Himself; was not puffed up, did not behave Himself unseemly, did not seek His own; He was not provoked; He did not take account of evil; He did not rejoice in unrighteousness, but He rejoiced with the truth. He bore all things, He believed all things, hoped all things, endured all things. The Lord Jesus never failed."

So this description of love is just a description of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In Him God came down from heaven, to show in human life what love is, and to show us what love may be in our lives also.

The Secret of the Lord

We might turn to many other illuminating passages in the Epistles and in the

Gospels that set before us the essentials of the character of the Lord. In the Epistle to the Galatians for example there is the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit falls into three triplets; the first three are concerned with the Christain in his relationship with God, the second three, in his relationship with his fellows, and the third, as he is in himself. This fruit of the Spirit is now to be produced in every believing heart, and manifested in every believing life, but it was manifested in its nine-fold fulness in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. And some day when you are looking for a fruitful avenue along which you may study the Scriptures, trace the nine-fold fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Lord Jesus, and you will find, alike in prophecy, in history, and in subsequent Apostolic comment, how abundantly this fruit of the Spirit was manifested in Him. But His secret is described in His own words: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." That is the spring

from which His character flows, He was meek and lowly in heart. Matt. 11:28,29.

The Apostle Paul writing again to the Corinthians, beseeches them "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." The word "meekness" has an unfortunate connotation in our ordinary use of it, one that little agrees with the character of our Lord. Meek He was, indeed, but not with the meekness that arises out of weakness. If there is a meekness that can be associated with strength, then that meekness was His. But I take it that what is intended by that word "meekness" is gentleness, delicacy of touch; only the strong can be really gentle, and the Lord's gentleness came of His strength. 2 Cor. 10:1.

But what of the second word? "Forbearance" is good, but there is a better. "I beseech you by the gentleness and the considerateness of Christ." That, perhaps, is the best word to express the thought. To consider, what is that? To consider is to think, but when you find a man is thinking about himself, do you call him considerate? No, you call him inconsiderate. The considerate man is one who has a heart "at

leisure from itself" to sympathize with other people. So our Lord Jesus is gentle and considerate, and every Christian man has begotten in him by the Holy Spirit of God, an ambition to be gentle and considerate as his Master was.

I have spoken to you this morning about our Lord Jesus Christ and His glories. Glory is character made manifest. The glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is the expression of His character. We have looked at His eternal glories, His pre-incarnate glories. We have dwelt for a little upon the glories of the days of His flesh, the glory of His kindness, the glory of His love, the glory He manifested while He endured the contradiction of sinners against themselves. If God will, tomorrow morning we shall think of the glory of His Cross, the glory of His intercession at the right hand of God, and the glory of His promised return.

PART II.

We will read two portions of Scripture, the first from the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 3:

“And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . . Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan; and they were baptized of Him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. . . . Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John would have hindered Him; saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffereth Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway from the water and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him; and lo, a voice out of the

heavens, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Now let us read John's recital of his experience in connection with the baptism, of which Matthew has given us the history. This is found in the Gospel according to John, chapter 1, beginning at verse 29.

"On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is become before me; for He was before me. And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause come I baptizing with water. And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, He said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness, that this is the Son of God."

At the opening of the second lecture of a series, the temptation to spend a little time on recapitulation presents itself, but we have so much ground to cover this morning that we must resist it, and, instead of reviewing what we had before us yesterday, we must, as God may help us, break new ground.

This morning I wish to direct your attention first of all to the two passages just read, and subject them to a simple analysis in order that we may perceive the purpose of the double record.

Remember it is not necessary for God to say anything twice in order to make it true. Men may repeat a thing in order to impress people with their veracity; not so God. But when the Spirit of God has given a second account of the same incident, we may conclude that some special importance attaches to that which is thus repeated.

That a second account of the baptizing of the Lord is given suggests that the incident has some peculiar significance. Men flocked to the baptism of John, and one and all were baptized on confession of their sins. That was the condition, and the sole condition, on which they received baptism at the hand

of John. Among them one day there came Jesus of Nazareth. I speak of the Lord thus just here, not forgetting that since the Resurrection, the normal for every believer in the Son of God is not "Jesus," but "the Lord Jesus."

The Apostolic Model

Let me digress here to point out to you that the expression commonly heard in the preaching of the Gospel, "Come to Jesus," "Believe in Jesus," is without Scriptural precedent. Let me remind you that the very common phrases, "Jesus said," and "Jesus did," are also without apostolic authority. Consider the Bible phraseology; and let us lay it to heart, lest we should be found sinning against God. Are you preaching the Gospel? Listen to the Apostle Paul, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." Are you quoting words He spoke? Then listen again to the Apostle Paul: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Are you telling what He did when He was here? Listen again to the same Apostle: "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, how that

the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread." And if you speak of the Cross, remember that when Christian people gather together on the first day of the week, it is in order that they may "proclaim the Lord's death till He come."

Or if you speak to Christians of the power of God to break the power of the sin cancelled at the Cross and set sin's prisoners free, then here again are the words of the Apostle Paul: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ the Lord." And let us never forget that He Himself said, "Ye call me * * * Lord; and ye say well; for so I am." Happy the preacher who preaches Jesus—Saviour and Lord! Happy the sinner who, in the same hour that he is brought to the feet of the Son of God, learns first that He is his Lord as well as his Saviour.

The Baptism of the Lord

Now to return from our digression,—which I hope will not be without profit—Jesus of Nazareth came to John the Baptist and asked to be baptized. When he re-

counts what happened thereupon, John goes back in his story to say that there was a hidden purpose in his baptism; it was to provide the opportunity for the identification of the expected Messiah; to provide a background against which He might be manifested. A sign had been given, the Spirit of God would descend on the Man whom God had sent.

Now, it is quite plain that John the Baptist knew, was personally acquainted with, Jesus of Nazareth, though He did not know He was the Messiah. It was because of this personal knowledge of his kinsman and of His character, that when He came to desire baptism John immediately drew back. It is as though he said, 'I baptize these people on confession of their sins; they submit to my baptism in order to acknowledge that a just condemnation has been passed upon them. But we all know you to be a good man; why should you be baptized among men who are confessing their sins? Far more appropriate that you should baptize me than that I should baptize you.'

The Triple Testimony

You must often have said to yourselves, how glad you would be to know something of what happened during those thirty unrecorded years of the Lord's life. The Baptist's words suggest the general impression He made upon His contemporaries, upon the people with whom He had summered and wintered through those thirty years; that is to say, the words sum up the testimony of man to the conduct and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. But men are often mistaken in their judgments; may not John have been mistaken in this case? Then the Lord Jesus spoke. If you were to go to the best man that you have ever met you would find that under such circumstances he would say something like this: 'John, if you knew my heart as well as you know your own you would know that I need to confess my sins also;' for Christian character is built up on repentance and reformation. Men rise in the Christian life on 'stepping-stones of their dead selves.' They grow in grace, and in righteousness, and in holiness. But the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of doing as the normal "good" man

might be expected to do—that is, take his place among sinners—separated Himself from sinners: “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” “Righteousness,” among its many uses, in the New Testament, means on occasion (Matt. 6.1, e. g.) the outward expression of the religious life. In submitting to His baptism the Lord set His seal to the ministry of John the Baptist, acknowledging him as a servant and messenger of God; but at the same time He as distinctly dissociated Himself from those who were being baptized on confession of their sins. These words, if I understand them aright, are the Lord’s own claim to sinlessness. He has no consciousness of sin.

But this is not enough. Something is lacking yet that the foundation of the faith may be well and truly laid. A self-satisfied man naturally assumes that God will be satisfied with him too. Not a few have claimed to be sinless who were merely self-complacents. What is lacking to the perfection of the testimony is promptly supplied. A voice is borne out of heaven: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Jehovah, Who trieth the reins and searcheth the hearts of men, bears His testimony to the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Immediately the Spirit of God descended upon Him in the form of a dove,—and the dove, as we know, is the emblem of purity. On the banks of the Jordan the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus is established. The testimony is three-fold: the observation of His character and conduct by men, the testimony of His own conscience, and the voice borne out of heaven. A three-fold cord is not readily broken.

Not Jordan But Calvary.

But now I ask you to consider one implication of what I have been saying, of some practical importance, and it is this:

On the banks of the Jordan the Lord did not take upon Himself the burden of man's guilt, nor did He not in any sense become a sin-bearer. That was reserved for the Cross. The difference between the life of our Lord Jesus and His death is this: in His life He lived in uninterrupted communion with God, but in His death that communion was interrupted, and judgment and darkness

took the place of the sunshine of His Father's face. Nor did He associate Himself with a godly remnant in Israel, on the contrary He dissociated Himself unequivocally from sinful men.

Another Three-fold Cord.

Here then is a man unique in His character. He stands apart from all other men in this, that heredity has communicated no taint to Him. He is descended from Adam, indeed, but not "by ordinary generation." This brings me to the assertion of the Virgin Birth of the Lord Jesus. I will not dwell upon it more than to point out to you that the First chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, and the Second chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, come to us on exactly the same authority as the rest of these two Gospels. The witnesses are independent each of the other; the stories are complementary; they do not cover the same ground, but each is necessary to the rounding out and completion of the other.

Another Three-fold Cord

To anticipate a little: the sinless life has its beginning in the Virgin Birth. That life

closed at the Cross, but the Cross is not the last word, for God raised His Son from the dead. In Hebrews 7:26 we read that He was "holy, guileless, undefiled"; holy in His person, guileless in His relations with men, and undefiled by His contact with the world. The writer proceeds, "separated from sinners," not, as in the Authorized Version, "separate from sinners," as though the reference were to His character, but "separated from sinners," that is, in resurrection. Men numbered Him with transgressors,—“on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.” God reversed the verdict of His judges, separated Him from sinners, and made Him higher than the heavens.

The True Manhood.

We must return to speak for a moment of the humanity of our Lord. Yesterday I sought to give you some Scripture authority for the doctrine of the true, full and essential Deity of the Lord Jesus. Let us remember that His humanity is not less real than His Deity, not less true, not less essential and complete. The Lord Jesus was not merely God in a human body. "The

Word," who was God, "became flesh," but by flesh here we are to understand the totality of manhood, all that is essential to manhood. For while He said, "My body which is given for you," He said also, "Now is My soul troubled," and we read that "He gave up His spirit." The Writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews supplies the only necessary qualification of the humanity of the Lord in the two words, "sin apart." Note here that sin is not essential to manhood; God did not create a sinner, He created a man; men have made themselves sinners. God sent His Son into the world in manhood so that in virtue of His manhood He might die for sinners, His manhood is His qualification to become the Saviour of men.

The humanity of Christ is such that the life presented in the Four Gospels is the life of faith in God, indeed He is at once the leader and the perfecter of faith. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing," He declared, and again "I spake not from Myself; but the Father hath given Me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak." This is not tautology. What one says is the mes-

sage, and what one speaks is the language in which the message is couched. And this is in harmony with the 22nd Psalm where the Prophet foreshowed that He would trust God from His birth, and expire with words of confidence in God upon His lips. And even so it came to pass. John 5:19;-12:49.

This is a great mystery, but it is well to realize early in life that there are limits set to our powers to comprehend. If by the good help of the Holy Spirit we may apprehend a little of the truth of God concerning His Son, surely we are greatly privileged, and we are encouraged to expect to attain to a larger apprehension still. But we approach the consideration of the person of Christ in vain unless we have learned to take our shoes from off our feet, realizing that we are treading on holy ground. The spirit of worship is essential to an understanding of Christ.

The Cross

Now I come to speak of the Cross itself. Its shadow early began to fall into His life. He speaks of it for the first time at Caes-

area Philippi, as recorded in the Sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. It is worthy of your note that on that occasion He spoke for the first time of four things; of His death, of His resurrection, of His return, and of the church which He is to build.

The disciples had their scheme of things, their only uncertainty being as to which of them should hold the place of prominence in the new kingdom. This controversy, as to who should be greatest among them, they left unsettled to become the baleful inheritance of the saints ever since. Men and women, if you would only, by the grace of God, come to the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and say, "By the good help of God, from this day on I shall judge in myself every jealous and every ambitious thought," I could foretell for you a life of great happiness, of great efficiency, and of great fruitfulness, for there is nothing that mars our service more than our ambitions and jealousies. Yet the Cross is the cure alike for jealousy and ambition. Remember that the law of the kingdom of heaven is that he who would rise high must come down low;

the way to greatness is by the path of humility.

The Guilt of Men.

We may now consider briefly some New Testament statements concerning the Cross. Let us look first at that of Peter "by the hand of lawless men" (the Romans), they (the Jews) had crucified and slain the Lord of life and glory. Now it is true that men did all that was necessary to deprive the Lord Jesus of His life, thus incurring the full guilt of His murder, but remember that He Himself said, "I lay down My life no one taketh it away from Me. . . . I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again. This commandment received I from My Father." John 10:17,18.

The Justice of God.

I do not dwell upon the peculiar feature of crucifixion, which is, that no human hand delivers the stroke that ultimately deprives the victim of life. He is put into conditions in which death is inevitable, and left to die. But come a little closer to the heart of the

matter and consider what Zechariah wrote, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts." And with these consider other like words such as, "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin," and such words as these, "Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death," and "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, and, "Jehovah hath caused to light upon Him the iniquity of us all." Behind that awful darkness there was that which passed between God and His Son, between God the Sender and God the Sent; a mystery into which we cannot penetrate, but which has other expressions, such as this, "He bare our sins in His body on the tree." We know that what passed behind that darkness accomplished the redemption of men. What man did to Him was no part of the redemption price; but only that which passed between the Holy Father and the Holy Son. We bow with humble hearts as we confess that our sins nailed Him to the tree; as we confess that He, the Just, took the place of us, the unjust, that so bearing our sins He might put them away forever.

An Evangelistic Interlude

Let me pause here for a moment. Taking nothing for granted, I will assume that there is not one converted, not one regenerated, not one saved soul in this audience. Permit me to suppose that I am speaking to a company of men and women who need to be saved. What should I say to you? I would tell you, with all my heart, that God loves you; that God loves you so much that He desires to have you with Him forever; that He desires to deliver you from the guilt and the penalty of sin, and that in order to express His love, His will to accomplish your salvation, He sent the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, into the world to die on the Cross in order that you might be saved. And I would tell you that God does not ask anything from you, that His desire is to give something to you; that God is not laying any demand upon you, but that He is offering you His love expressed in His Son, that He is inviting you to put your trust in the Lord Jesus; to pass out of the darkness into the light; out of death into life. I would remind you that the last words He spoke were these: "It is finished." The work of salva-

tion is completed and the grace of God is free. But remember this: you may come near Him in the crowd, where the hem of His garment might be touched; you may even be numbered among those who are regenerate. What a terrible calamity if, numbered among those who bear the name of Christ, any one of you should come short of salvation!

We have a great gospel to preach, men and women, and I envy you your youth, and the years stretching before you in which you may devote yourselves to that noblest work, the proclamation to sinful men of the love of God in Christ. May the Lord of mercy bless you first by giving you the joy of salvation and then by making you His messengers, carrying salvation to men and women in the uttermost parts of the earth.

The Willing Love of Christ

There is still another aspect of the Cross to be considered. I have already quoted the words of the Lord, "No one taketh it away from me; but I lay it down of myself." Consider for a moment the voluntary nature of

the sacrifice of Christ. He laid aside His glory of His own free will; He came from heaven of His own free will; He trod every step of the bitter way to Calvary of His own free will; He submitted to be nailed to the Cross of His own free will; He allowed the awful burden of human sin to be put upon His soul of His own free will; and in the moment of consummation He deliberately and of His own act laid down His life that men might be saved. The Cross stands alone, glorious in its isolation. There the heart of God is displayed, and there the salvation of men is secured. The Cross has been in the heart of God from all eternity. It is the very glory of heaven, for do we not read that "the glory of God did lighten it and the lamp thereof is the Lamb"? Rev. 21.23.

Christ's Death Alone Vicarious

Let me remind you that in Scripture we are never told that Christ lived "for" us; or that Christ kept the law "for" us; or that the life of the Lord Jesus had any atoning efficacy whatever. His life demonstrated His competence to undertake the work, but

the work itself was done at Calvary. And when that work had been accomplished God raised His Son from among the dead. He "was delivered up for (because of) our trespasses, and was raised again for (because of) our justification." Romans 4:25.

His Resurrection and After

There are many implications of the resurrection; time forbids that I dwell upon them this morning. For forty days He accompanied with His disciples, and then the history ends in such words as these: "A cloud received Him out of their sight." So far men tell us what they saw and heard, but now revelation comes to tell us that faith may follow where sight fails. He was received into heaven, passed through all the heavens, entered into heaven itself, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There he has resumed the glory He had with His Father before the world was. Consider how He is occupied then: "Whither for us the forerunner is entered," gone "to prepare a place" for us. Consider Him as the "great Priest over the house of God," and "if any man sin," let us remember that "we

have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And if the fear of death descends upon our souls at times, let us remember that when Stephen died the Lord arose from the throne to receive his spirit. In bereavement let us comfort ourselves and others with the thought that He has conquered death, and conquered death for us.

Head of His Body, the Church

Consider, too, that the Lord Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God, that there He should be the Head of the Church, and let us remember that that Church, growing here from age to age, is the building of the risen Lord, by His Holy Spirit. Or, if another figure is used, it is His body, only part of which is here at any time, the whole of which is to be made manifest when the Lord comes. But let us remember that from the risen Lord there is supplied to that body from day to day for its nourishment and completion all that that body needs. The human body is composed of its members, its tissues, its ligaments, its nerves, its circulatory system, and what not, and all this has

its analogy in the body which Christ is building and nourishing. All that is necessary for the sustenance of that body is supplied from the risen Head, and nothing is necessary to its growth and maintenance in health and efficiency, save and except that which it receives along the appointed channels from the risen Head Himself. The connection between every remotest member of that body and the Head is complete; however, these members may be scattered, and wherever they may be found, they are all bound by an unbreakable cord with the risen Lord in heaven.

The Abiding Presence.

It may fall to your lot some day, as in past years it has fallen to mine, to stand amid a hostile mob, to face men with hatred glaring out of their eyes, to see them gnash their teeth and stamp their feet and declare their hatred for you and for your Lord; and the devil will be there to suggest the danger in which you stand, and to bring vividly before you the possibilities of the next few minutes; but then you will find, too, that the Lord will come Himself and re-

mind you that He is with you, that all you need for that emergency, for that moment of terror, for that demand on brain and muscle and nerve, will all come from Himself, for has He not said, "Lo, I am with you?"

If we have a great salvation to preach, men and women, we have a great salvation to experience for ourselves. If we have a great Saviour of whom we may speak to others, we have a great Saviour present with us, only desiring that we should surrender ourselves unreservedly to Him, that we might the more fully experience His grace and power to save.

The Gathering Centre.

And not only so. I have already suggested to you that in our service He is with us. But remember that around the throne of God the hosts of heaven join in His praise, ascribing the honor and the glory and the dominion and power, and every worthy thing, to the Lamb that sits upon the throne; and then remember that He has also said that "where two or three are gathered together into My Name, there am I in the midst of them." He Who sits in the midst

of the throne of heaven is in the midst of the two or three of His own who gather together down here, and not less really here than there. And if He gathers us around Himself here, what is the end in view? In order that in whatever feebleness we might reproduce here that heavenly scene, worship Him, and ascribe to Him honour and glory and praise. Matt. 18:20; Rev. 5.

And then as we go forth from worship to serve, we shall be conscious that He is with us, and that as our hearts are set to proclaim His glory, so will He unfold His glories to us, that we may ourselves share in, and enjoy, that to the enjoyment of which we invite others.

An old saint in centuries gone by used to pray that he might be kept from "the false commerce of truth unfelt." Let us see that we do not preach to men inviting them to enjoy that to which we ourselves are strangers, but if we keep ourselves in the love of God and in communion with Christ, then He Himself will be our chief enjoyment, and we shall commend His

Gospel, and His salvation, to those before whom we live and to whom we speak.

The Advent Glory

Finally, there is the glory of His coming again. He is coming to judge; and the scene on Calvary seems to foreshadow His judgment. The Lord is in the midst, on one hand is the man who rejected Him, and on the other is the man who put his trust in Him. So it is still. This world is divided by an unseen line; on one side are those who have not trusted Christ, on the other are those whose sole hope is in Him. When that day comes, the line will become visible, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . and we (that are in Christ) that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up;" the judgment will have begun. Those who neglect this great salvation will be left behind. Then, as I understand the Scripture, we who have been caught away to be with the Lord, will be made manifest before His judgment seat, for though grace takes us to heaven, loyalty to Christ here determines our place and position there. Salvation is of grace, but crowns must be earned.

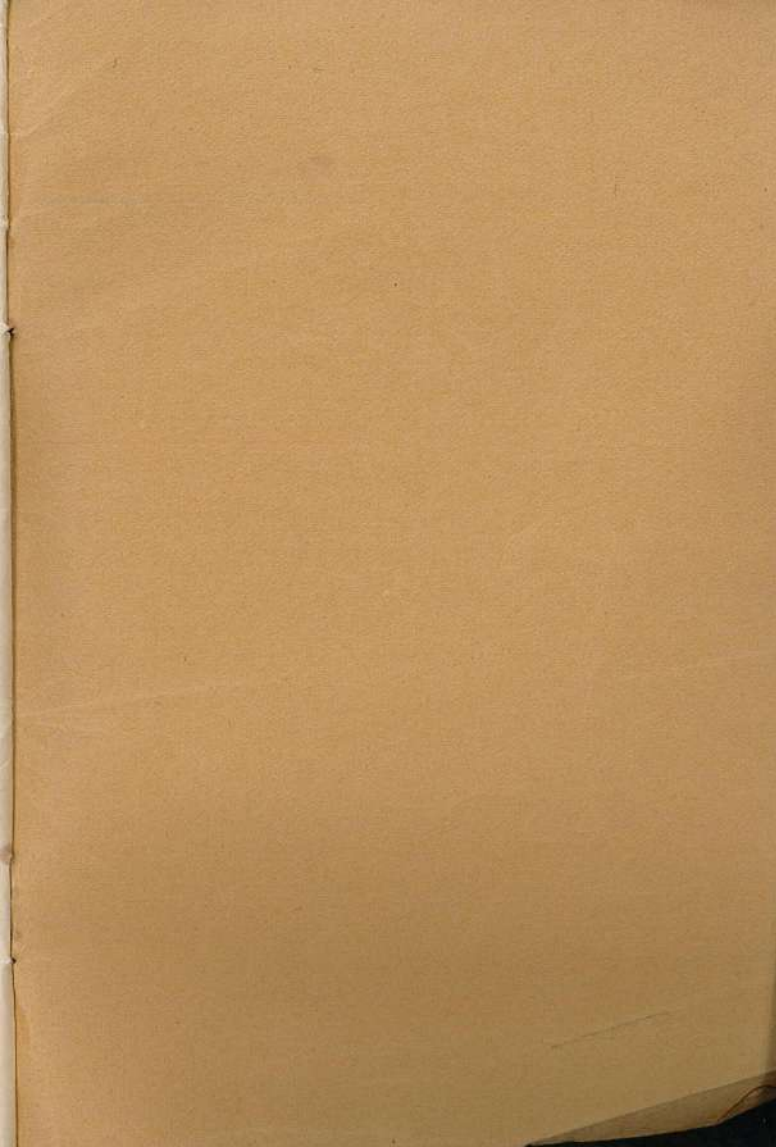
And when the earth is ripe for its judgment, then, as the lightning flashes from one end of the heaven to the other, so the glory of the Son of Man will be displayed, and He will come for the deliverance of His people Israel, and for the overthrow of the Antichrist. Then He will establish His kingdom upon the earth, even as it is written: "The seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." There can be no millennium until Christ brings it. He does not look to men to prepare a millennium for Him, He will bring it in and establish it, that the glory may be not ours but his own. Rev. 11:15.

I have not time to trace its course this morning; it will end in a rebellion, but in that rebellion also He will be the Victor; and He will overthrow the last of His enemies, and death itself shall be destroyed. Then shall come to pass that which is written, that "God—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the Triune God—may be all and in all." 1 Cor. 15,28.

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