

NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRIES

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“Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?
Who can shew forth all His praise?”

Psa. 106 : 2.

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NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRIES

THE Lord Jesus Christ is the One of Whom all God's inspired ministers spake. He is their subject, whether it be the Baptist, who testified of Him to Israel as the One about to visit them, or Paul, who testified of Him as our ascended and seated Head at God's right hand. Even the Lord Himself testified concerning Himself, and we know that His testimony is true. God thus revealed His Son, and His several purposes in Him, by means of the ministries of those He appointed. They spake and wrote according as it was given them, and their testimony is preserved to us in the Holy Scriptures.

The ministers whom God appointed to speak or write the words of Holy Scripture are, for the most part, closely associated with the ministry they were chosen to perform. For instance, Moses and Paul lend their names as titles to the specific truths made known through them. Moses was but the minister through whom the law was given—God Himself was the Author; nevertheless that word was termed both “the law of the Lord” and “the law of Moses” (LUKE 2:22-23). Paul speaks of “the gospel of God,” “the gospel of Christ,” and “my gospel” in connection with the same glorious good news (ROM. 1:1, 16; 2:16). This was “of God” as to its source, “of Christ” as to its subject, and “my gospel” as being that distinctive message which was revealed solely through Paul's ministry.

That God's ministers should thus have been associated with the Word He gave them to minister suggests that He would have us consider the two together—the Minister with his Ministry, the occasion when the word was spoken with the word spoken, the nature of the

hearers with that which was spoken to them—that thereby we may the better think upon, and enter into, the things revealed. Then, as the steps in the unfolding of God’s dealings are seen in the light of the consequences they had in the lives of those through whom they were made known, the very steps themselves become the more apparent and striking. This, therefore, is our present purpose, to acquaint ourselves afresh with the Ministers of the New Testament that thereby we may be led the more fully to realize—that is, to make real to ourselves—God’s purposes in Christ.

The New Testament Ministries have been taken in the order in which they form successive steps in the unfolding of God’s purposes. Each ministry is considered separately to preserve us from confusing one with another, and that we may thereby be enabled to see their several purposes. Then as the successive ministries are traced we are led both to that which is the fulness of God’s revelation made known in Paul’s latter ministry, and to that vision of the eventual accomplishment of God’s purposes concerning the earth foreseen in the Revelation committed to John. May the God of all grace guide and bless in the study of His Word.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

“John . . . first preached before His coming
the baptism of repentance to all
the people of Israel”

Acts 13 : 24.

THE LORD'S FORERUNNER

HIS MINISTRY

HIS MINISTRY AS PRESENTED
IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

THE LORD'S FORERUNNER.

ZACHARIAS and Elizabeth, the parents of John, stood faithful amidst prevailing unfaithfulness. The start of their life together had been right, for they married within their tribe (LUKE 1:5; cp. NUM. 36:7-9). Their subsequent life had likewise been right, for it is emphasized that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (LUKE 1:6).

But while their way had been truly ordered, yet they had not a son, and were now well stricken in years. That this was an unfulfilled desire can be seen by the words of Gabriel—"thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son" (LUKE 1:13). "Heard" is in the aorist tense, not the imperfect, which suggests that this prayer had been made in days gone by, but that since the time had come when such a gift was humanly impossible, it had not continued to be requested. Thus it was that Zacharias hesitated when Gabriel gave him the promise of a son, this answer to their prayer having long ceased to be expected.

To the righteousness of the home life of Zacharias must be added the rightness of his public fulfilment of his priestly office; and it was "while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course" that the angel Gabriel came to him with this joyous message concerning the son that was to be given him. This has ever been the manner of God's dealings with His own: when home matters are in order, and His service is being truly done, then He reveals the things which belong to those of His children who are faithful. The years that had gone by had been to Zacharias and Elizabeth a time of preparation, a time of testing, when their faithfulness had been proved so that they were such as God could use.

Had this prayer for a son been fulfilled earlier, it would not have produced such a keen consciousness that he was a child of God's own giving. Their experience was a

repetition of that of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebekah, and of Manoah and his wife. When the natural ability of the flesh is impaired, then God often steps in and manifests His overruling power. John came in the natural way; yet these antecedents of his birth marked his coming as supernatural, and manifested the working of an agency that was above the ordinary, and showed him to be a child of miracle. Thus there was given to such a pair him of whom the Lord said, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (MAT. 11:11).

Luke alone gives the record of John's birth and its attendant happenings, it being the purpose of his Gospel to present a history of all things connected with the Lord "from the very first" (1:1-4). The incident with which he opens is Gabriel's announcement to Zacharias that he should have a son; thus the promise of John's conception marked the commencement of those happenings which led to the Lord's coming.

The literary disposition of the first two chapters of Luke emphasize how the events connected with John led up to those to do with the Lord. The sequence of events associated with their conception is identical: Gabriel first gave the announcement (1:5-12; 1:26-30); then commanded that they were to be named respectively John and Jesus (1:13; 1:31); said that they would be great (1:14-17; 1:32-33); and answered the question how this should be (1:18-23; 1:34-38). This same sequence continues through the records of their birth and childhood. There was the time of waiting (1:24-25; 1:39-56); their birth and the attendant rejoicing (1:57-58; 2:1-20); they were circumcised and named (1:59-63; 2:21-24); the Holy Ghost caused a prophecy to be spoken concerning them each (1:64-79; 2:25-39); and of them both it is said, "the child grew" (1:80; 2:40).

John's going before the Lord was thus a fact in the natural sense as well as later in a ministerial. This marked similarity between his coming and that of his Lord must have caused many to realize that there was a connection between these two sons. Then also the words spoken

made it clear that, though both were great, yet the second was the greater. John's greatness was extrinsic; it was through the endowment of power he received from above—"He shall be great in the sight of the Lord"; for he was to "be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (1:15). But the Lord's greatness was intrinsic; it was what He was in Himself—"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest" (1:32).

John's general appearance and manner of living was remarkable. The casual observer must have realized at once that he was a man of no ordinary character; but the enlightened student of the Old Testament would certainly have been reminded, apart altogether from what he said, of those prophecies which were associated with the advent of their Messiah—the coming of Elijah (MAL. 4:5), and the voice of one crying in the wilderness (ISA. 40:3).

John dressed in the same manner as Elijah; he "had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins" (MAT. 3:4), and Elijah "was a man with a garment of hair" (2 KINGS 1:8, R.V. marg.). The Lord commented on John's clothes when He asked the people if they thought he was a prophet (MAT. 11:7-9); evidently this had been the characteristic garb of the prophets, for Zachariah mentions those who posed as such, wearing "a garment of hair to deceive" (13:4, margin). Then also John cried in the wilderness beside Jordan, the place of such memorable associations to Israel, for here it was that they first entered their land; as many as desired to hear him had to leave Jerusalem and Judæa and go away into the wilderness, and such as were baptized re-entered the land through the waters of Jordan in a manner that was remarkable for its similarity to the nation's first entry under Joshua.

Visualizing John's appearance, and the setting in which he preached, we may well ask ourselves what would have been our attitude towards his ministry had we lived in those days. Perhaps it is a foregone conclusion that we would most certainly have repented and shown it publicly by baptism, and, what is more, we

should not have been content with this, but would have stayed by John to seek to help him in some way, or, if not this, we would have returned home and entreated our relations and acquaintances to go and hear him. But would we ? Looking back on the past, it is easy to see what would have been the right course, but in those days, as always, they needed to seek enlightenment from above in order to discern God's truth and to act according thereto.

To have been baptized with the baptism of John must have meant much ; there was no glamour or excitement to buoy them up, but they were faced with the stern realities of the world in which they were living. Think what their attitude would have looked like, how unconventional it was to leave the cities and go to a man of such strange dress and ways, and to the wilderness of all places. Then who among the Pharisees believed John ? Who of any intellectual standing took what he said seriously ? If these, who surely ought to know, had not countenanced him, then how simple it would appear before the world generally to be baptized, and that in company with publicans.

It is well, at the outset of our study, to have put this question to ourselves, for living, as we do, many years after the days when the New Testament ministries were enacted, we are apt to imagine that it would have been easier to enter into truths then than it is now. But it is clear that those who heard John needed, as men always do, to seek enlightenment from above to discern the way of truth. Such as trusted to human sight and reasoning, or to what others said and did, had much to deter them, but to as many as were graciously enlightened how different was the outlook ! They could brave the passing jeers, for in John they recognized the very forerunner of the Lord from heaven.

This question is all the more pressing in view of the glorious truth up to which we shall eventually be led in tracing the ministries of the New Testament. The message of God to Israel in John's day was indeed glorious, but the message He would make known to His

own in this day is more exceedingly glorious. There is, however, this similarity between them: they alike require a response from those to whom they are addressed, and it is in this that we can draw a useful lesson from the experiences of those who heard John preach.

Let us test ourselves by one short passage. "His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery" (COL. 1:26-27). What is our attitude towards this purpose, or desire, of God? Have we prayed earnestly that He would enlighten us in the understanding of this which He desires us, as His children, to know, or have we simply let the matter pass unheeded? Have we sought to go on into this truth or have we been deterred by the fear of what some might say about us? Have we encouraged other believers to give heed, or have we—oh may it not be!—discouraged them? It has been easy to see what Israel's attitude ought to have been to the word John heralded to them; but is it not easy to see what our attitude ought to be to this which God has so definitely stated He wants us to know? Assuredly the only fitting attitude towards such a gracious expression of God's desire for His own is one which seeks that His desire might be fulfilled in our individual case.

If John's pathway was strange to the natural eye, what shall be said of his end? The Lord's forerunner, whose coming had been proclaimed by the angel, died in weakness, a victim of a woman's hatred, without any divine intervention to save him. While many rejoiced at his birth, yet but a few sorrowing disciples were there to lay him in the grave. He who had seen multitudes flock to his baptism ended his days in prison. But John's passing was no exception. The Son of God was last seen by the world as one suffering upon a cross; Peter, James, and John, the most distinguished of His twelve disciples, were all martyred; Stephen was stoned; and Paul is last seen in the Scripture as a prisoner "now ready to be offered." To the world all this might have appeared utter failure, but God has revealed His purposes, and, as we shall trace, their seeming fate was a direct result of the

outworking of His purposes. As in life, so now also through death, John led men to Christ; for when his disciples had laid him to rest, they "went and told Jesus" (MAT. 14:12).

HIS MINISTRY.

"John . . preached . . to all the people of Israel" (ACTS 13:24). John's ministry was, therefore, to Israel as a people, and the advent of his ministry introduced a new era of God's dealings with His chosen nation, for, as the Lord said unto them, "the law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached" (LUKE 16:16 R.V.). Before, however, considering what this further phase of God's dealings meant to Israel, let us first note His earlier ways with them, that thereby we may appreciate something of their state at the time when John ministered.

God's promise to Abraham and David of an earthly kingdom was confirmed by an unconditional oath. His way is perfect, and what He has promised to Israel will certainly be accomplished. Israel have, however, been dealt with conditionally; on occasions God has caused these promises made unto their fathers to be set before them upon certain terms. The application of these conditions has resulted in their varied history right down the ages.

As we contemplate Israel to-day, scattered and afflicted, we remember with thankfulness this promise which God has said He will assuredly establish to them. But in this we are apt to overlook what He has said He would have done for them had they believed Him and fulfilled His will. This theme is dwelt on in Psalm 81: "Oh that My people would hearken unto Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I should soon subdue their enemies" (13-14, R.V.). "But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me. So I gave them up unto their own heart's lusts: and they walked in their own counsels" (11-12). If Israel had hearkened, God

would have delivered and honoured them, but as they did not, He had, necessarily, to refrain from doing all that He might have done for them.

Israel are a typical people—that is to say, God has set them as a type of His dealings with the redeemed. In considering God's conditional dealings with Israel, we find a lesson for ourselves as His own. What might God have done for us had we given more heed to His Word and walked more consistently in His way? or what might He yet do for us if we act so that it is possible for us to receive the blessings He is so ready to impart? Many of our prayers are occupied, quite rightly, with requests that God might guide, use, and bless us for His own Name's sake. Yet we need, perhaps, to think of these requests in the light of Israel's experiences. We know that God is as desirous to do things for us as when He waited to be gracious to Israel. The question is not His willingness to bless, but rather our fitness to receive what He is so ready to bestow. Oh, then, that we may pray to be kept in that attitude of heart and life where God is able to bless us with all He has intended for us!

Briefly, then, let us consider God's conditional dealings with His people Israel which led up to, and finally produced, the peculiar characteristics of the time of John. The dedication of the Temple by Solomon was undoubtedly the high day of Israel's former welfare, and the great joy of that time became proverbial (2 CHRON. 30 : 26). God had delivered them from Egypt under Moses, brought them into their land of promise under Joshua, established the throne under David, and finally, He had caused the Temple to be built and its service to be inaugurated under Solomon. This climax in Israel's prosperity was quickly followed by departure and consequent impoverishment, and this continued and increased with but few reformations right down to New Testament days. Under Solomon's son, Rehoboam, the ten tribes departed from the throne of David, and their subsequent apostasy was rapid, with the result that they early went into captivity. The two tribes that remained loyal were given several godly kings, who revived the true service

of God. Apostasy was thereby restrained; nevertheless, eventually it gained such ground that they also were delivered into captivity. At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prayed for the generations of Israel that were to follow, and in the foreknowledge of God he was caused to give a condition, based upon that set forth by Moses in Deuteronomy 30, for the event of such departure.

“When Thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against Thee; if they turn again to Thee, and confess Thy name, and pray and make supplication unto Thee toward this house: then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel, and bring them again into the land which Thou gavest unto their fathers” (1 KINGS 8 : 33-34, R.V., with A.V. marg.).

This condition that Israel should “turn again” to God that they might receive forgiveness of sins and restoration in the land of their fathers became henceforth a prerequisite of any of His dealings with them for blessing, and any failure to respond to this requirement has always been followed by disaster. About the time of their being taken into captivity, both houses of Israel were given this call to “turn again.” It was in the sixth year of the reign of Hezekiah, the godly king of the two tribes, that the ten tribes under their last king, Hoshea, were carried away into captivity by the Gentiles “because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed” (2 KINGS 18 : 9-12). In the early part of his reign, Hezekiah wrote letters to those of the ten tribes, giving them an invitation to come into his kingdom and share with him, and with the two tribes, in the celebration of the passover at Jerusalem; thus it was about the time of their captivity that the ten tribes received this exhortation.

“So the posts went with the letters from the King . . . throughout all Israel . . . saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and He will return to the remnant of you . . . For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that led them captive, so that they shall come again into this land; for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will

not turn away His face from you, if ye return unto Him . . . So the posts passed . . . but they laughed them to scorn, . . . nevertheless divers . . . humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem" (2 CHRON. 30 : 8-11).

The two tribes were not taken into captivity until the time of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon; but in the first year of his reign they received, as the ten tribes had done, a call to "turn again."

"The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in . . . the first year of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon; . . . the Lord hath sent unto you all His servants the prophets, . . . They said, Turn ye again . . . and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever; . . . and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto Me . . . Therefore . . . Because ye have not heard My words, behold, I will send . . . Nebuchadrezzar . . . against this land" (JER. 25 : 1-9).

The last of the kings of the two tribes was Zedekiah, and it is said of him that "he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel" (2 CHRON. 36 : 13). Thus all the twelve tribes of Israel were taken captive under the power of the Gentiles and all the land promised unto Abraham—that is, "from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates"—became the kingdom of Nebuchadrezzar (2 KINGS 24 : 7; cp. GEN. 15 : 18). Israel from that time onwards have been disinherited and dispersed.

While it was in the first year of Nebuchadrezzar that Judah received this call to "turn again," the rejection of which meant the forfeiture of their land, yet in the second year of his reign, Nebuchadrezzar himself received that vision of the great image with the head of gold, breasts of silver, thighs of brass, legs of iron, feet and toes of iron and clay mixed—the meaning of which it was given to Daniel to explain was that successive kingdoms should follow in the place of Nebuchadrezzar but that all these would at the end be supplanted by a Kingdom set up by the God of heaven.

"And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the

sovereignty thereof be left to another people; . . . it shall stand for ever" (DAN. 2: 44, R.V.).

The period of Gentile rule over the territory promised to Israel was destined to continue unbroken until such a time that the stone cut without hands—that is, the Kingdom set up, not of man, but by the God of heaven—should come. It remained, therefore, that Israel must continue without the possession of their land until that day when the God of heaven shall Himself reclaim it and then His Kingdom shall fill the whole earth (ver. 35). In the days of Nehemiah and Ezra a remnant from the captivity were allowed to return to Jerusalem in order to restore the wall and the Temple in preparation for the coming of Christ, but they returned to dwell in a land which, while it was theirs by promise, was as yet held by a Gentile power.

The prophets following the overthrow of Israel's kingdom spoke often on this theme of its restoration and of the repatriation of the dispersed Israel. As the scattering of Israel was consequent to their not having "turned again" unto God after departing from Him, so, conversely, their gathering will be accompanied by a return unto Him. Until Israel turns again unto their God, they will not be fully restored.

"I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them, . . . they shall remember Me . . . and turn again. . . . and I will bring them into the land" (ZECH. 10: 6-10; cp. HOS. 5: 14 - 6: 1; 14: 1-7).

This, then, was the Israel to whom John the Baptist came, a nation to whom God had promised a Throne and a Kingdom, yet a people who, through failure to fulfil His conditions, were now reduced to being the subjects of a Gentile dominion. John came unto Israel that he might, in the words of Isaiah, "Prepare the way of the Lord." There was a custom in those days which provides an apt illustration of his mission. When a person of distinction was about to visit a city a man was sent on before to remove the boulders and suchlike obstructions

from the road by which he was to enter. So John preceded the Lord that he might prepare His way before Him.

Gabriel's word to Zacharias made it clear that this way prepared for the Lord was "a people prepared for the Lord" (LUKE 1:17). The manner of this preparation is also stated: "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God" (ver. 16). "Turn to" (*epistrepho*) is the same word as "turn again" in the Septuagint rendering of the passages we have quoted in reference to Israel's turning again. (The Septuagint is the Greek version of the Old Testament current in John's day.) Thus John came to move many in Israel to fulfil that condition for their national blessing ordained in Solomon's prayer; his coming thus betokened some dealing of God with His chosen nation for blessing.

John, therefore, came to prepare Israel for the Lord who had come to visit them. "Visited" is a word used by Luke to describe the position of Israel at the time when the Lord was among them. He "hath visited . . . His people . . . the day-spring from on high hath visited us" (1:68, 78). "God hath visited His people" (7:16). But when John commenced to preach, he did not confine himself to the plain straightforward statement that the Lord was nigh, but said "Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (MAT. 3:2). This, however, was supplementary to his testimony concerning the Lord's coming, for it showed in what capacity He was to be manifest unto them.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder; . . . Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even for ever" (ISA. 9:6-7).

The One Whose way John had come to prepare was heir to David's Throne and David's Kingdom, and He was to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice for ever. The coming of Israel's King thus introduced the proclamation of the Gospel concerning this

Kingdom. The proclamation of that Gospel would certainly have turned the minds of many in Israel to those definite passages such as "the God of heaven"—and note the title here—shall "set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . it shall stand for ever" and shall fill "the whole earth" (DAN. 2:35, 44); and to other passages in the prophets which show this to be, first of all, a Jewish hope, for Jerusalem will be the city of the great King, and Israel will be His ruling nation.

In Malachi's day "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard" (3:16), and in like manner when John came some three hundred and seventy years later there were a few who had communion together in the things of God. Mary and Elizabeth talked together, and some of their words are recorded. Simeon was a faithful man, and Anna knew of some in Jerusalem to whom she could speak of the things she held precious. Gabriel said of John "many shall rejoice at his birth" (LUKE 1:14), and these faithful ones did indeed rejoice—the very atmosphere of Luke's opening chapters pulsate with an exhilaration of joy. This joy did not come from the present happenings only, it came also from the thrill of anticipation which went through their hearts when they realized what it was that these happenings betokened.

"All that is in thine house, . . . shall be carried to Babylon: . . . Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, . . . The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (ISA. 39:0 – 40:3).

John had come to fulfil the words of Isaiah—"The voice of one crying in the wilderness" (LUKE 3:4), and the context of that prophecy associates that voice with the comfort or consolation of God's people Israel following a time of trouble which commenced with their being delivered into Babylon. Those faithful ones thus rejoiced in expectation of this hope. Simeon was "looking for the consolation of Israel," and Anna spake of the infant Lord "to all them that were looking for the redemption of

Jerusalem" (LUKE 2 : 25, 38, R.V.). Other passages in Isaiah also show that the consolation or comfort of Israel will be when Israel are restored, for until then they will know no lasting cheer (51 : 1-11; 66 : 10-13; cp. JER. 31 : 10-14). "The redemption of Jerusalem" is likewise connected with that restitution, for not only will Israel as a people be delivered but their city and land will also be redeemed from the hand of those by whom it has been held (ISA. 62; 1 : 27). Zacharias in his inspired hymn of praise likewise speaks as expecting that their warfare was accomplished, and that the time drew near for their deliverance from those who had oppressed them.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, . . . That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; . . . that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, . . . all the days of our life" (LUKE 1 : 68-79).

This, then, is the hope which the enlightened ones of those days visualized when they heard John, and after him the Lord and the Twelve, use the expression "Kingdom of Heaven," and it was for this the Lord taught them to pray "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (MAT. 6 : 10). As pictured by the stone cut without hands seen in Nebuchadrezzar's vision, this Kingdom was to "come"; the source from which it would come was not human (JOHN 18 : 36-37), but "of Heaven," the genitive evidently implying origin—"from Heaven"; and the place to which it shall come being "the whole earth." When this shall be, and not before, that prayer will receive its complete fulfilment, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (cp. PSA. 103 : 19).

"The Kingdom of Heaven" is a term used only in Matthew, it being always in the plural "the Kingdom of the Heavens," but "the Kingdom of God" is employed in all the Gospels. The Kingdom of God must include the Kingdom of Heaven, as the greater includes the lesser, for the Kingdom of God necessarily embraces all over which God is Sovereign, whereas the Kingdom of Heaven evidently particularizes that division thereof which is of, or from, heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven may be called

the Kingdom of God, as passages strictly parallel show (MAT. 4:17; MARK 1:15); but it does not necessarily follow that it is coextensive. For example, English and British can be used interchangeably to express nationality, though their field of meaning is by no means equal. English strictly specifies that the person is of the English race and a native of that country of the British Isles called England. British, on the other hand, is a more inclusive term, expressing the nationality of one domiciled within Great Britain. An English-man is British, but a British-man is not necessarily English—he may be Scotch or Welsh. Matthew's use of the more restricted term "Kingdom of Heaven" particularizes that John's ministry to Israel pertained to this specific portion, or sphere, of God's great Kingdom.

When John began publicly to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven, it is not said that he explained what he meant, neither is it recorded that any asked him for such an explanation. The same is also the case with the Lord's preaching; He spoke much about the Kingdom of Heaven, likening it to various figures, and giving instruction as to how they might enter or gain reward therein, but as to what this Kingdom was He neither gave, nor was asked to give, a definition. As we have traced, the Kingdom was something well known and generally expected by many among Israel in those days; hence to have explained what it was would have been superfluous—all that they needed to be told was the bearing that the then present happenings had upon this their hope. The Old Testament sets forth the promise of the Kingdom to Israel and the New records how it has been preached unto them. Like other Old Testament subjects—as, for instance, the New Covenant—its appearance in the New Testament called for no special introduction or explanation.

John the Baptist thus stood at the threshold of a period when God caused this hope of the Kingdom to be proclaimed to Israel. The Lord, speaking of that time, said—"From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent

take it by force" (MAT. 11 : 12). The inflectional termination of the verb rendered "suffereth violence" indicates that its voice is either middle or passive, to be decided by its usage. Here it is rendered as the passive—"suffereth violence"; but the Revised Version renders this same construction in Luke 16:16 as the middle—"entereth violently." This latter would seem the most probable meaning, for the parallel passage in Luke reads—"Since that time the Kingdom of God is preached" (16 : 16). John thus introduced a time when the Kingdom of Heaven was entering violently; it was being proclaimed in a manner which compelled attention—"and the violent take it by force" or "the forceful ones grasp it." Thus there were those who grasped that opportunity of laying hold upon the Kingdom, or in the phraseology used elsewhere, were striving to enter therein.

John, as the first herald of that proclamation, gave promise of things shortly to follow, the foremost and greatest being his testimony that the Lord was about to appear, and then of what He should do, even baptize them with the Holy Spirit. Thus in Acts John is referred back to as the first herald of that proclamation to Israel of which the testimony of those days was a continuation (1 : 22 ; 10 : 37 ; 13 : 24) ; and the baptism of the Holy Spirit then given as an accompaniment of that proclamation was repeatedly affirmed to be the fulfillment of John's promise (1 : 5 ; 11 : 16 ; 18 : 24-28 ; 19 : 3-7). The Acts is the record of the course of that proclamation to Israel, and in the addresses there recorded frequent reference is made to John. The Epistles, on the other hand, never, at least directly, mention John, their purpose being not so much to record that witness which was to Israel as a nation, but rather to edify those who, from among Israel and the Gentiles, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation.

To this promise of things shortly to follow John added warnings, for the proclamation that the Kingdom is at hand is always accompanied by a warning of impending judgment. The setting up of the Kingdom is

to be preceded by a weeding out of all that offend—"Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (MAT. 13 : 30); hence the nearness of the Kingdom meant also the nearness of the judgment connected therewith. John's warnings of judgment were not so much addressed to the moral delinquents as they, for the most part, realized their need and readily repented, but the class who invoked his severest censure were the respected Pharisees and Sadducees, the religious and intellectual leaders of the people, for, as is generally the case, this class, as a majority, not only rejected God's Word themselves, but also hindered others who looked to them for guidance.

This preaching of the Kingdom to Israel was conditional. John, and after him the Lord and the Twelve, did not say "the Kingdom of Heaven" had come, neither did they state definitely that it was to come at that time, but simply stated that it "is at hand." The word so translated occurs in the same form in Luke, where it is rendered "is come nigh" (10 : 11); perhaps the thought is best conveyed by "doth draw near." The Kingdom of Heaven had drawn near tentatively, so that it might have been received by Israel upon certain specified conditions; thus it was that the coming of the Kingdom was a contingency so long as the opportunity of receiving it remained open to Israel.

We have noted that Gabriel said of John—"Many of the children of Israel shall he turn again to the Lord their God." This John did when he called upon Israel to repent and confess their sins, for to "turn again" is linked with repentance: "Surely after that I was turned I repented" (JER. 31 : 19). This key thought, "turn again," thereafter continued to underly God's dealings with Israel throughout that period when their hope was in view, for, as the history of that time shows, it remained the condition for their receiving this hope even so far as unto the end of Acts. It is ever in this world of failure a fit time for repentance, but that was not the thought of John's

proclamation; he cried because that particular time occasioned repentance. "Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," or "doth draw near"; repentance was timely because of the proximity of the coming Kingdom.

The situation created by the coming of this proclamation of the Kingdom was similar to that which occurred in Daniel's life. Daniel states that through reading Jeremiah's prophecy he learnt that God had promised Israel that after Jerusalem had laid desolate seventy years He would "visit you . . . in causing you to return" (DAN. 9 : 2; JER. 29 : 10). Realizing that those years had nearly expired, and knowing that Solomon's prayer had laid down that for Israel to be restored it was required that they should "repent and make supplication, . . . saying, We have sinned . . . and so return unto Thee with all their heart" (1 KINGS 8 : 47-48), Daniel therefore set himself to confess his own sin and the sin of his nation (DAN. 9 : 3-20). Daniel's prayer was thus in preparation for the fulfilment of God's promise seen when a remnant returned to Jerusalem with Nehemiah. In like manner, this Gospel of the Kingdom was to prepare them, for "the time is fulfilled"—that is, the set time for Messiah's coming (DAN. 9 : 25-26); "the Kingdom of God is at hand"—that is, according to this usage of the term, the time for Israel's visitation, comfort, and restoration. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," that was the attitude of heart on the part of Israel which was the condition for their being allowed to receive this blessing (MARK 1 : 15).

Israel were confronted with John's call to repentance, the genuineness of that call being forcefully attested by all its concomitant circumstances. What, then, did their response prove to be? The importance of Israel's attitude in this matter hardly needs to be pointed out: the express purpose of John's mission was to bring them into a right attitude, to turn them again and cause them to confess their sin and repent; thus their decision indicated whether or not they had answered to the purpose for which John had been sent to them. Then, also, the

supreme importance of Israel's attitude towards John's ministry lay in the consequences that were to result therefrom; it would mean that when the Lord came He would find them either prepared or unprepared to receive Him.

"And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of Him" (LUKE 7: 29-30).

Israel's attitude was one of general, though not unanimous, response; the rank and file were moved to repentance, but an influential section remained obdurate. We have touched upon the importance of this attitude in its effects on the people; here, in these verses, we are raised to a higher consideration, even its effects to Godward. God was "justified" when the ordinary people and the proverbially notorious publicans were baptized—that is, they accounted that what He said was just, and acted accordingly, irrespective of what they may have been in themselves. But the counsels of God were "rejected" when the Pharisees and lawyers refrained from being baptized. This word rendered "rejected" is frequently given as "despised," but something even more serious may be implied, for the margin reads "frustrated," and elsewhere the word is represented as "disannul" and in one instance "bring to nothing." The Pharisees adopted an attitude not merely of contempt but of contravention; they sought to "bring to nothing" God's counsel.

As the attitude of Israel towards John's ministry was one of fairly general interest, it might be thought that the prospects were, on the whole, favourable, the antagonism of the Pharisees and their associates not being of very great consequence. This, however, was not so. John's censure anticipated the evil the Pharisees were to work, and the Lord likened their doctrine to leaven (MAT. 13: 6), in that as "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" so their pernicious teaching was to work its way among Israel until the whole nation was corrupted.

We find as we consider the successive ministers raised up of God to speak to Israel that, instead of the response to their message increasing, it decreased until eventually it became almost nil. These verses regarding Israel's attitude are followed by the parable of the children in the market-place, which depicts how Israel of that generation remained unresponsive to all entreaties.

John's ministry reached its climax when he was called upon to baptize the Lord, and shortly after this his public ministry was brought to an end by his imprisonment. Israel had not fully received John's preaching, and consequently they did not protest when he was taken from them; nevertheless God's long-suffering towards them was such that He raised up another minister unto them to testify this same gospel. Nothing is recorded of John's experience in prison, but we are able to enter into his thoughts by the question he sent two of his disciples to ask the Lord.

"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" (MAT. 11 : 2-3).

Now John had already received a definite sign by which the Lord had been pointed out to him, for he had declared, "He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (JOHN 1 : 33-34). Why, then, in view of this definite testimony to the Lord, should John afterwards manifest this doubt? Let us seek to put ourselves in John's position. He knew the prophecies that attended his birth, how that the Lord before Whom he had been sent was to be given "the throne of His father David" (LUKE 1 : 32), and that Israel were to be "delivered out of the hand of their enemies" (1 : 74). He knew, too, of the expectation "for the consolation of Israel" (2 : 25), and the "redemption in Jerusalem" (2 : 38) and had preached "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (MAT. 3 : 2). Yet where was the blessedness, the peace, the consolation, and the

restitution that was to be Israel's when Messiah came? If the Lord was He that should come, where were all these blessings that He was to bring? The Lord's answer to John's disciples was—"Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see"—that is, the miracles He had performed in their presence. These miracles would have reminded John of such passages as Isaiah 35: 4-6 and 42: 7, which testified that healings should attend the Lord's coming. He was therefore reassured as to the Person of the Lord even if the things which had given rise to his doubt were left unexplained.

The problem that caused John to ask this question may well be our problem also. As the prophecies and the preaching of those days anticipated the near approach of the day of Israel's deliverance and consolation, how was it that this hope did not materialize? The Lord Himself on two occasions, one in public and the other in private, expounded the significance of John's ministry. In these expositions He made it clear that the application of God's principle of dealing with Israel conditionally wrote a big "IF" across that time of the preaching of the Kingdom, for it was upon the condition of Israel's response to this word that the issues of those days hinged.

The Lord's first exposition on John's ministry arose out of this incident of John sending to Him, asking "Art Thou He that should come"? (MAT. 11 : 1-15). After reaffirming that John was the one of whom it was written "Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face," the Lord went on to speak to the people concerning those days.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it this is Elias, which was for to come" (MAT. 11 : 12-14).

The purport of John's coming was that if Israel were to receive the testimony then John was none other than Elijah, the verb "will" (*thelo*) indicating, in these circumstances, conscious volition or freedom of choice,

"If ye will receive it" or "If ye are willing to receive it" (R.V.). This was made a matter for Israel to decide. But Israel proved unwilling, so John was not accounted as Elijah, and the blessings that were to follow Elijah's coming were, in consequence, withheld. We know from what was afterwards revealed that Israel's failure was foreknown to God and that His purposes were pre-ordained accordingly; but this in no way absolved Israel from the responsibility of having rejected.

The Lord's second exposition was spoken privately to Peter, James, and John, as they descended the mountain after the Transfiguration. At the Transfiguration they had been permitted to see "the Kingdom of God come with power" (MARK 9 : 1), and while transported in that glory "there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him" (MAT. 17 : 3). Thus it was that they asked the Lord concerning Elijah's coming prior to the Kingdom.

"And His disciples asked Him saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist" (MAT. 17 : 10-13).

The Lord reaffirmed that Elijah "shall first come" and when he does it will be to "restore all things"—that is, as we have seen, the restoration of the Kingdom and the Throne of David. The scribes were right in this matter, as well they might be, for the prophets had stated clearly that Elijah was to come before that day of the Lord when the Kingdom shall be established (MAL. 4 : 5-6). But then the Lord went on to speak of a matter that was not so evident, something that the scribes, with the rest of unheeding Israel, knew not, but nevertheless, something the Lord made known to these His own. "But I say unto you"—in contrast to the scribes—"That Elijah is come already"; and by this "the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist." The same word which is rendered "willing" (*thelo*) in the

condition "If ye are willing to receive it" here occurs as "listed," "they have done whatsoever they listed." Thus Israel were unwilling to receive the message, and so the messenger was given over to the will of men; they did with him what they liked. The consequence of Israel's will was not, however, to end here, for the Lord added "Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them."

In these two expositions which the Lord gave on John we have, therefore, the explanation of John's tragic death. It was not through any lack of God's dealings, as an unenlightened human view might suggest, but it was the direct outcome of God's dealings with Israel. The explanation of John's end lay in the principle of God's conditional dealings with Israel at that time. On this principle the coming of John had implied the coming of Elijah, but Israel's unfavourable attitude towards the condition for his being accounted such occasioned that Elijah shall yet come.

This principle is evident, and its condition clearly stated, but how Elijah could have been John, or how he can yet come, is left unexplained. In matters like this we need to keep distinct the things explained in the Scriptures from those which are not explained. The things explained are necessary for our enlightenment, and these we need to search out prayerfully; but the things not explained but simply stated are for us to receive without its being essential for us to know the how or why, or because these reasons are beyond our ken. Elijah "was a man subject to like passions, or feelings, as we are" (JAS. 5:17), but while he was a normal man yet he was abnormally empowered by God. John was likewise a man, but he was filled "with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb" and went before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (LUKE 1:15-17). So when Elijah "shall yet come" it will be with a demonstration of power, for supernatural evidences are ever associated with a time when God is dealing directly with Israel.

This case of Israel's rejection of the condition of God's dealing with them occasioning a yet future coming of

Elijah will become increasingly clear as we consider the subsequent ministries of that time. This was by no means an isolated instance; it was rather the first of a succession in which Israel's rejection of the words sent to them in those days, necessitated that the events of that time should have a counterpart in the yet future time when God will again deal directly with Israel. When we have considered the ministries that succeeded John and are able to view his ministry as being part of a series, then we may be enabled to see the way in which the future coming of Elijah is linked with other happenings yet to come, all of which have a relation to things which occurred during the witness to Israel in New Testament days.

HIS MINISTRY AS PRESENTED IN JOHN'S GOSPEL.

To conclude our study of John's ministry at this juncture would be to consider it from one aspect only—that is, the aspect of his ministry as the Baptist to herald the Gospel of “the Kingdom of Heaven” to that contemporary generation of Israel, and to cause many of them to “turn again” by bidding them “repent.” The Gospel of John, however, presents another aspect of his ministry. This Gospel does not speak of him as “the Baptist,” does not state that he “heralded” (*kerusso*) or “preached” (*euaggelizo*), does not mention that he came to “turn again” Israel to the Lord, and does not record that he bade them repent. John's Gospel had obviously another aspect of the Baptist's ministry to present seeing that these items, which were the very substance of his ministry as recorded elsewhere, do not require to be mentioned.

A detail can be seen proportionately only in the light of its concord with the whole. Thus we can discern that aspect of John's ministry presented in the Gospel of John only as we view it in the light of the scope of this Gospel

as a whole. The purpose of John's Gospel, that intention to which the signs and other component details all jointly contribute, is clearly stated.

"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (JOHN 20 : 31).

The aspect of John's ministry presented in this Gospel is, therefore, his testimony that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," and this in order that through believing upon Him we "might have life through His name." Thus we read of John crying "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (1 : 29), and this "that all men through Him might believe" (1 : 7). This aspect of John's ministry is, very apparently, one which is to us-ward to-day every whit as much as to those who heard John speak; it is an aspect which is applicable to this time, and not circumscribed, like those unmentioned items, to God's particular dealings with Israel at that time; almost the only explanation given for John's ministry as it concerned Israel at that time is the brief statement "I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water" (1 : 31). The Gospel of John was in all probability the last Scripture to be written, which means that it was penned after the time when John's proclamation of the Kingdom to Israel had any immediate bearing; thus his ministry is given, not in the light of its purport to Israel, but of its purport to the world.

"I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (1 : 34, R.V.). These words were spoken by John after he had seen that sign which pointed out to him the One Whose way he had come to prepare. The verb rendered "witness" (*martureo*) occurs in John's Gospel 33 times, but in Matthew only one, Mark none, and Luke two; and the noun "witness" (*marturia*) occurs in John 14 times, but in Matthew none, Mark three, and Luke one. Witness is, therefore, a special theme of the Gospel of John, and it is witness to the person and work of the Son of God. John the Baptist was one who gave this witness; this was the purpose of

his coming as viewed from the aspect in which this Gospel is written. "John . . . came for witness, that he might bare witness of the Light . . . he was not the Light, but came that he might bare witness of the Light" (1 : 6-8, R.V.). The record of John's words are introduced by such phrases as "John bare witness of Him" (1 : 15), "and this is the witness of John" (1 : 19, R.V.). Then in speaking of the Lord to John the people referred to Him as "He . . . to Whom thou barest witness" (3 : 26); and the Lord's own discourse on John that is chosen to be recorded concerns the fact that "he bare witness unto the truth" (5 : 33).

As being a witness to the Son of God, John did not speak much concerning himself, neither does this Gospel say much about him personally. It is the Lord Himself that is made to fill our vision. He was "the Word" (1 : 1), John was but a "voice" (1 : 23); the Lord was "the Light" (1 : 9), but John a "lamp" (5 : 35, R.V.). Throughout John's utterances the pre-eminence of the Lord above himself was constantly affirmed: "After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me" (1 : 30); "He must increase, but I must decrease" (3 : 30). In the witness to the Lord we, too, can have part, and in this John's attitude is a model for us to emulate. May we seek so to direct attention to His glory far above all, that those who hear may become unconscious of us through being occupied with Him. As with John, so with all who go on to believe, the token of true growth in grace is the desire that the Lord shall in all things have the pre-eminence.

There are several things which distinguish between John's witness to the Lord as the Son of God as recorded in this Gospel, and his specific ministry to Israel as recorded in the other Gospels. This can be seen from two examples. When he was asked "Art thou Elijah?" "He said I am not" (1 : 21, R.V.). This might seem a direct contradiction of that which the Lord said of him. "If ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah" (MAT. 11 : 14, R.V.). John's Gospel is not, however, concerned with those contingencies which were conditional upon Israel's

willingness, but is written in the light of the fact that Israel had "received Him not" (1 : 11). Then, when "John bear witness of Him," he said, or the Evangelist associates these words with his witness, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (1 : 17). "Grace" is never used in connection with John's ministry in the other Gospels; indeed the very word "grace" (*charis*) does not even occur in Matthew and Mark—they are concerned with another gospel than that of grace. These two examples serve to show that John's Gospel, and the record it gives of the Baptist's ministry, is written from the aspect of our present needs now that the conditional dealings of God with Israel, so far as that time is concerned, are settled by the covering statement "His own received Him not"; and the gospel of grace has been given us to receive and to proclaim.

This difference between the aspect of John's witness presented in the Gospel of John and that presented in the other Gospels and Acts makes clear the distinction between his ministry to all men, ourselves included, and his ministry to the Israel of his day. In John's all-embracing witness to the world the Lord is seen as the One Who died to bear away its sin and Who gives eternal life to all who believe on His name. But in John's restricted ministry to Israel the Lord is presented as coming particularly to that nation in the capacity of their promised Messiah, the King of David's line, and because they were visited the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, the hope of the consolation of Israel and the redemption of Jerusalem was probable. This distinction is to be seen in the case of some of the subsequent ministries; all the ministers of God testify to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in this they minister to us, but some of them had, like John, a specific ministry to those whom they definitely addressed. By noticing this distinction we shall add greatly to our appreciation of the several purposes of God revealed through His ministers; and, moreover, we shall see that ministry which God has addressed directly to us in its distinctive glory above and beyond that of any of the ministries by which it has been preceded.

What were the consequences of John's witness as recorded in this fourth Gospel? Time proved to the people that what John had said of the Lord was right—"John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this Man were true." Many believed on the Lord through him, even the place where he had laboured was afterward the scene of the fruits of his witness—"And He went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John was at the first baptizing . . . and many believed on Him THERE" (10 : 40-42, R.V.).

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

**“Jesus Christ was a minister of
the circumcision”**

Rom. 15 : 8

THE LORD FROM HEAVEN

THE FORMER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY

TEACHING - WARNINGS - PARABLES

THE LATTER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY

PROPHECIES - SUFFERINGS - ASCENSION

HIS MINISTRY AS PRESENTED

IN JOHN’S GOSPEL

THE LORD FROM HEAVEN.

“WHEREFORE when He cometh into the world, He saith . . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) To do Thy will, O God” (HEB. 10 : 5-7). These words the Lord from heaven uttered as He laid His glory by and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. The world was not, however, permitted to hear that mighty declaration; the first it saw was the firstborn of a virgin wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

“He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things” (EPH. 4 : 10). “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever” (HEB. 13 : 8). “The image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature,” the Creator and sustainer of all things; is now the Redeemer, “the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence” (COL. 1 : 14-19). After His ascension He revealed Himself to John, saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord, the God, He which is, and which was, and He which is to come, the Almighty I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I became dead, and behold I am alive unto the ages of the ages” (REV. 1 : 8-18, R.V. marg.). Yet this was the One Whose hair men plucked, Whose face they spat upon. O wonder of wonders! How wonderful that “the Word” thus “became flesh, and tabernacled among us” (JOHN 1 : 14, R.V. marg.).

Wherefore did He come? Those words He uttered as He left the glory for the manger at Bethlehem supply the answer—“Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (HEB. 10 : 5-9). He came to do the Father’s will, and this He did completely, for He affirmed repeatedly that everything He did, in word and in deed, was not of His own will but had been given Him of the Father.

"I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (JOHN 8 : 28; cp. 3 : 34; 5 : 17; 14 : 24; 17 : 4, 8). "I do always those things that please Him" (JOHN 8 : 29). The only "limitation" the Son knew was this, His absolute restriction to the will of the Father.

What purpose of the Father did the Son come to accomplish? "For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (MARK 10 : 45, R.V.). The Lord came to minister for a few short years within the comparatively small district of Palestine, then afterwards gave His life "that the world through Him might be saved." The theme of His great love in the gift of Himself, and of the efficacy of that sacrifice to us-ward who believe, may well seem to overshadow in importance those things He did during His ministry, but from the standpoint of our study of the New Testament ministries our attention must, of necessity, be given to His wondrous ministry.

"The Son of Man came . . . to minister (*diakoneo*)."

There are but two references to the Lord Jesus Christ being a "minister" (*diakonos*); Paul in argumentation put the question—"Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" (GAL. 2 : 17) in order to call forth an emphatic No!; the remaining reference is in the plain statement—"Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision" (ROM. 15 : 8). The Lord was a minister primarily to the circumcision—that is, the Jewish people. Thus it was that when a Syrophœnician woman besought His attention He replied—"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MAT. 15 : 24).

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past" unto Israel's fathers by the prophets, now spake unto them "in Son" (HEB. 1 : 1-2). As the Son, God came to Israel in person, for He was God; the Father addressed Him as such—"But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God . . ." (HEB. 1 : 8). Matthew, in recording that the Lord came to Israel

as their King, states that His name was "Emmanuel, God with us" (1 : 23).

As a minister of the circumcision the Lord was "born King of the Jews" (MAT. 2 : 2), as their King He entered Zion (21 : 4-5), and as such they rejected and crucified Him (27 : 37), but the Father raised Him up to sit upon the Throne of David (ACTS 2 : 30-31). The King of Israel was a title applicable only to the Deity; this is seen from Daniel's prophecy, spoken at the time when the last of Israel's kings was taken from them, for to him it was revealed, as we have noted, that the Kingdom was no more to be possessed until it was reclaimed by the God of heaven.

The prophets that followed likewise foresaw that Israel must thenceforth remain without a King until the day when God shall Himself reign in their midst—"The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee, . . . the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty" (ZEPH. 3 : 15-17). That the Jews recognized this is evident; Nathanael exclaimed when first he saw the Lord, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel" (JOHN 1 : 49); and the Jews who reviled Him used these titles interchangeably—"If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, . . . If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross" (MAT. 27 : 40-42).

What, then, did it mean to Israel to have the Son, their Divine King, ministering to them in their midst? It meant that their Kingdom was potentially present. This is clear in that when Zion was told "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass" (MAT. 21 : 5), it was said, "Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (MARK 11 : 10). Then also the Lord upon being asked by the Pharisees, "When the Kingdom of God should come?" declared—"The Kingdom of God is among you" (marg.), or "The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (R.V. marg.). This did not imply that the Kingdom was in their hearts, for the "you" must here refer to those He addressed, the Pharisees.

whose hearts were far from the truth; it meant rather that the Kingdom was present among them because, as the Lord went on to say, it was "one of the days of the Son of Man" (LUKE 17 : 20-25).

Matthew's Gospel in particular presents this aspect of the Lord walking among Israel as their King; thus from the standpoint of our study of the New Testament ministries we will, in the main, take this Gospel as the basis for consideration. Before, however, embarking upon this study of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ we would stay yet a moment to remind ourselves of the essentials which must ever be borne in mind when His Holy Name is mentioned.

A prime essential to all approach to the Lord Jesus Christ is that He must be honoured even as the Father: "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (JOHN 5 : 23). This is the acid test of all profession of worship; nothing less than this is of any honour to the Father, for, as the verse continues, "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him." Man is altogether shut up in his approach to God to the "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 TIM. 2 : 5), for He cannot be rightly addressed apart from the Son—"No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (JOHN 14 : 6); neither can He be known—"No man knoweth . . . Who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him" (LUKE 10 : 22).

A further essential is that the Lord Jesus Christ must be believed, for insight and understanding of His person and work is granted upon belief but not apart therefrom. It was to those who believed Him that the Lord manifested His glory; but to those who were inquisitive, insincere, or incredulous, He did not reveal Himself. Peter confessed "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (MAT. 16 : 16), not because of any wisdom of his own but by reason of divine enlightenment granted to him through believing. John could testify "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (JOHN 1 : 14), for he had joined in that

statement of faith "We believe that Thou camest forth from God" (10:80). The woman of Samaria received from the Lord a clear statement, such as few were privileged to hear, that He was the Messiah, and this because she did not doubt His words.

Those who were unbelieving received no such disclosure. When the chief priests, scribes, and elders of Jerusalem came and asked the Lord "By what authority doest Thou these things?" He agreed to tell them on condition that they first answered a question, the nature of which would cause them to divulge their belief or otherwise in God's manifest working. "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? . . . they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you . . ." (MARK 11:27-33); and this is the reply that must invariably be given to those who approach the Lord with critical intents. These scribes were equipped with well disciplined minds and could bring classical learning to bear upon the Lord's words, but this of itself did not befit them to be told of His authority; every qualification they seemed to possess was rendered of no consequence by reason of their unbelief.

May we, then, approach the study of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ reverently and believingly. Reverently because He must be honoured even as the Father, and believingly because upon this basis alone can we be granted that "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him."

THE FORMER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY.

MATTHEW presents the Lord's ministry of the Gospel of the Kingdom as being divided into two clearly distinct periods. This is seen in the two occurrences of the phrase "From that time began Jesus to . . .",

which words imply a starting-point in the Lord's ministry, a juncture at which He commenced to do something He had not previously done, but which He henceforth continued to do. The former period commenced immediately after John the Baptist was apprehended (4:17, R.V.); the latter, immediately after Peter's confession (16:21, R.V.).

"John was delivered up . . . from that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (MAT. 4:12-17, R.V.; cp. MARK 1:14, R.V.). Whatever the Lord had spoken prior to this did not come within the limits of this specific testimony, but now henceforth He preached this Gospel concerning the Kingdom to Israel. The Lord's heralding of this proclamation did not coincide with that of the Baptist's; Israel had heard John crying "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (3:2); but now that he was removed from their midst another arose, even He of whom John had given promise, and began to preach these identical words (4:17). The Lord in commencing this ministry did not, therefore, proclaim to Israel anything essentially fresh, but rather took up and continued that word which it was given the Baptist to open.

The Lord preached the same word as John—"the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"; but it was with greater forcefulness, for He did miracles, and with greater fulness, for He taught, gave warnings, and put forth parables, respecting that hope. This proclamation of the Kingdom to Israel was with ever-increasing power. At its commencement with John it was unaccompanied by healings, for "John did no miracle" (JOHN 10:41), then it was taken up by the Lord with the addition of evidential miracles (MAT. 4:23), and subsequently continued by the disciples when the power to work these wonders was imparted to many.

The Lord preached and worked miracles before Israel for a single purpose. He preached "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" and performed miracles to certify

that this Kingdom had "come upon" them. "But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you" (MAT. 12:28, R.V. marg.; cp. LUKE 11:20). The word here translated "come upon" (*phthano*) is defined in a lexicon as "to come first, precede, anticipate, come sooner than expected." It occurs in the Septuagint rendering of Ecclesiastes 8:14, corresponding to our "happeneth" in the sense that death happens upon men. In 1 Thessalonians 4:15 it is given as "prevent" in the Old English sense of "go before." The words "upon you" are a rendering of the preposition *epi* ("upon"), followed by the accusative form of the pronoun, in which circumstance this preposition indicates "up to" (Green). The implication of these miracles to Israel was that "the Kingdom of God" had "happened upon you," "overtaken you" or "come upon you," so that they were confronted with it abruptly.

"Then is the Kingdom of God come upon you." Thus it was, as we have already seen, that when John asked if He were He that should come, the Messiah of Israel, the answer given was that by His word the blind saw, the lame walked, and the lepers were cleansed.

The miracles of healing performed by the Lord's word may well have had also a typical significance to Israel. The man with the withered hand received it "restored whole, like as the other" (MAT. 12:13) and the blind man "was restored and saw every man clearly" (MARK 8:25). The word rendered "restored" in both cases is the same as occurs in the question "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" (ACTS 1:6). The power that the Lord exercised in these miracles of restoration manifested what He was able to do for Israel.

The teaching, warnings, and parables, which the Lord added in connection with His proclamation of this word to Israel will best be considered under separate headings. As Matthew's record of the Lord's ministry is traced, a progression is discernible giving a

sense of direction to His proclamation of the Kingdom. As with John's ministry, so with the Lord's; the associations of the districts where they commenced to preach "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" were of significance to the Jews. We noted that John's voice was heard at the river where Israel first entered into the land, but the Lord's commencement of that proclamation was at the place where Israel first began to be deprived of their land and to be carried away captive by the Gentiles (MAT. 4:12-13, R.V.; cp. 2 KINGS 15:29-30; cp. 2 KINGS 17:6).

The Lord commenced His ministry of the Kingdom to Israel in this district: "Galilee . . . in the borders of Naphtali; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying" (MAT. 4:14). The quotation then given is significant in that it is taken from a context that refers to Israel's deliverance and restoration. Naphtali, which "in the former time He brought into contempt," is seen as being "in the latter time made glorious," and this because to Israel was to be born a child Who should sit upon the Throne of David. Thus the rise of the light in Naphtali indicated the coming of that Son Who was to establish the Kingdom of Israel for ever; even the Lord Who then commenced to minister in their midst.

"In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath He made it glorious . . . the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light . . . Thou hast increased their joy . . . the rod of his oppressor Thou hast broken . . . For unto us a child is born . . . Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it . . . from henceforth even for ever" (ISA. 9:1-7, R.V.; quoted MAT. 4:14-16).

Matthew then pursues the Lord's ministry without mentioning that aspect which caused His several visits to Jerusalem as does the Gospel of John (JOHN 7:10 before 12:12), but rather gradually leads up to His public entry into Jerusalem, to the acclamation of the people, "Hosanna to the Son of David," thereby

emphasizing that it was in the direction of that end that He came to Israel's city. Nevertheless He whose rise in Galilee, and whose pathway to Jerusalem, set Him forth to be the promised Son of David, Israel took and crucified under this title, "the King of the Jews."

TEACHING.

We have seen that the Lord preached to Israel "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," and performed miracles to attest that this Kingdom "had come upon" them, and now in teaching the Lord was still concerned with the same subject. The preaching and miracles were to arrest attention and provoke inquiry, but the teaching provided the needed guidance for those who desired to grasp the opportunity of entering into that Kingdom.

Matthew presents the Lord's teaching concerning entry into the Kingdom in the form of a pattern address, usually termed "The Sermon on the Mount." The things which the Lord taught on that special occasion were the things He was teaching generally in respect to the heralding of the Kingdom. This is clear from the fact that Mark and Luke contain passages parallel thereto uttered by the Lord at various times, notably Luke 6 : 20-49, and Matthew in subsequent chapters narrates how the Lord reiterated themes He had expounded in this address.

The Sermon on the Mount is pervaded with the same atmosphere that characterized the preaching of that time. This is evident in the manner of the Lord's reference to the Father. The titles by which the Lord referred to the Father are an extraordinary feature; the term "your heavenly Father" (*ho pater humon ho ouranios*) is peculiar to this discourse (6 : 14, 26, 32; cp. 15 : 13). The similar expression "Father which is in heaven" is not used outside of the first three Gospels;

it occurs in Matthew 14 times, Mark two, and Luke two. Of Matthew's 14 occurrences, seven are with the possessive "My" referring to the Lord Himself (7:21; 10:32, 33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 19), and seven with "your" or "our" referring to man; of this latter seven no fewer than six are found in the Sermon on the Mount (5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 9; 7:11; 18:14). Thus God, in His knowledge and care of these, is referred to in a manner that was in keeping with their hope of the heavenly Kingdom.

Point is added to this frequent use of "heaven" in the address of the Father by noting the associations of the title "God of heaven" in the Old Testament. The associations are the dispersion of Israel, the gift of the kingdom of this world to Gentile rulers, and the future restoration of Israel. The second book of Chronicles records how Judah lost the Kingdom and were delivered to the Gentiles, but in the concluding verse, which is the last verse of the Old Testament according to the order of the Hebrew canon, a proclamation is given which employs this title—"Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem." Ezra and Nehemiah narrate the performance of that proclamation, and these books use 12 out of the total 18 occurrences of "God of heaven" in the Old Testament. This title is further associated with the final setting up of the Kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar was used to bring about the dispersion of Israel, and to him it was said, "Thou, O King, art a King of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom" (DAN. 2:37); but in the interpretation of the dream it was foreseen that "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom" (2:44). When Israel are restored they shall call God "Father."

"In those days . . . they shall come together . . . to the land that I gave for an inheritance unto your fathers . . . ye shall call Me My Father; and shall not turn away from following Me" (JER. 3:18-19, R.V.).

The setting of the Sermon on the Mount was, of course, in the first place among Israel. Those addressed were not to behave like many of the Gentiles among whom they lived (5 : 47 ; 6 : 7, 32 ; R.V.) ; their predecessors were the prophets (5 : 12) ; Jerusalem stood to them as the city of the great King (5 : 35) ; the scribes were their teachers (7 : 29) ; and for worship they were provided with the altar (5 : 23). The subject of the Sermon on the Mount pertains, therefore, to this atmosphere and setting. The subject itself is the way by which they might be permitted to enter into the Kingdom.

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (MAT. 5 : 20).

“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven” (MAT. 7 : 21).

“Enter into” is not, perhaps, a word which readily suggests to us anything of specific significance, but to Israel it at once betokened an opportunity of great moment, for by their national history they knew what it meant to “enter into” the land which God had promised them. Israel had “come out” (*exerchomai*) of Egypt and had “entered into” (*eiserchomai*) Canaan. Their coming out of Egypt with its bondage was through redemption provided for them by God, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (EX. 12 : 13), but their entry into the land God had given them was consequent upon their walk having been pleasing to Him. The whole nation came out under cover of the shed blood, but all these did not enter in, for “with most of them God was not well-pleased.”

“For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, how that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea ; . . . Howbeit with most of them God was not well-pleased : for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples . . .” (1 COR. 10 : 1-6, R.V.).

The New Testament draws many lessons from the example of Israel's pathway; the lesson deduced from their coming out is different from that of their entering in. Israel's coming out was a type of redemption—that is, of the appropriation by faith of God's provision whereby the sinner is liberated from sin's bondage and constituted God's purchased possession; their entering in, on the other hand, typified the subsequent pathway of faith where by going on to believe God and to walk in His way the redeemed are permitted to possess their possessions. The lesson of Israel's coming out is, therefore, of particular importance to those whose need is to receive initial redemption, but the instruction based upon their entering in is essentially a matter which applies exclusively to the redeemed. Those who are redeemed have set before them the privilege of seeking, by God's enabling, to enter into whatever may be the inheritance that is theirs by promise, and the very real probability that if, as redeemed ones, they are unfaithful and unbelieving they may be disallowed from entering. The epistle addressed to the believing Hebrews stresses this lesson, they were redeemed but the writer urges them to go on to believe God that they might "enter into" His rest and be partakers with Christ.

"For we are become partakers with Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: . . . For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out (*exerchomai*) of Egypt by Moses? And with whom was He displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore He that they should not enter into (*eiserchomai*) His rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in (*eiserchomai*) because of unbelief" (HEB. 3:14-19, R.V. marg.).

When the Lord in this Sermon on the Mount bade those of Israel to seek to "enter into" their particular calling termed "the Kingdom of Heaven" He did not, therefore, suggest that by their own striving and doing they might purchase redemption; His mention of the

altar shows that these exhortations were spoken to a people already provided with a means of cleansing, and, moreover, He inserted a clause whereby, on the fulfilment of certain conditions, their forgiveness was assured (5 : 23 ; 6 : 14). Israel were to God a redeemed nation, not simply the generation that came out of Egypt but those that followed: "And what one nation in the earth is like Thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be His own people . . . whom Thou hast redeemed out of Egypt. For Thy people Israel didst Thou make Thine own people for ever" (1 CHRON. 17 : 21-22). Thus the Lord addressed this Sermon to a people who were accounted as God's purchased possession and its subject concerned how they, as His people, might grasp the opportunity and "enter into" the Kingdom of Heaven that had then drawn nigh.

The requirement necessary that they might "enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" is crystallized in the central theme of the Sermon, that statement which constitutes the pivot around which all the other supplementary and subsidiary matters are ranged.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (MAT. 5 : 48).

"Perfect" (*teleios*) is derived from the same root as the word "end" (*telos*); it has the thought of the attainment of an end, and is the ultimate issue of that attainment. In the New Testament this word is variously rendered "perfect" in contrast to lack (MAT. 19 : 20-21), "of full age" in contrast to a babe (HEB. 5 : 13-14), and "men" in contrast to children (1 COR. 14 : 20). It is linked as a complement of such words as "attained . . . perfect" (PHIL. 3 : 12), "perfect and complete" (COL. 4 : 12), "perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (JAS. 1 : 4, R.V.).

Three cases where this word is used will serve to show conclusively that to "be perfect" does not concern the absence of sin but the consistent pursual of the pathway ordained of God in order that the end He has set before may be attained. The Lord Jesus Christ, whose

sinlessness was absolute, is said to have been made "perfect through sufferings" (HEB. 2:10; 5:8-9), and in this He is set forth as an example to His people to endure that they may also reign with Him. Paul, who knew the blessedness of imputed righteousness, said "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (PHIL. 3:12), and with this he gave the exhortation—"Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them which so walk even as ye have us for an ensample" (ver. 17, R.V.). Those addressed in the Hebrew epistle, whose acceptance was upon the merit of Christ having been "once offered to bear the sins of many" when He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (9:26-28), were encouraged on their pathway by the words, "Let us go on unto perfection"; and this had to do, not with their salvation, but with "things that accompany salvation" (6:1, 9).

The exhortation to "be perfect" is clearly a subject that is consequent upon redemption. It is to the Lord's people alone that any word is given to "go on unto perfection." This principle is seen to operate in connection with the several callings: the Sermon on the Mount applies it to those to whom the Kingdom of Heaven was preached, the Hebrew epistle to those whose blessings were associated with the heavenly Jerusalem, and Philippians with our hope which is in the heavenly places, seated with Christ, far above all.

In this Sermon the Lord, therefore, exhorted them to "be perfect," as this was required that they might receive the hope set before them, even that they might "enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." This connection between being perfect and entering into the Kingdom of Heaven is seen also in the Lord's conversation with the rich young man.

"Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, . . . If thou wouldest enter into (*ciserchomai*) life, keep the commandments . . . The young man said unto Him, All these things have I observed: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect (*teleios*), go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have

treasure in heaven: . . . and Jesus said unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into (*eiserchomai*) the kingdom of heaven" (MAT. 19 : 10-20, R.V.).

"What lack I yet? . . . If thou wouldest be perfect." To lack is therefore the opposite of being perfect. This word "lack" (*hustereo*) is rendered elsewhere "want" (LUKE 15 : 14), "come short" (ROM. 3 : 23), "come behind" (1 COR. 1 : 7), and "fail" (HEB. 12 : 15). Hence it implies to come short of some aspiration, whereas perfect means the attainment thereto. Man as a sinner has "come short of the glory of God" (ROM. 3 : 23), and it is impossible to "keep the commandments" so that this deficiency is made good; it can be remedied by redemption alone. Those who have a promise of inheriting a blessing may, however, come short of it; Esau is an example of this.

"Looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short (*hustereo*) of the grace of God; . . . as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright. For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it diligently with tears (HEB. 12 : 15-17, R.V.).

The testimony of the Scriptures would seem to be that the opportunity of receiving redemption is ever open to man. This message is not, however, concerned with redemption but with the inheritance of a blessing. If the heir of a promise, like Esau, "lacks," "comes short," or "falls back" therefrom, then he may be "rejected" or "disallowed" from inheriting the blessing. The possibility of finding opportunity for repentance is in this matter limited, for the past is beyond reclaim. The Hebrews epistle exhorts that in the light of this fact all should exercise care.

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into (*eiserchomai*) His rest, any of you should seem to come short (*hustereo*) of it" (HEB. 4 : 1).

The subject of the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven, is not, therefore, such as is applicable to the world at large. The Lord did speak words that apply to the whole world, and He has given

us a gospel whereby whosoever believeth on Him receives life in His Name; but these things are not the burden of the Sermon on the Mount. This Sermon has particular reference to Israel at a time when it can be said "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"; it is based upon the fact that they were God's peculiar people by purchase, and although "being evil" (7 : 11) was their recognized state, yet they were provided with a means of cleansing. The message of the Sermon, proclaimed upon this basis, was that as such they should seek to be "perfect" that they might "enter into," and not "come short" of, the Kingdom of Heaven.

The injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount are, therefore, the conditions for the obtainment of entry and reward in the Kingdom of Heaven. Personal righteousness was a paramount requirement—"except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (5 : 20). Those who shall enter into the Kingdom are called "the righteous" (13 : 43, 49; 25 : 37, 46). The standard of this righteousness was the Law, and the sense in which it could "exceed" that of others who professed to observe the Law was made clear by the Lord's strengthening the Law, as introduced by the repeated "I say unto you" (5 : 21-44), and His rules, which were superior to the traditions of the Pharisees (6 : 1-18). This righteousness was essentially a matter of doing; they were to "do and teach" the whole Law (5 : 19), for "he that doeth the will" of the Father was to "enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (7 : 21). It was righteousness in the sense that Zacharius, Elizabeth, and Paul could be said to be "blameless" in respect to their observance of "all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord" (LUKE 1 : 6; PHIL. 3 : 6); a righteousness relative rather than absolute (DEUT. 6 : 25).

These conditions were not something entirely new or unfamiliar to those whom the Lord addressed; they were in essence the injunctions already enjoined them in the law and the prophets. A large part of this Sermon,

together with the prayer included therein, can be reconstructed in the words of the Old Testament. The Lord's "text" was the law, in its letter and in its spirit. The working of these conditions necessarily involved the principle of reward for good and retribution for evil, which ever attends the application of law. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (7 : 12). This principle even entered into the matter of the forgiveness of their trespasses.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (MAT. 6 : 14-15).

When Peter asked how often he should forgive his brother, the Lord illustrated this principle by the parable of the unmerciful servant, who, because he did not forgive his fellow-servant, was cast into prison until he should pay his debt (MAT. 18 : 21-35). The contrast between the economy to which this Sermon pertains and that under which God is dealing with us at the present time is made clear by a matter like this. They had to forgive that they might be forgiven, but we should forgive because we have been forgiven. "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (EPH. 4 : 32). The matter is now on a higher plane and consequently a higher principle operates. It is not that it is less incumbent upon us to forgive, but rather more. They were compelled to forgive under pain of condemnation; we are constrained to do so by the love of Christ.

The Beatitudes are conditional blessings dependent upon the attitude and actions of the recipients. The first and eighth (5 : 3, 10) are in the present tense ("theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven"), evidently to express certain futurity; the Kingdom was theirs because it assuredly shall be. The rest are in the future. The third fixes the sphere, or realm, to which their hope pertains—"They shall inherit the earth"; the others speak of the blessed state that shall be theirs in that inheritance—they shall

be "comforted," "filled," and will "obtain mercy," "see God," and be called "the sons of God." These are future because they must await the time when the Kingdom of Heaven shall have come and their reward in heaven is given them (5 : 12).

The Lord brought this Sermon to a close by a simile of the wise man who built upon a rock and the foolish who built upon sand. Those like the man on the sure foundation were "Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them," but those like the foolish man were such as "doeth them not" (7 : 24-27). The doing of these sayings was thus the certain basis of their hope; everything depended upon their individual working out of the injunctions in daily life. This was the Lord's teaching relative to the hope of the Kingdom of Heaven, and as He taught them to live so He taught them to pray "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (6 : 10).

WARNINGS.

The Lord's ministry to Israel was one of love and compassion, but this graciousness necessitated words of warning. Unless the preaching had been accompanied by these warnings they would not have been informed as to the consequence of their attitude towards that which was proclaimed. These warnings to Israel were of two kinds—national and individual. Israel was then being dealt with as a nation; the hope of the Kingdom was national in character, and the realization thereof was then conditioned upon a general repentance. Collectively, therefore, the prospect before the nation was that if as a generation they turned again the Kingdom would come, but if not, the Kingdom would be withheld and given to a generation yet to arise. Individually, however, each man's attitude towards the things spoken would decide if he should enter into, or else be cast out of, the Kingdom. Hence the national attitude. that disposition which predominated,

affected the time when the Kingdom might come, but the individual's attitude determined his own entrance, or otherwise, into the Kingdom whensoever it should come.

The Lord's warnings to Israel were accompanied by references to the Gentiles being blessed; for, as we shall trace, Israel's failure, both national and individual, was graciously overruled of God to the blessing of the Gentiles. The Lord held up to Israel as a people the example of a Gentile community that repented at a lesser testimony than that which they were then privileged to receive. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold a greater than Jonas is here" (MAT. 12 : 41). Then also the Lord took the faith evidenced by the Gentile centurion as a reproach to the individual Israelite, and showed how many from the east and the west will be included as participators with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, while some of the "sons of the Kingdom" shall be excluded (MAT. 8 : 10-12, R.V.).

First, then, the warnings which concerned Israel as a nation. God's dealings with Israel have been in terms of generations. In the genealogy of Jesus Christ Israel's history from Abraham to Christ is divided, according to Divine reckoning, into three periods each consisting of fourteen generations, although the time spanned by those periods was by no means equal (MAT. 1 : 17). The expression "generation" signifies that these have been dealings with Israel as a "people"; this is clear from the reference to the Israel with whom God dealt in the wilderness.

"Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways" (PSA. 95 : 10).

The Lord frequently used the term "this generation" in reference to the people of Israel to whom He witnessed, even that new or contemporary generation

as distinct from those by whom it was preceded and succeeded. The first three gospels and Acts alone use the term "this generation" (*he genea haute*)—unless *ekeinos* is to be read as *haute* in the quotation of Psalm 95: 10 in Hebrews 3: 10; but this change does not accord with the LXX—for these scriptures deal expressly with God's dealings with it in those days.

That generation was evidently especially evil; perhaps it was actuated in a particular degree to resist the Lord's sojourn among men. It was said to be "evil," "adulterous," "wicked" (MAT. 12: 39, 45), "faithless," "perverse" (17: 17), "sinful" (MARK 8: 38), and "unto-ward" (ACTS 2: 40). Moreover, of some it was said "Ye offspring of vipers" (MAT. 12: 34, R.V.), "Ye are of your father the devil" (JOHN 8: 44), showing that there was an element corrupt at the core. The Lord used several figures to signify the nature of that generation. The children that piped and mourned to their unheeding fellows depicted that, however appealed to, it would not respond (MAT. 11: 16-19). The parable of the man with an unclean spirit symbolized its end—"And the last state of that man is worse than the first; even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (MAT. 12: 43-45).

The Gospel to Israel was "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." This repentance was to be general to be effective in bringing about that establishment which was then made conditional thereon; individuals, like Peter of Capernaum, might give heed and be blessed, but the city as such through its unrepentance was destined not to remain. The Lord's warnings that were collective in their application thus concerned the judgment which would befall that generation if they did not repent. "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not" (MAT. 11: 20-24). Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were singled out because they had been the most privileged and were thereby the most answerable. God in judging is able to take into account not only what was done but also

what would have been done had circumstances been different; thus example was taken, as elsewhere, from the Gentiles to shame Israel. "For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes . . . Sodom . . . would have remained unto this day." The point of this example is apparent: if they repented they too would remain, but as it was they did not repent and in consequence they did not remain.

The Lord took two calamities and used them to set forth the nature of the judgment which would be theirs if they failed to repent: "the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices," and "Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell" (LUKE 13:1-5). These did not suffer thus because they were sinners above others, neither should Israel because they were sinners, "but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The R.V. reads, "Ye shall all in like manner perish." Israel's punishment if they did not repent was thus to be both speedy and drastic.

How long was that generation permitted to continue, and when did this punishment overtake it? The Lord as He ministered foretold a sign that should be given that generation—"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (MAT. 12:38-40). This generation's existence and God's dealings with it was not, therefore, to be cut off when they delivered up their Messiah to be crucified, but they were to be permitted to hear of this sign of His resurrection.

"Therefore also saith the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: Verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation" (LUKE 11:40-51).

The Lord spoke words similar to this quotation after the ministry of the Twelve was ended so far as the time of His earthly sojourning was concerned (MAT. 23: 29-36); hence the only sending of prophets and apostles unto that generation which could then be anticipated was that which took place after His resurrection. There were, therefore, as we shall trace, Apostles sent unto Israel to declare the Lord's resurrection and again to call upon them to repent (ACTS 2: 38). What was to be their attitude towards these witnesses of the Lord's resurrection was foreshadowed in the illustration of the rich man and Lazarus—"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (LUKE 16: 31). It was not, therefore, Israel's rejection of the Lord in the days of His flesh, but it was their rejection of those whom He sent to testify of His resurrection that proved to be the revolt which rendered full the measure of the iniquity of their fathers. That generation repented not at the proclamation that the Lord had risen from the dead, and not until they had so done did that speedy and drastic punishment befall them by the hand of Titus and his army.

The Gospel to Israel of repentance in view of the Kingdom was thus accompanied by warnings concerning what would befall them as a generation if they failed to respond. As this Gospel was being heralded the Lord taught, as we have seen in the Sermon on the Mount, how they might individually enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; His warnings to them as individuals thus concerned that punishment which would befall them personally if they failed to gain entrance into the Kingdom. The judgment that was Israel's as a generation came to pass in the days of Titus and its effects in Jerusalem's desolation and the nation's dispersion remain unto this day. The judgment of individuals, on the other hand, will be seen to await that day when the Kingdom is established.

As the Lord set before the doers of the Sermon on the Mount a specific hope of entering into the Kingdom

of Heaven, so He set before its rejectors a specific condemnation. This condemnation is the direct opposite of their hope, and is described by three expressions. To be "cast out" (*ekballo*) or "expelled," which is the reverse of "entering into." The place of banishment is "the outer darkness," a place mentioned in Matthew only, the word "outer" (*exoteros*—hence our "exoteric") being peculiar to this phrase. The occasion of this banishment is termed "the weeping and gnashing of teeth." The Lord used these three expressions together in the following passages:

"When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said unto them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (MAT. 8: 10-12, R.V.).

"Then the king said unto the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen" (MAT. 22: 13-14, R.V.).

"And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (MAT. 25: 30, R.V.).

Those who shall suffer this punishment are, therefore, defined as "the sons of the kingdom" who have not wrought righteousness, the potential guest to the marriage of the King's Son who though he was called yet he was not chosen, and the slothful servant that did not trade according to his ability during his lord's absence. The parable of the unfaithful servant is similar; he did amiss when his lord was absent, in contrast to the faithful and wise servant whom his lord came and found "doing" rightly (MAT. 24: 45-51). The remaining references to "the weeping and gnashing of teeth" in Matthew occur in the parables of chapter 13. Those who suffer this are the devil's emissaries whom he has scattered among the true sons of the kingdom (vers. 38, 42), together

with such as "do iniquity" (ver. 41), even those who are "the wicked" as opposed to "the just" (vers. 49-50). Outside of Matthew this expression occurs but once.

"Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (LUKE 13 : 26-28).

The gospel of John sets forth the general condemnation applicable to all who hear the gospel of grace. It concerns a man's attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and many passages, like John 3 : 16, set forth that upon believing Him we receive life in His Name, but such as do not shall perish; in this the question of works is not the deciding factor. Matthew, however, is concerned with the Lord's ministry of the Kingdom to Israel, which gospel sets forth to those to whom it is addressed that such as "do the will" of the Father shall "enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," but the "workers of iniquity" shall suffer that remorse termed "the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (LUKE 13 : 26-28). With the subjects and associations of these warnings to individuals clearly defined it is evident that they apply to such as are dealt with under the economy which has the Kingdom as its hope.

PARABLES.

Matthew 13 records a group of parables which the Lord spake in reference to the Kingdom of Heaven. The day on which the Lord gave these parables was long and crowded. He commenced by speaking many things in the house, as is recorded in the preceding chapter; after this He went out of the house and sat by the seaside and taught the people there. Then when the multitude increased He resorted to the boat so that all could see and hear Him without unduly pressing

upon each other. "And on that day, when even was come, He saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side. And leaving the multitude, they take Him with them, even as He was, in the boat" (MARK 4: 35-36, R.V.). What volumes those words "even as He was" suggest! The long day was over, but so strenuous had it been that the evening found the Lord exhausted. When the storm overtook them during that night "He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow," so that the disciples had deliberately to awaken Him (MARK 4: 38).

The tiredness that comes after physical exertion is one thing, but the reaction following prolonged testimony to the things of God before irresponsible hearers is quite another. The Lord knew both—"Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well" (JOHN 4: 6), and on this evening after the teaching of the parables He was spent through giving out to others. The Lord, as a Minister of God, had taken upon Himself "the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men," and as man He was subject to "the feeling of our infirmities," sin excepted (HEB. 4: 15). The Lord was unalterably omnipotent, yet He never used His power to alleviate His own wants or weariness but willingly endured them that thereby He might be acquainted with our many frailties. Thus we are able to look above to the Son of God and know that though He is now highly exalted, even far above all, yet He is One Who has "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Then how precious to remember, when tired in, though not of, His service, that He too has known the like weariness!

The scene when the Lord was speaking these parables must have been one of great beauty. The Saviour seated—as was the custom when teaching—in the boat, the sea perfectly calm, the disciples earnestly endeavouring to comprehend His sayings, the people on the shore wrapped in quietness as they sought to catch His words coming to them across the water. This, and much more,

can be visualized from the description of that occasion. However, though all may have looked serene, yet there were gathering the storm clouds of rejection. Opposition to the Lord was increasing. Even on that day, before He left the house for the seaside, He had spoken dreadful words concerning that generation and had singled out His disciples as being an exception in that they were seeking to do His Father's will. The Lord's audience was, therefore, sharply divided, the majority being indifferent to His sayings, a minority only desiring to understand.

"And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (MAT. 13 : 10-11).

The subject of these parables, that was made known to the disciples but not to the multitudes, is here said to be "the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven." The word rendered "mysteries" (*musterion*) does not mean anything mystifying. True, our "mystify" is derived from the same Greek root, but, as Skeat remarks, this is "a modern and ill-coined word"; its Greek original has no suggestion of anything uncanny or inexplicable. "Mystery" (*musterion*) has been defined as "A knowledge of hidden things, requiring a special communication or revelation" (Cremer); "what is known only to the initiated" (Young). Hence a secret to be received rather than found, to be given rather than gained. In Scripture "mystery" is used to designate some aspect of God's truth which He commits in a special sense to such as He appoints, a truth not given to perplex but rather to make clear His purposes. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (PSA. 25 : 14).

The nature of this revelation given in these parables bespeaks the introduction of a new element into the things spoken respecting the Kingdom of Heaven. Till then the Lord had spoken only those things that might be received by all. He had proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, had taught how it might be

entered into, and had warned of the danger of being cast out; these were subjects that every hearer might understand. Now, however, in these parables the Lord added the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven—that is, the inner or esoterical truths pertaining to the Kingdom, things that could be known only by initiation.

“It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given” (ver. 11). Of the multitudes who heard the Lord speak it was the disciples and those with them who were alone permitted to understand what He spake. “It is given unto you”: admittance into these mysteries was a gift, an entrustment, or committal. This gift was granted the disciples but withheld from the people. This is explained in the next verse.

“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath” (MAT. 13 : 12).

The disciples were among those to whom it was given to know these mysteries because they had already received somewhat of God’s truth, but the multitude were denied this as, for the most part, they possessed only a semblance of understanding. The disciples were such as “hath” because they were in the way to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord taught that “He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven” “shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven” (MAT. 7 : 21). This, He was able to say, the disciples were doing (12 : 49-50), hence as having this much they were qualified to receive more.

“Who hath ears to hear let him hear” (ver. 9). These were the words with which the Lord concluded the parable of the Sower. Afterwards in His conversation with the disciples He declared that they had ears to hear but that the multitude were dull of hearing.

“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand, . . . But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower” (MAT. 13 : 13-18).

The reason the Lord gave for His use of these parables was, therefore, that in hearing the people might not hear. The Sower had been spoken before all the multitude; in itself it was a commonplace figure familiar to everyone, and the chances that the grain might fall upon different grounds was obvious. The Sower, however, was used as a simile of something pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven; what it was used to illustrate could be known only upon explanation. Thus this parable, and also the others, required interpretation before it could be known what was revealed therein; the figures used needed to have their doctrinal equivalents made clear before they could be understood. It was, therefore, upon interpretation that access into the understanding of the parables was given, and this access was granted to the disciples only. The Sower was spoken before the multitude (3-9), but its explanation in an aside to the disciples (10-23); The Tares, Mustard, and Leaven were given publicly (24-35), but the interpretation, together with the remaining parables, privately (36-52). The people generally heard several of the parables, but it was not given them to receive the keys that were essential to gain admittance into an understanding of what the parables depicted. When all was over the disciples alone affirmed that they understood all these things (ver. 51).

The purpose of these parables was not, therefore, to make the truth clear to all, but rather to conceal it from all except the initiated. They were truths spoken enigmatically or abstrusely that the knowledge thereof might escape all save those for whom they were intended. These parables exhibit the principle upon which admission into God's mysteries is given. The particular mysteries set forth in these parables are distinguished as "the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven." Later, further mysteries were revealed: Paul had committed unto him "the dispensation of the mystery" (EPH. 3: 9, R.V.), a subject we shall presently seek to be allowed to understand. The theme of this mystery revealed through Paul is distinct from that of the parables, but the

principle of its committal is the same. The manner in which the understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven was forbidden to all save the Lord's own serves to illustrate God's express will respecting this mystery. "His saints, to whom God would make known . . . this mystery" (COL. 1 : 26-27). It is not to the world at large, but it is to us His saints, redeemed ones, that God is desirous of making known this truth. The prayer of Ephesians 1 was given to this end; let us then request for ourselves the gift of "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" that we "may know what is . . ." (EPH. 1 : 17-18).

The mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven were revealed by the Lord to His disciples because of the state of Israel. This is made clear by two Old Testament prophecies which the Lord quoted in reference to the reason He used parables. The words by which these quotations are introduced signify that they were made to illuminate further the purpose of the parables. The first—"Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? . . . In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which saith" (vers. 10, 14). The second—"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; . . . that it might be fulfilled . . ." (vers. 34-35).

Matthew exhibits how every aspect of the testimony to the Kingdom of Heaven had been foreseen by the prophets, for in his presentation of this testimony it was of first importance that its hope should be demonstrated to be that of the promises made unto the fathers. The preaching, healing, and teaching had all been shown to be a fulfilment of the prophets, and now also he records the Lord's testimony that these mysteries were likewise foreseen. The two Old Testament quotations in Matthew 13 are given prominence through the manner in which the parables are arranged; they are placed in the central, or key, positions of the passage, the parables being grouped around them. Isaiah 6 : 9-10 is quoted in verses 14-15, with the Sower on one side and its interpretation on the other. Psalm 78 : 2 is quoted in verse 35,

with the Tares, Mustard, and Leaven on one side, balanced by the Treasure, Pearl, and Net on the other. This emphasis is an indication of the importance of these quotations to the subject of the parables.

The First : "And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; . . . For this people's . . . ears are dull of hearing, . . . lest haply they should . . . hear with their ears . . . and should turn again, and I should heal them" (MAT. 13 : 14-15, R.V.).

The Second : "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (MAT. 13 : 35).

The first quotation deals with hearing, the second with speaking; the first with the hardness of Israel's hearing and its consequences, the second with the nature of the things spoken because Israel had not heard. Both are introduced by "fulfilled" although the mood and tense of the two words are different. The first is in the indicative present. The Greek present signifies an imperfect state—that is, the action is spoken of as being in progress, its end having not necessarily been reached. "In them is fulfilling, or is being filled full, the prophecy of Isaiah." This prophecy was then taking place. The word "fulfilled" that introduces the second quotation is in the subjunctive aorist: the subjunctive indicates dependence on the preceding statement; the aorist, completeness. The preceding statement reads "without a parable spake He nothing unto them," and this the Lord did "that (*hopos*=to the end that) it might be fulfilled . . ." From these two words it is made clear that at the time when the Lord was speaking Isaiah's prophecy concerning Israel's inattentiveness was in the course of fulfilment, and in consequence of this the Lord used parables that the Psalmist's words concerning the unfolding of hidden things might come to pass.

The reason that the revelation of these "mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" was consequent upon a

fulfilling of Isaiah's prophecy concerning Israel's deafness becomes more evident when we consider what that fulfilment implied. John the Baptist was, as we have seen, sent to Israel that he might "turn again" (*epistrepho*) many of them to the Lord their God, for this turning had been a condition for their restoration. The fulfilling of this prophecy, however, signified that Israel were being prevented from turning again, and in consequence their healing that was made conditional thereon was necessarily stayed. "Lest haply they should . . . hear with their ears . . . and should turn again (*epistrepho*), and I should heal them." The implication was that the probability of an immediate coming of the Kingdom upon these terms had become remote.

This consequence of Israel's unheedingness made necessary some explanation as to how the hope of the Kingdom would be realized. To the people who were rejecting the conditional proclamation of the Kingdom the Lord gave no such explanation, but severe words of warning. To the few who had heeded, however, He revealed these mysteries wherein was set forth the future course and final coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus although outwardly the public testimony to the Kingdom had come to have the appearance of being a failure, yet to the disciples the Lord committed these mysteries that they might know what the issue of these things would be, even that God will, despite all seeming hindrances, finally accomplish that which He had promised.

This prophecy of Isaiah 6, which the Lord said was being fulfilled in His days, continued to be fulfilled for many years afterward. This is seen in that Paul was caused to quote the prophecy once more in reference to that generation of Israel. Between the Lord's quotation and that of Paul there was a time during which Israel were increasingly disinclined to give heed. The occasion of Paul's quotation brought to a conclusion the history of Acts—that is, it took place at the crisis which ended the sending of the word to that generation (ACTS 28 : 28,

cp. 13 : 26). At that juncture this trend of Israel's stubbornness reached its climax so that their state was, for the time being, irremediable. As the fulfilling of this prophecy of Isaiah during the Lord's days led to the unfolding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, so, as we shall trace, its fuller fulfilment in the day Paul quoted it was followed by the revelation of the "dispensation of the mystery" (EPH. 3 : 9, R.V.).

In His interpretation of the Sower the Lord explained that the seed which fell on the four different grounds was typical of four types of hearers (vers. 18-23). The subject heard was "the word of the Kingdom" (ver. 19), even that Gospel which was then being proclaimed; the hearers in question are therefore such as hear that distinctive message. The classification of these hearers was according to their responsiveness, the causes that influenced the measure of their response being clearly defined. The first (by the wayside) did not understand the word and so were unable to retain it; there is no uncertainty as to who snatched it from them for the birds are said to represent "the wicked one" (ver. 19), "Satan" (MARK 4 : 15), and the "devil" (LUKE 8 : 12). The second (on the stony places) were not established and consequently when adversity arose they were offended. The third (among thorns) were stunted through sundry distractions and did not attain the maturity necessary for fruit-bearing. But the fourth (on good ground) understood and were established so that they were enabled to bring forth fruit abundantly.

Whenever the word of the Kingdom is preached, all four classes of hearers may be represented, though at different times the ratio has varied. The four periods of the preaching of the Kingdom are characterized by a preponderance of one type of hearer, and that in the same sequence as they are set forth in the parable. This suggests that in the Sower is revealed the course of the Kingdom evangelism, from its commencement when it was not understood to its final fruitfulness. At the moment Israel's ears were stopped lest they should hear,

but the parable foresaw that eventually there will be some who will understand and bear fruit.

John the Baptist was the first to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom (LUKE 16 : 16), and this he did "by the way-side" in a literal sense; those who heard him were "willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (JOHN 5 : 35), but it was for a season only—few understood his ministry. The Lord and those with Him continued the proclamation of this Gospel to Israel, and as the hearers on the stony ground received the word "with joy" but afterwards were "offended," so "the common people heard" the Lord "gladly" (MARK 12 : 37) though later they were "offended" at Him. Indeed, "offended" is a word used specially of the attitude shown towards the Lord and His ministry; this He anticipated in the word "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (MAT. 11 : 6). However, in the course of His preaching many were "offended in Him" (13 : 57 ; 15 : 12), and eventually when persecution arose He had to say even to the disciples "All ye shall be offended because of Me" (26 : 31).

We have observed the Lord's announcement that His resurrection was to be preached to Israel before they were dispersed, and the record of that period of preaching is contained in Acts and the earlier epistles. During that time many gave heed, and gatherings of believers were formed in divers places, but the troubles which beset these were of the thorny ground variety. James, for example, gave warning concerning distractions such as cares, riches, and lusts which tended to hinder their perfecting. As that period passed matters grew worse rather than better; these suppressive influences gained increasing ascendancy, and in consequence declension set in. The churches of Asia which, under God's hand, Paul had been largely instrumental in establishing, so departed from the truth that Paul had to say in his last epistle: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 TIM. 1 : 15).

As these first three types have characterized respectively the three periods of the preaching of the Kingdom

that now are past, it follows that in like manner the fourth type will be the standard during the forthcoming period of its proclamation. The Lord stated that "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (MAT. 24 : 14); thus immediately preceding the end there is to be a period when this Kingdom gospel will be preached. Prophecies relating to that end time have many references to those who, like the fruitful hearers, will "understand." The Lord's words just quoted are followed by the significant parenthesis "whoso readeth let him understand" (ver. 15). Daniel in writing of this "time of the end" makes several references to those who shall then "understand" (11 : 33-35; 12 : 9-10), and indeed that will be a period of such unparalleled deception that only those with "understanding" will be enabled to stand (REV. 13 : 18).

An application of this parable to those who hear the Gospel of God's grace as preached in this day is legitimate and most helpful. We need to be warned of the danger of distractions, but its interpretation must lie within the specified limits—namely, to a time "when any one heareth the word of the Kingdom" (ver. 19). The Sower portrays the four ways in which individuals hear that particular word, and also four periods in which that word is preached. The fourth, or coming period, will be fruitful, but this fruitfulness, be it noted, relates to the quality rather than to the quantity of those who hear; it is as individuals that they will "understand" and bring forth severally "some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty" (ver. 23). The Scriptures which speak of the end-time show unmistakably that it will be a minority who will abide faithful; nevertheless they will be such as shall bring forth much fruit to God's honour and glory.

The six parables that follow are each introduced by "The Kingdom of Heaven is like, or likened, unto . . ." (vers. 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47), and each leads up to a consummation typified, for instance, by the harvest. Hence these parables are concerned with matters respecting the Kingdom of Heaven pending the day of

its inauguration; they reveal that until that day the good and the evil are to remain in contiguity but that in that day they will be separated by Divine command. The advent of the Kingdom will not, therefore, be arrived at by some gradual process, such as the Gospel converting the world, or of good overcoming evil, but it will be brought about by God's appointing, and that with suddenness. This transitory intermingling of the good and evil is viewed from two aspects: the first three parables deal with evil hid among the heirs of the Kingdom—the tares among the wheat, the birds amidst the branches, the leaven hid in the meal; but the last three treat of the heirs of the Kingdom hid in the world—the treasure hid in the field, the pearl sought and found, and the good fish among the bad.

The Mustard, Leaven, Treasure, and Pearl were not interpreted; the signification of some of the figures employed are, however, revealed elsewhere. The Mustard (vers. 31-32): A grain of mustard is used as a simile for faith (17 : 20), while the "birds" are used in the Sower to typify the wicked one. Thus when believers in the word of the Kingdom increase the evil one will lodge his emissaries among them. The Leaven (ver. 33): The Lord used leaven to typify "the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" "and of Herod," "which is hypocrisy" (MAT. 16 : 6-12; MARK 8 : 15; LUKE 12 : 1). Paul's usage of leaven shows clearly that it is not a fitting symbol for the truth of the Gospel but rather of the insinuating working of "malice and wickedness," for unless it is checked it will render putrid the whole lump (1 COR. 5 : 6; GAL. 5 : 9). Thus evil is to work its way among the good. The Treasure (ver. 44): Of Israel it is said, "For the Lord hath chosen . . . Israel for His peculiar treasure" (PSA. 135 : 4), and to purchase them God redeemed also the whole world. The Pearl (vers. 45-46): The price of this pearl was so great that it cost the merchant "all that he had"; even so the Lord "gave Himself" for them, and for us. Thus in the world are hid things precious to God by reason of the price paid for their redemption.

The Tares and the Net foresee the great occasion when at last the Kingdom of Heaven is established on earth. The "field" is said to represent the "world" (ver. 38), which is, for the time being, overrun by the tares of the devil's own sowing; but there is coming a day when "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity: and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (vers. 41-42). When the tares have thus been "first" gathered and burned (ver. 30) it will be cleansed and "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (ver. 43).

Those who looked for the Kingdom had, therefore, this hope set before them, the great day when at last that long-awaited promise should be realized. The name here used of this hope is "the end of the world" (vers. 39, 40, 49), a term which, like "the Kingdom of Heaven," occurs in Matthew only. (The expression in Hebrews 9: 26 is plural, see R.V.). "End" (*sunteleia*) is constructed from the stem *tele*, "end," prefixed by *sun*, "together"; hence it implies "a juncture at which several affairs are conterminous," "a bringing to one end together"; it includes also the thought of a purposive ending, a "consummation." "World" (*aionos*) signifies a time-period, or "age." A good rendering for this title of their hope is therefore "The consummation of the age" (R.V. marg.). At that end of the age of Kingdom testimony the activities both of evil and of good will together attain their consummation; that will be the harvest of the tares as well as of the wheat, the one being ripe for judgment, the other for entry into the Kingdom.

The Lord Jesus Christ thus gave to His disciples the interpretation of these parables, and thereby enlightened them concerning both the testimony and the hope of the Kingdom of Heaven. The testimony of the word of the Kingdom was eventually to be fruitful, though for the time being Israel's dim-sightedness was preventing them from discerning that it was an opportune

time for them to repent and be blessed. The hope of the Kingdom was thereby deferred, but it was nevertheless to come at "the consummation of the age"; pending the time of its coming the tares were to be allowed to flourish and the leaven to work, but even so God had His treasure in safe hiding. At the time of harvest the Son of Man, having returned to the place from which He had come, would send forth His angels to gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and afterwards to cause the children of the Kingdom to enter thereinto.

THE LATTER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY.

"From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up" (MAT. 16 : 21, R.V.).

Up to this juncture the Lord had not, therefore, taught even the disciples that He had come to suffer. The Gospel which the Lord and the Twelve had preached prior to this was one which declared to Israel that the Kingdom of Heaven had drawn nigh and because of this they should repent, and do works meet for repentance, that they might be restored and blessed according to the promises God had given to their fathers.

The latter period of the Lord's ministry, which now occupies our attention, was a continuation of the proclamation of this word concerning the Kingdom, but with the addition of teachings given to the Twelve concerning His coming sufferings. The Old Testament had foreseen that Messiah should be cut off but not for Himself (DAN. 9 : 26), and the Lord had foretold that the sign of the prophet Jonah was to be given that generation (MAT. 12 : 39-40; 16 : 4), and that the Bridegroom would be taken from them (MARK 2 : 20); but here it is stated that not until this juncture in the Kingdom evangel, when Israel were definitely rejecting that word, did the Lord commence to show the disciples

that He must die. That this was something they had not anticipated is seen from Peter's reaction to this first intimation—"Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee."

The occasion of this commencement of the latter period of the Lord's ministry was Peter's confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." To which statement of faith the Lord replied, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (MAT. 16: 18-20, R.V.). The Lord in using this word "church" did not introduce to His disciples the thought of a calling different from what they had been preaching. "Church" (*ekklesia*) is constructed from the stem which gives the verb *kaleo*, "to call," prefixed by *ek*, "from," or "out from"; hence it implies a "called-out" company. The disciples were familiar with this word in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, where it is used frequently of Israel—for example, "And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: and all the congregation (*ekklesia*) of Israel stood" (1 KINGS 8: 14).

In the New Testament "church" never stands by itself as a proper noun—that is, it does not name one particular company only. It is used of various gatherings—for example, Israel after they had been called out of Egypt are termed "the church in the wilderness" (ACTS 7: 38), and the throng that rushed into the theatre at Ephesus are called an *ekklesia*, or "assembly" (ACTS 19: 32). When used of any company which God has called out then it is clearly defined; "The church of God" is used in a wide sense to distinguish His saints from "the Jews" and "the Greeks" (1 COR. 10: 32). Then also from among His redeemed God calls out specific companies to fulfil different aspects of His purposes; when "church" is used of these it is qualified by such distinguishing phrases as "the church which is His Body" (EPI. 1: 22-23) and "The church of the firstborn" (HEB. 12: 23). The Lord's words to Peter

concerning "My church" still had in view the calling they had been preaching, for the next verse speaks of "the Kingdom of Heaven."

The King Who is to restore again the Kingdom to Israel is God, and here the Lord reveals that the basis upon which that hope is to be established is Peter's confession that He is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Israel, however, crucified Him because He claimed to be the Son of God, the King of Israel, and afterwards when His resurrection was proclaimed to them they again rejected Him; nevertheless there is coming a day when the Lord shall appear in the glory of His Kingdom and then Israel will confess "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (ISA. 25 : 9).

Immediately after this first intimation that He must suffer the Lord was transfigured before His chosen disciples Peter, James, and John. The Transfiguration was the similitude of the glory both of the coming of the Lord and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven—"See the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (MAT. 16 : 28); "See the Kingdom of God come with power" (MARK 9 : 1). As the Lord must suffer, the hope of the Kingdom would necessarily have to abide the time when the sufferings were passed; now, however, the Lord made it clear that the coming of the Kingdom would be, not only after the sufferings, but also not until He should come a second time.

Peter's suggestion that they should build three "tabernacles," or "booths" (R.V. marg.), bespoke his appreciation of the significance of the Transfiguration, although at the same time it betrayed his failure to realize the Lord's words concerning His sufferings. When unfolding "the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" the Lord used the harvest to typify "the consummation of the age" (*sunteleia tou aionos*), that name for the occasion on which the Kingdom shall come. Peter would, no doubt, have associated this name with the final and most joyful of the feasts of Israel,

that of Tabernacles, or Ingathering, for the Septuagint termed it the "feast of consummation" (*heorte sunteleias*).

"The feast of ingathering (*heorte sunteleias*), which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field" (EX. 23 : 16).

"In the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in (*sunteleo*) the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days . . . ye shall dwell in booths" (LEV. 23 : 39-42).

Peter in his wonderment at this likeness of the coming of the Kingdom suggested that they should then and there keep Tabernacles, for here he beheld the antitype of that feast, even the consummation of the age. This suggestion was, however, premature, for had he been attentive to "Hear Him," as the voice from heaven said, he would have remembered that the Lord must first die. Even in the midst of that coming glory the Lord "spake of His decease (*exodus*) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (LUKE 9 : 31), for He was to become the antitype of Passover before the antitype of Tabernacles could be realized. When the Kingdom shall have come then Tabernacles will be kept annually, and the nations blessed therein will be required to come and keep this feast at Jerusalem (ZECH. 14 : 16-19).

The promise of the Transfiguration is the first mention of the Lord's second coming in the New Testament (MAT. 16 : 27). The Lord henceforth gave prophecies and teaching concerning His coming again; even while they descended the mount He explained how that, as the Baptist had prepared for His coming, so likewise Elijah was first to come before His second advent, and that will be to "restore all things" (17 : 9-13). In the Transfiguration the Lord received from the Father honour and glory (2 PET. 1 : 17-18), and the note struck here rings through the remainder of His ministry; men were rejecting Him, but He now emphasized that it was the Father Who would exalt Him and give Him the Kingdom.

PROPHECIES.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record how the Lord now revealed that the interval between His ascension and return was to be divided into three clearly distinct periods. The first would be a time of testimony to Israel, "that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ"; their rejection of this word was to bring upon them the destruction of Jerusalem by the hand of Titus (LUKE 21 : 20). The second would be a time of the desolations of Jerusalem and the dispersion of Israel (LUKE 21 : 21-24). The third would be a time when "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (MAT. 24 : 14).

The Lord had previously mentioned what was to be the nature of the first period, for He had promised that "the sign of the prophet Jonah" would be given to that generation, thus making it evident that the witness to Israel was not to be withdrawn at the crucifixion, but that it should be continued for some time thereafter so that those who rejected Him might hear of His resurrection. This the Lord expressed again in His prayer on the Cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (LUKE 23 : 34). So it was that afterwards Israel were granted a season in which they might "repent" and "turn again" (ACTS 3 : 12-26, R.V.).

The issue that would be at stake during this first period was therefore the repentance or otherwise of that generation at the testimony to the Lord's resurrection. The Lord declared that if they did not repent they would perish in like manner as the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell (LUKE 13 : 1-5). The Lord showed, however, that although He sent unto them prophets yet they would reject these, that upon them might come the blood of all the prophets—"Verily I say

unto you. All these things shall come upon this generation" (MAT. 23 : 34-36). When the Lord was approaching Jerusalem He lamented because of her blindness, and described in detail the manner of her overthrow.

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and they shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (LUKE 19 : 41-44).

These things came to pass some 40 years later when Titus besieged Jerusalem and carried Israel away captive among the nations. "Jerusalem . . . ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God (EZEK. 14 : 22-23). There is, therefore, a cause for all things done unto Jerusalem and Israel is one day to know this. The specific reason given by the Lord for this overthrow was—"because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Israel's blindness to their time of opportunity was the cause of all these things befalling them.

The Lord revealed that the second period—namely, that ushered in by this overthrow—would be at a time of the "desolation" of Jerusalem: "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (LUKE 21 : 20). The significance of such a "desolation" is explained in Leviticus 26—where Israel are informed that "If ye walk in My statutes . . . then . . . ye shall . . . dwell in your land safely (vers. 3-13), but if they would not then sanctions were to be brought upon them. The extreme sanction, even that beyond which God would add no other, was that of "desolation."

"I will bring the land into desolation . . . and I will scatter you among the heathen . . . and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised My judgments, and because their soul abhorred My statutes" (LEV. 26 : 32, 33, 43).

This was to be imposed only after every other means had been employed to induce them to give heed, for earlier in the chapter a graduated series of punishments are set forth, each group being "seven times more" severe than the preceding (vers. 18, 21, 24, 28), and not until the successive application of all these had proved unavailing was this final punishment of "desolation" to be meted upon them. In connection with this extreme measure God assured Israel that there was one thing He would not do: He would not cast them away for ever "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away" (ver. 44), for there "they shall confess their iniquity" (ver. 40), and He will cause their captivity to return (JER. 33 : 23-26). Thus Hosea prophesied of Israel, "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto Him : and they shall be wanderers among the nations," but nevertheless they "shall return" (HOS. 9 : 17 ; 14 : 7).

Once only in Israel's previous history had such a desolation been brought upon them. "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (2 CHRON. 36 : 15-16). It was then, after there was "no remedy" for their rejection of God's witnesses, that Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem for the third and last time. "And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and . . . as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil three-score and ten years" (vers. 19-21). This 70 years' desolation ended at the time of the restoration of the temple by Ezra.

This same principle brought about the second and greater desolation. The Jews were witnessed to by the Lord and those that came after, and, moreover, as a final measure the Gentiles were brought into blessing "for to provoke them to jealousy"; but when they had

rejected all these, so that there remained no remedy, then wrath came upon them "to the uttermost" (1 THESS. 2:14-16). Thus the period of desolation of which the Lord spake came in, and the Temple was destroyed.

The third period was the subject of the Lord's prophecy as recorded in Matthew 24. This unfolding of the events that shall take place in those days presupposed that the Temple will have been restored, for that will have to be done before it is possible for "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet" to "stand in the holy place" (ver. 15). Daniel, (9:26) foresaw the destruction of the Temple by Titus and the desolation that followed: "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; . . . and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." But in the next verse that future circumstance is foreseen of which the Lord spake, when, the Temple having been restored and its sacrifices reinstated, a wicked one will arise who shall defile the Temple and "shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

During that last period "this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (MAT. 24:14). The Gospel in any broad or general sense is not here alluded to, for the use of the demonstrative "this" definitely particularizes that specific "Gospel of the Kingdom" which the Lord had preached to Israel (MAT. 4:23). In that day "this Gospel" is to be proclaimed, not to Israel only, as when the Lord ministered, but to the other nations also, and when all nations have heard that evangel "then shall the end come."

The Lord showed in Matthew 24 that this last period would consist of three stages. First those things which will constitute "the beginning of sorrows" (ver. 8); next there "shall be great tribulation" (ver. 21); and finally "immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (vers. 29-30).

"All these things are the beginning of sorrows" or "travail" (R.V.). This time, which is to lead up to the day when the Lord shall come, is frequently likened to birth pangs, no doubt because of that which is eventually to be brought forth therefrom. The early symptoms will be that "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," etc. (ver. 7). The history of the world since the days of Christ has hardly a space when wars of some kind have not been raging, but the nature of war is ceasing to be an affair confined mainly to one army against another and is even now becoming increasingly a matter which virtually involves entire nations and kingdoms in conflict. These wars and other troubles "must needs come to pass" (R.V.); they are the inevitable antecedents of the last days.

Believers who hear of these conflicts and catastrophes are graciously exhorted to see that they "be not troubled." The Lord, however, gave warning that they should "Take heed that no man deceive you," for even at that stage, when the end is still "not yet," there will be many that "come in My Name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (vers. 4-12). Counterfeit is ever a ruse of evil; nevertheless in those days, as always, the knowledge of the excelling glory of Christ will be the believer's safeguard against deception. These false christs "shall arise" (*egeiro*) (vers. 11, 24), but after Christ "arose" from the dead this word is no more used of Him, for He is to come from above. Then also these impostors "shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (ver. 24), but miracles are not necessarily an evidence of divine working; those who understand will look for something greater, even the appearance of "the sign of the Son of Man in heaven" (ver. 30), for nothing short of the splendour of the Transfiguration will satisfy their expectation for Him.

The great tribulation, that second stage in the end period, is to commence with a definite incident, and will last for three and a half years. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel

the prophet, stand in the holy place . . . then shall be great tribulation" (vers. 15-20). The Septuagint version of Daniel has three occurrences of the expression rendered "the abomination of desolation." These reveal, among other things, that "the daily sacrifice shall be taken away to set up the abomination of desolation" (DAN. 12 : 11, marg.), that this will be followed by a persecution of the people who know their God (11 : 31-35) and that the occasion when it is set up will be in the middle of the last of the 70 weeks determined upon Israel and Jerusalem (9 : 24-27).

In that dread day those who heed the Lord's words will know of a definite way of escape whereby they will be enabled to rest apart during this time of unparalleled trouble, for He enjoined that "when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation . . . then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains" (MAT. 24 : 15-20). Daniel was told that of the countries that shall suffer in those days "these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon" (DAN. 11 : 41). Those who are enlightened into God's purposes will, therefore, take refuge in this territory to the east of Judæa until the tribulation is overpast.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days" (MAT. 24 : 29) there comes the final stage of that end period, the glorious day when Daniel's people Israel "shall be delivered" and "everlasting righteousness" shall be brought in (DAN. 9 : 20, 24 ; 12 : 1-2). For "then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (MAT. 24 : 30).

The nature of each of these three periods, which the Lord said would occupy the time of His absence, is clearly set forth by the 14 occurrences of the verb *eggizo* in the perfect indicative, third person singular, "is at hand," "is come nigh," or "doth draw near." We have seen that when the Lord was present among Israel it was

proclaimed that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (MAT. 3 : 2; 4 : 17; 10 : 7; MARK 1 : 15); "The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (LUKE 10 : 9, 11).

During the first period which followed the ascension the Lord's second coming was spoken of as being "at hand." The Lord had explained that at His return the Kingdom would be realized, hence this declaration that His coming was at hand included also the thought that the Kingdom was at hand: "The coming of the Lord is at hand" (JAS. 5 : 8, R.V.); "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (ROM. 13 : 12); "The end of all things is at hand" (1 PET. 4 : 7). However, although at that time the Lord's return was said to be at hand, yet, as we shall see, it was but tentatively so in order to prove Israel, for those days of opportunity passed and He did not come.

During the second period the consequence of Israel's rejection of the tentative proclamation both of the Kingdom and the Lord's return is seen, for of the things that had been spoken of as "at hand" two only came to pass—namely, the Lord's sufferings (MAT. 26 : 45-46; MARK 14 : 42), and the desolation of Jerusalem ("her desolation is at hand," LUKE 21 : 20, R.V.). This second period is never referred to as a time when the Lord's return or the Kingdom is at hand, for, as we have seen, the desolation of Jerusalem is the extreme opposite to the Kingdom of Heaven.

During the third period the Gospel of the Kingdom, the evangel whose theme is that the Kingdom is at hand, is to be preached unto all nations; for then the Lord's return will be at hand, not tentatively but certainly. The very presence of the deceivers who will seek to pose as christs will be an evidence that "the time is at hand" (LUKE 21 : 8, R.V.). To this usage of the verb may be added its cognate adverb (*eggus*) "near" or "at hand." When referring to persons or things it implies adjacency—"The Lord (is) at hand" (PHIL. 4 : 5), in the sense in which He is ever present with His people; the Septuagint has a parallel

construction—"The Lord (is) nigh unto all them that call upon Him" (PSA. 145:18; also 34:18). But when referring to events it indicates their imminence, and in this sense the Lord employed it in His prophecies concerning the last period. He explained that when those things were seen which He said would immediately precede His return then it might be known assuredly "That the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (LUKE 21:30-31; cp. MAT. 24:32-33; MARK 13:28-29).

The nature of the first and last of these three periods is, therefore, similar, both being occupied with the outworking of the purpose of the Kingdom. The things which were expected as "at hand" during the time of the Lord's ministry and the first period shall also be the expectation of the last period, for then the time for their realization will have come. Thus it was that many of the things which obtained during the first period were, as we shall notice later, a foretaste and foreshadowment of things which shall be in the last period; and moreover, the believers of those days were spoken of as being a firstfruits of that harvest yet to come.

In answer to the disciples' question "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming (*parousia*), and of the consummation of the age?" the Lord explained that there must first be "the beginning of sorrows" (MAT. 24:3-8), but also that "before all these things," which will constitute the beginning of sorrows, Jerusalem was to suffer desolation (LUKE 21:12-24). The hope of the Lord's coming as anticipated during the first period thus finds its setting in the last days. This is seen also in that when Paul reminded the Thessalonian believers of the "falling away first" without which "that day shall not come" he mentioned several things which the Lord had shown would happen when the last period had come. For example, the Temple will be standing and someone shall arise who will cause it to be desecrated (MAT. 24:15; cp. 2 THESS. 2:4). At that time evil "signs" shall be wrought in order to deceive and there will be a "falling

away" so that "the love of many shall wax cold" (MAT. 24 : 24 ; cp. 2 THES. 2 : 9-10). But the Lord's people are warned not to be "deceived" (MAT. 24 : 5 ; cp. 2 THES. 2 : 2), for at His coming they will receive their glorious "gathering together unto Him" (MAT. 24 : 31 ; cp. 2 THES. 2 : 1).

The Lord spake several parables in which He set forth what course the affairs of the Kingdom were to take during the first and last of these three periods. Two parables—the Husbandmen (MAT. 21 : 33-46) and the Marriage of the King's Son (MAT. 22 : 1-14)—deal with the aspect of that course which was consequent upon Israel's rejection of Him.

The Husbandmen had the vineyard let to them, and when the season of fruit drew near the owner sent his son and heir, but they conspired to slay him that they might seize for themselves his inheritance. In recompense for this the husbandmen would be destroyed and the vineyard taken away and given to others. The chief priests and scribes recognized that the Lord "spake this parable against them" (MAT. 21 : 45 ; LUKE 20 : 19), for they possessed the Kingdom as being rulers of "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts" which is "the house of Israel and the men of Judah" (ISA. 5 : 7). The Son of God had been sent at a time when the Kingdom was "at hand," but the Pharisees were shortly to cast Him out of His inheritance and to instigate His death. The Kingdom was, therefore, to be taken away from them and given to "other husbandmen," even to Israel in a future day, for "other" (*allos*) implies not generic distinction but others numerically; hence of the same kin. "Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (MAT. 21 : 43, R.V.).

The Marriage of the King's Son likened the Kingdom of Heaven to a King who, having prepared for the marriage of his son, sent servants to call those that had

been bidden, but "they would not come," or, to express it colloquially, "they didn't want to come." Whereupon he sent other servants to call them, but some made light of it while others persecuted and killed his servants. The King, therefore, commanded that they should be destroyed and their city burned. When this had been done he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out . . . and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests" (MAT. 22 : 8-9).

Israel, like those first called, were the appointed guests to be bidden; thus it was to them first that the call of the Gospel of the Kingdom was sent during the time of the Lord's ministry and again by those who testified after His resurrection. They were, however, unwilling to respond and in consequence Jerusalem was given over to desolation, for, in the words of the parable, armies were sent which "destroyed those murderers and burned their city" (ver. 7). But the Kingdom was, as pictured by the parable, still unfurnished with guests; thus the Lord revealed that before the end came "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations," and it will be by this means that the full number will be gathered.

The Lord thus depicted by the Husbandmen that the Kingdom would be given to the nation of Israel which shall be, and by the marriage of the King's Son that the Kingdom's full complement of guests will be gathered when this Gospel is preached unto all nations. The Kingdom is, therefore, to be possessed by Israel to whom it was promised, and to be populated by "as many as the Lord our God shall call."

The parables which the Lord spake in concluding His prophecy on Olivet deal with the Kingdom of Heaven "then" (MAT. 25 : 1)—namely, at the time of His return.

The Goodman of the House and the Ten Virgins both concern the necessity to "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (24 : 42 ; 25 : 13). The Goodman is followed by the exhortation "Therefore be ye also ready" (24 : 44), while the Ten Virgins exhibits the issues of such readiness, even that "They that were ready went in (*eiserchomai*) with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (25 : 10-12). Those who shall seek to "enter into" the Kingdom will need to maintain their vigilance to the end, for "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (24 : 13).

The Servants (24 : 45-50) and the Talents (25 : 14-30) show that the faithful will be rewarded, "He shall make him ruler" (24 : 47 ; 25 : 21, 23), but the slothful shall be condemned—"Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (25 : 30, R.V. ; 24 : 51). The Sheep and Goats depict the separation of the nations that shall be made at the Lord's coming, the principle of this separation being their attitude towards a third party, even His brethren (25 : 31-46). This judgment of the nations is the subject of Old Testament prophecy, where it is shown to be one of recompense according as they had treated the Lord's chosen nation Israel (JOEL 3 ; OBAD. 10-17, R.V.). Those approved will be called to "inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (MAT. 25 : 34).

These five parables show that the principles as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount are the conditions for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, not only before the Lord's death, but also during that time which shall lead up to the hour when the door of opportunity is shut. The Scriptures are explicit that the sole basis upon which God can receive sinners is the Lord's work of redemption; but in the case of those judged in respect to the preaching and calling of the Kingdom the condition on which they

will be received is stated to be their faithfulness, diligence, and kindness towards the people of God.

Thus by prophecy and parable the Lord made known what was to be the manner of God's dealing during the first period following His resurrection and the last period immediately preceding the end. He did not, however, make known the manner of the hope which would be in view during the interim period in which Jerusalem should suffer desolation, for, in the purpose of God, that glorious truth was destined to remain hidden until this period had arrived. The ministers of God whom we have yet to consider all testified, of necessity, in connection with one or the other of these three periods which the Lord said would divide the time between His ascension and return. Let us, therefore, desire that we may be graciously guided in understanding to which of these periods each respective ministry primarily belongs.

SUFFERINGS.

Darkness covered the earth when the Lord was upon the cross, and so it is fitting that instead of commenting on so great a sight we should rather bow our heads in wonder and thanksgiving that such was the love where-with He "loved me and gave Himself for Me." The world last saw the Lord as one dying in weakness upon the Cross; when next it sees Him it will be coming in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords, to take His great power and reign.

Peter's confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" is the rock upon which the Lord's called-out-ones are to be built. Yet it was precisely upon this claim that He was condemned of the Jews. "The high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said: . . . They answered and said. He is guilty of

death" (MAT. 26 : 63-66). The Lord's life had been attempted previously for this same reason—"The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God" (JOHN 10 : 33).

The gospel of John makes it very evident that this remains the crucial question, for to us the acknowledgment that He is God is the condition upon which we receive life through His Name. "He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God" (JOHN 19 : 7). To think clearly upon this is vital; indeed, it is more vital than anything else, for to-day many will eulogize about what they term the Lord's devotion to His ideals, or His supreme example of self-sacrifice, yet when such are brought up to this crucial question they deny that He is the Son of God, and thus find themselves in company with the mob who, for this very reason, cried "Crucify Him."

The Lord had entered Jerusalem to the acclamation of the people—"Blessed be the Kingdom of our Father David, that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (MARK 11 : 10); nevertheless He had come, not to bring in the Kingdom, but to receive that crown of thorns. The Lord was about to go away to receive the Kingdom, and to return. "He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the Kingdom of God was immediately to appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return . . . and it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom" (LUKE 19 : 11-15, R.V.). The Father Himself was to give Him the Kingdom—"Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: . . . I will overturn, overturn, overturn, and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him" (EZEK. 21 : 26-27; cp. DAN. 7 : 13-14). Thus the Lord said, "My Kingdom is not of this world. . . . My Kingdom is not from hence" (JOHN 18 : 36).

When the Lord was keeping the Passover with His disciples immediately before the sufferings, He gave

them assurance of the certainty of their hope during His coming absence: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom" (MAT. 26 : 18, 29). Then also He revealed to them what His death was to mean to Israel: "He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is My blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (vers. 27-28). This New Covenant had been promised and defined in the Old Testament.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they break, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (JER. 31 : 31-33).

The New Covenant, ratified in the Lord's blood, like the Old Covenant inaugurated at the exodus, is to be made "with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." Thus the Lord, in speaking to His disciples of "My blood of the New Covenant," referred to that aspect of His work of redemption which applied particularly to Israel. We have seen that the condition upon which they might enter into the Kingdom required a certain measure of personal righteousness, and that they should forgive others if they were to be forgiven, or should do good if they were to be blessed. The New Covenant makes it clear, however, that the grounds for their acceptance was not in these things, but was upon the provision through the Lord's death for the "remission of sins." As in life the Lord ministered to Israel, so now also in suffering He procured that redemption upon which they can receive their promised inheritance (HEB. 9 : 15).

Although the Lord ratified the New Covenant by His own blood yet it has not been actually made with Israel. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah," and those days will be when the Lord comes to them a second time. The Lord's return at the consummation of the age has already been seen to be the time when the Kingdom will be established, and Israel will be restored, and now the New Covenant shows how that will be the great occasion when God "shall take away their sins."

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (ROM. 11 : 26-27).

The New Covenant will thus cause Israel to be made what God has intended they should be—"they shall be My people" (JER. 31 : 31-33). Israel were unable to keep the Old Covenant whereby their inheritance was promised them conditionally upon their righteousness according to the law, but under the New Covenant God will put His law in their inward parts, their sins will be taken away, and then they shall be established in their promised land (EZEK. 36 : 24-28; 11 : 17-20). The Israel who shall then be God's people will not be an Israel as we know them to-day, but they will have been changed and given "a new heart."

ASCENSION.

The Lord ascended to the Father to be accepted for His own on the morning of the resurrection. This is seen in that when He appeared first to Mary Magdalene He said "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father" (JOHN 20 : 17); but later, when He appeared to her again, she, together with the other Mary, "came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him"

(MAT. 28 : 9). The permission to touch Him was the proof that He had ascended to the Father and had been accepted on the behalf of the redeemed. The Lord thus fulfilled the type of the "sheaf of the firstfruits" which was waved before God on that day after the Sabbath "to be accepted for you" (LEV. 23 : 9-14).

The Lord's ascension in the sight of His disciples forty days later was especially connected with the hope of the Kingdom, for, like the Transfiguration, it prefigured the manner of His second coming. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (ACTS 1 : 11). As the Lord's feet left the Mount of Olives so likewise "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east" (ZECH. 14 : 4). As the disciples beheld the wounds in His hands so in that day "One shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thine hands?" (ZECH. 13 : 6). As a cloud received Him out of their sight so it is written—"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him" (REV. 1 : 7). And as He was parted from them with His hands outstretched in the act of blessing so will He return with blessings for His own. Thus the Lord "was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (MARK 16 : 19, R.V.).

Matthew concludes with the Lord's commission to His disciples given upon a mountain in Galilee, a commission which, together with that of Mark 16 : 15-18, gave the word for the continuation of the preaching of the Kingdom. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," not as proffered in the Temptation but as foreseen in the parables; the Father had given it to Him. This great fact the disciples heralded to Israel—"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (ACTS 2 : 36). In fulfilling this commission they were assured of the Lord's help "even

unto the consummation of the age" (MAT. 28 : 20, R.V.); hence this commission applied, not to the disciples only, but to those also who shall testify during the time immediately before the Lord's return, the time when "this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (24 : 14).

The Kingdom of Heaven was, therefore, the subject of every part of the Lord's ministry to Israel as recorded by Matthew. The preaching declared the Kingdom to be at hand; the teaching as given in the Sermon on the Mount set forth how it could be entered into, and the warnings stressed the danger of being cast out therefrom. When Israel began to reject this testimony the parables of chapter 13 were given to initiate the disciples into the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. During the second period of His ministry following Peter's confession the Lord revealed to them that the Kingdom would not be set up until He came a second time; the Transfiguration gave them a foretaste of the coming of the Son of Man in His Kingdom, and the prophecies explained that prior to His coming three periods would obtain, the last of which would see the Gospel of the Kingdom preached to all nations. The sufferings still had this same hope in view; for at His trial the Lord spake of His coming to establish the Kingdom, and at the last supper He showed His disciples that His blood was that of the New Covenant, which Covenant will one day establish to Israel their promised Kingdom. Matthew brings all these things to a close with the words which are the name for the hope of this calling, even "the consummation of the age" (R.V. marg.).

HIS MINISTRY AS PRESENTED IN JOHN'S GOSPEL.

THE Gospel of John records that the Lord commenced to testify publicly a considerable time before John the Baptist was imprisoned; the things which He had said

in Galilee and Jerusalem, as recorded in the first three chapters, are followed by the statement "For John was not yet cast into prison" (3 : 24). Matthew and Mark, as we have traced, state with equal precision that the Lord's proclamation of "the Gospel of the Kingdom" did not commence until after John had been delivered up "John was delivered up, . . . from that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (MAT. 4 : 12-17, R.V.); "Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee preaching" (MARK 1 : 14, R.V.).

This difference as to the time given for the commencement of the Lord's ministry makes two facts clear; First, that the Gospel of the Kingdom with its call to Israel "Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," as presented in Matthew and Mark, was a specific message, something that did not embrace all the testimony given by the Lord but which was confined to strictly stated limits. Secondly, that John's gospel presents a testimony that is not circumscribed to those restricted aspects of the Lord's ministry which related to the hope of the Kingdom.

The districts associated with the commencement of the Lord's ministry as presented in Matthew and John are likewise different. Matthew states that it was to Galilee that the Lord withdrew, upon John's betrayal, in order to commence the Kingdom evangel "Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." John, however, records that the Lord had gone from Galilee to Jerusalem to attend the Passover and had returned to Galilee again, all before the Baptist was imprisoned (2 : 13; 3 : 22-24; 4 : 1-3). Thus the Gospel of the Kingdom as presented in Matthew is still further exhibited to be a distinctive message by reason of its being so definitely affirmed that the Lord did not commence to proclaim it until He came to Galilee after John had been delivered up: the things which the Lord had testified during His journeys prior to this as given in John must be outside the distinctive limits of that Kingdom gospel.

The gospel of John is concerned with the Lord manifesting the glory of His person: "This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory" (2 : 11, R.V.), and this beginning was when the Baptist was still testifying of Him. The Lord's witness to His own person is distinct in many respects from His ministry of the Kingdom of Heaven to Israel; for example, John's Gospel does not mention, except in a few explanatory remarks, themes so vital to the hope of Israel such as are the burden of the Sermon on the Mount, the parables of Matthew 13, the prophecies on Olivet, or the New Covenant. The absence of these things, which were the very substance of the Lord's ministry of the Kingdom, makes it evident that they do not constitute an essential part of that testimony concerning Him as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

The Lord is seen as the Messiah (4 : 25-26), the King of Israel (1 : 49); but while mentioning that He held these titles in connection with His dealings with Israel, yet it is emphasized that "salvation is of the Jews" (4 : 22), and that He who came to Israel was also "the Saviour of the world" (4 : 42). This witness concerning the Lord is applicable to us at this time, for it is addressed to the world without qualification; the Kingdom Gospel, on the other hand, is applicable primarily to those appointed for that particular calling, and to such seasons when, as we have seen, God has expressly appointed that it should be preached.

The Lord's witness was two-fold. First, as Saviour of the world He witnessed to the world in order that men might believe on Him; and secondly, He witnessed to His own who from among the world believed on Him to life everlasting. The Lord's witness (*martureo*) was concerning Himself—"I am He that beareth witness of Myself." "The very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me" (8 : 18 ; 5 : 36 ; 10 : 25, R.V.), and in this witness to Him others had part also—"The Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me," "The

Spirit of truth . . . shall bear witness of Me," "The Scriptures . . . bear witness of Me," and John the Baptist and the disciples likewise bore witness to Him (8 : 18 ; 15 : 26 ; 5 : 39, 33 ; 15 : 27, R.V.).

In witnessing to the world concerning Himself the Lord taught that this was to the end that men might believe on His name, and showed that the issues involved were death and life, judgment and exemption therefrom—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (3 : 36). The things recorded in John's gospel are those which the Lord did with the express intent of causing men to believe on Him, while the fact that many did believe is mentioned like a refrain after almost every incident.

In witnessing to His own, even to those who had become "the children of God" (1 : 12, R.V.) through faith in His Name, the Lord taught further glories concerning Himself and the Father Who sent Him, glories that could be rejoiced in only by the redeemed; and, moreover, for their sakes He said and did many things whereby they might be strengthened and comforted. "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me" (17 : 9), and this He did not for the disciples only but "for them also which shall believe on Me through their word" (17 : 20). Thus this witness of the Lord was for all who believe upon His name and who have thereby received life in Him; these things He did that our "joy might be full" and that in Him "we might have peace," and when He washed the disciples' feet it was to set us an example (13 : 15).

"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (17 : 4). These were among the closing words of the Lord's witness. By accomplishing this work He declared the Father, Whom man otherwise could never have known (1 : 18). He manifested the Father's Name to those given Him (17 : 6), and showed them that He was Himself one with

the Father (14 : 11). The Lord's words as given by John have indeed been to multitudes down the years the mainspring of their assurance and comfort, and they cause our hearts to well up in love and gratitude to Him. Truly, as John reveals this One, full of grace and truth, we are constrained with Thomas to exclaim in wonder and adoration—"My Lord and My God" (20 : 28).

THE TWELVE

“So great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will”

Heb. 2 : 3-4.

EARLY INCIDENTS

THE FORMER PERIOD OF THEIR MINISTRY

THE LATTER PERIOD OF THEIR MINISTRY

EARLY INCIDENTS.

THE earliest incident that is recorded concerning the Twelve is found not in the Gospels but in Acts. It is that they all, including Matthias, were baptised by John. This fact Peter revealed when he set forth the qualification essential to one who might fill the place of Judas. "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, **beginning from the baptism of John**" (ACTS 1 : 21-22).

John the Baptist was sent to preach "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," which preaching aroused the devout among Israel to an earnest expectation for the immediate fulfilment of their hope. The Twelve were among these who believed John's testimony and were baptized unto repentance in view of the coming of Him Who should restore again the Kingdom to Israel.

The gospel of John records how several of the Twelve first met the Lord, and in each case He fulfilled this expectation which had been quickened in their hearts. Andrew was one of John's disciples and he is shown as the first who followed the Lord. Andrew testified to his brother Peter, "We have found the Messiah" (1 : 41). Philip then met the Lord and he testified to Nathanael "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (1 : 45). Nathanael himself exclaimed when he saw Him, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel" (1 : 49). The Lord was, therefore, revealed to them in His capacity of Messiah, the King of Israel, and as such they followed Him and later witnessed concerning Him.

The Twelve accompanied the Lord as associates in His ministry of the Kingdom to Israel; thus not until He commenced that ministry did He call upon them to follow Him. The Lord "began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," after the Baptist had been apprehended, and it was then that He first called Andrew, Peter, James, and John to

follow Him (MAT. 4 : 17-22 ; MARK 1 : 14-20). The narration of the disciples' earlier experiences as given in John reveals that Andrew and Peter had met the Lord and certain disciples had been with Him at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, and had accompanied Him to Jerusalem to keep the Passover and had returned again into Galilee, all before the Baptist was imprisoned (3 : 24).

The Lord Who called Andrew and Peter by the seaside was, therefore, One Whom they already knew. He was also known to James and John, for even if they were not among those who had previously accompanied Him they had certainly learned of Him from Peter, who was a partner with them in fishing (LUKE 5 : 7-10). Matthew, Mark, and Luke give this call and the prompt obedience thereunto as the first incident in the record of the disciples. The suddenness of this event is in keeping with their presentation of the Gospel of the Kingdom, for when that Gospel is preached the time is spoken of as short so that it behoves all who hear to respond immediately.

"They forsook all and followed Him" (LUKE 5 : 11). Does this imply that the disciples were called upon to desert their dependants, leaving them unprovided for? Such a suggestion is unthinkable, for the Lord disapproved the practice of the Pharisees who as Corban, "Given to God," withheld from their parents what was due to them (MARK 7 : 11). The pathway God ordains for His own is neither unreasonable nor inhuman. Instead of these disciples being bidden to disregard their responsibilities we find that they were relieved from them, for when the call came, "They left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants and went after Him" (MARK 1 : 20). The business in which they were partners was continued by Zebedee and the servants; thus it was that after the Resurrection they had boats and gear to which they returned.

It is precious to see how several members of the disciples' families were in sympathy with this obedience to the Lord's call, and shared with them in their expectation for the Kingdom. Zebedee's wife, the mother

of James and John, manifested her belief that the Lord would receive the Kingdom by the request she made for her two sons (MAT. 20 : 20-23), and, moreover, she, together with Mary, the mother of James and Joses, were among the women who stood by when the Lord was upon the Cross (MAT. 27 : 55-56). Peter had a home where it was possible for him to entertain the Lord, and after his mother-in-law was healed she ministered unto them (MAT. 8 : 14-15). Matthew when he had been called was able to make the Lord "a great feast in his own house" (LUKE 5 : 27-29), and John could take the Lord's mother unto his home when she had been entrusted to his care (JOHN 19 : 26-27).

THE FORMER PERIOD OF THEIR MINISTRY.

The Lord continued all night in prayer to God before the day when He chose the Twelve (LUKE 6 : 12-13). Then also in preparation for their call He had exhorted them to pray "The Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest," for the next verse records how they were themselves commissioned to be the ones sent forth. What a precious privilege was this, to be in God's hands a means used in the answer of their own prayers (MAT. 9 : 37-10 : 1).

"He chose twelve" (LUKE 6 : 13). Those chosen were, in the estimation of the world, "Illiterate and unprofessional men" (ACTS 4 : 13). They were called from the fishing quarters and the revenue office and not from the seats of Judaic learning at Jerusalem. It seemed good in the Father's sight to hide these things from the wise and prudent and to reveal "them unto babes (*nepios*, infant in intelligence; from *ne*, negative, *eipon*, to say or reply; hence one unable to reason)" (LUKE 10 : 21). He spared them from that distortion of thought which so often is the result of human lore, and preserved them unspoilt with hearts open to receive His revelation. They had, however, been schooled in the pathway of faith obedience, for they knew the promises of God,

and when John proclaimed that the Kingdom was at hand they believed and obeyed his baptism; thus they were prepared for the Lord and His service.

"He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles" (LUKE 6:13). Apostle (*apostolos*) means one that is sent (*apostello*=to send); hence it indicates, not a minister in a general sense but one especially sent by God with a distinct message to a specified party. The Lord was an Apostle (HEB. 3:1), or Sent One of God, and during His earthly ministry He was sent unto Israel.

"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MAT. 15:24).

The Twelve Apostles were appointed by the Lord to go unto the same people and speak the same message; thus these were privileged to have part with Him in His special ministry to Israel at that time. They were to go and proclaim the identical words which they had themselves heeded when John at the first opened the testimony concerning the Kingdom to Israel.

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (MAT. 10:5-7).

"The Twelve" became a title used, especially by Mark, for these Apostles. This number is associated with Israel. The Twelve whose first commission was to Israel continued as Apostles to the circumcision throughout their earthly pathway, and, moreover, their future blessings are also connected with that nation. The Lord promised them that "in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (MAT. 19:28). In the Bride, the heavenly Jerusalem, their names are upon the twelve foundations, while the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are upon the twelve gates (REV. 21:10-14). Thus they have their part in Israel's earthly and heavenly blessings. The earthly aspect of Israel's blessings have alone been

before our notice; but later, especially in considering Paul's earlier ministry, we shall find that there are also heavenly blessings connected with their name.

The Lord's instructions to the Twelve when He commissioned them are recorded in Matthew 10: these concerned the principles applying to preaching "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," even as the Sermon on the Mount gave the teaching connected therewith. "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me" (ver. 38). The principles concern, not so much initial belief but rather the following after, or life walk, of those who had the hope of the Kingdom set before them, an hope, the receiving of which was conditioned upon their righteousness (MAT. 5: 20). Worthiness was a special requirement; the word "worthy" occurs seven times in this passage.

They were to go unto Israel, and so their itineracy took them "over the cities of Israel" (ver. 23). This evangel was, as we have seen, a call to Israel as a nation; thus there was a collective as well as an individual responsibility thereunto. The Lord, therefore, spoke of the judgment of houses and cities as such according to the manner in which they received these heralds of the Kingdom (vers. 11-15). These instructions concerned the disciples' ministry during the time of the Lord's presence among Israel, for they were to go forth taking no purse or scrip (vers. 9-10), as also the Seventy were sent later (LUKE 10: 4); but on the night of His betrayal the Lord reversed this order (LUKE 22: 35-36), and thereafter it is not said that they went about in this way.

The Eleven first heard of the Lord's resurrection from the women who were early at the sepulchre; but "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (LUKE 24: 9-11). The Lord had declared plainly and repeatedly that He must die and rise again the third day; indeed, so clear had He made this that the Pharisees remembered the saying and sought to take measures accordingly (MAT. 27: 62-66).

How was it, then, that the Apostles so signally failed to understand this which even the Lord's bitter opponents had apprehended?

"Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken" (LUKE 18 : 31-34).

The Apostles did not understand because their understanding had not as yet been enlightened to know that truth. Words could not emphasize this more strongly—"They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said" (R.V.). As in the case of the loaves, these things were lost upon them, for while they might recall the incident yet they understood it not, "for their heart was hardened" (MARK 6 : 52, 8 : 17-21). Thus even when Peter and John had seen for themselves the empty tomb and folded graveclothes it still did not dawn upon them what had happened, "for as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (JOHN 20 : 1-9).

When "Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them," and "showed them His hands and His feet," and took the fish "and did eat before them," then they realized with joy that He was risen. "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (LUKE 24 : 30-40). When the Lord had opened their understanding to understand the Scriptures, then this truth which they had passed by unnoted was revealed to them. Peter after his enlightenment preached this truth clearly—"But those things, which God before hath showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled"

(ACTS 3 : 18); and wrote it in his epistles—"The prophets . . . testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 PET. 1 : 10-12).

This enlightenment of the Apostles is seen to be the more remarkable when it is remembered how many things they had believed and endured previously. They had believed the Scriptures concerning the coming of the Lord as Messiah, the King of Israel, for they were ready to accept John's baptism, and when the Lord appeared they had believed and left all to follow Him. Then also these Apostles had been chosen by the Lord, and at His command they had gone forth and fully preached all that He had committed to them, and had healed and raised the dead according to His word. Nevertheless, although they had believed and done all these things, yet they needed the Lord to open their understanding before they could understand this which was written in the prophets.

The Apostles, like the two whom the Lord joined on the road to Emmaus, had believed the Scriptures, but, nevertheless, they had been "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (LUKE 24 : 25). They testified, "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (ver. 21), and that redemption they knew would mean Israel's restoration and forgiveness. The Lord did not say they were mistaken, but that they had not believed all, they had not seen that the sufferings had first to be accomplished before the glory could be entered into. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (ver. 26).

A great and precious lesson is afforded us in this incident of the Apostles' enlightenment into all that was revealed in their Scriptures concerning Christ, for the same principle is said to be in operation to usward who believe, though now the specific truth to be thus entered into concerns something of the Lord's "glory that should follow." Paul, in addressing "the faithful in Christ Jesus" at Ephesus (EPH. 1 : 1), records his

prayers on their behalf that their understanding might be enlightened to know that hope revealed in this epistle.

“Making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling” (EPH. 1:16-18).

Many believers, like these Ephesians, are instructed in “all the counsel of God” as it was taught by Paul during his missionary journeys (ACTS 20:17, 27), and are faithful in God’s service, showing love unto all saints; nevertheless it is clear that there are things revealed in this Ephesian epistle which even such cannot understand until they are enlightened. When by God’s grace any can testify to such enlightenment, then the glories of this hope appear so plain and unmistakable that, like the Apostles with the Lord’s statements concerning His death and resurrection, it seems strange that it could have been unseen before.

The Lord appeared to the Apostles during forty days after the Resurrection and spake to them “of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (ACTS 1:3), and these “things” as the conversations that are recorded show, still had in view that aspect of the Kingdom which concerns the earth, even the hope of Israel which had been preached during the Lord’s ministry. On the occasion of His last appearance to the Apostles—that is, after He had opened their understanding to understand the Scriptures, and had instructed them for forty days in “the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God”—it is recorded that “They asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?” (ACTS 1:6). The Lord replied, “It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority” (ver. 7, R.V.). At this time, the time of the Apostles’ witness after the Resurrection, there was, therefore, still the thought that even then the Lord might “restore again the Kingdom to Israel.”

“And in those days” (ACTS 1:15)—that is, the few which remained before Pentecost—Peter stood up in the midst of the believers, in number about 120, and set forth from Scripture how that another must take the place from which Judas had fallen. Prayer was made before this appointment, as it had been when the other Apostles were first called, and prayer was answered, for the Lord chose Matthias and thereafter the inspired record speaks of “the Twelve” (ACTS 6:2).

“Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection” (ACTS 1:21-22).

In the purpose of God Matthias was already accounted one of the Twelve even though he was not actually appointed to this apostleship until after the ascension. This is seen in that when Paul set forth the order in which the Lord appeared to the saints after His resurrection he stated, “He was seen . . . of the Twelve” (1 COR. 15:5), which must, of course, mean the Twelve as constituted with Matthias, even though he had not as yet been appointed, for Judas had already destroyed himself.

“That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship” (ACTS 1:25). The demonstrative indicates that the Apostles’ ministry to which Matthias was divinely appointed was of a specific character, and for him to be able to take this part among them it was essential that he should have been an eyewitness with them of all things since the days of the Baptist. This qualification is manifestly such as could not be conferred on others, which shows that “this ministry and apostleship” was their charge solely and that it necessarily ceased with them.

The Lord “ordained twelve, that they should be with Him” (MARK 3:14). The fact of their having been with the Lord proved after the Resurrection to be the warrant for the Apostles’ distinctive ministry—“Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the

beginning" (JOHN 15:27). The Twelve, including Matthias, thus testified with the peculiar authority that is the prerogative of an eyewitness. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (ACTS 4:20). The disciples who wrote epistles both mention this.

"We were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 PET. 1:16, R.V.).

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 JOHN 1:1-3).

The Twelve with their ranks complete were thus prepared to be witnesses of the Lord's resurrection to Israel: "To be a witness with us of His resurrection" (ACTS 1:21-22). Peter, standing up with the Eleven, declared to the "men of Israel" that they stood before them as witnesses of the resurrection, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (ACTS 2:32); this he repeated in his second address, "Ye . . . killed the Prince of life, Whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (3:14-15); and this they continued to proclaim with power.

"And with great power gave the apostles their witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them" (ACTS 4:33, R.V.).

THE LATTER PERIOD OF THEIR MINISTRY.

Over seven weeks had passed uneventfully since the Jews, who were gathered at Jerusalem from all parts to attend the Passover, constrained Pilate to have Jesus, their King, crucified. Since then Israel had heard nothing more of Him, saving a rumour that His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while the guard slept (MAT. 28:11-15). But now Pentecost arrived, and once more "Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven," had come to sojourn in Jerusalem to keep the feast (ACTS 2:5-11). Then "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty

wind” and the Apostles “were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (2 : 2-4). The silence was broken, the multitude of Jews at Jerusalem came together, and the Apostles heralded to them in every language there represented the great declaration—“Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (ACTS 2 : 36).

“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” was the accusation put upon the cross. “Of Nazareth” or “the Nazarene” had been a by-word of reproach, for it was a town held in low esteem, as is seen from Nathanael’s remark, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (JOHN 1 : 46). The Apostles now heralded this Name to Israel, thereby confronting them with the fact that the One Whom they despised and rejected God had raised up and glorified.

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up” (ACTS 2 : 22-24).

The Name was henceforth the keynote of the Apostles’ testimony to Israel. Peter set forth how Joel had prophesied that in those days “It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved” (ACTS 2 : 16-21). For at such a time as Israel so calls they would be restored—“They shall call on My Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God” (ZECH. 13 : 9).

The cripple at the Beautiful gate of the Temple was healed expressly to demonstrate to Israel how that by this Name perfect soundness could be received. Peter said to the man, “In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk” (ACTS 3 : 6); and his testimony to the astonished multitude was “Ye men of Israel, . . . ye . . . killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses, and His Name through faith in His Name hath made

this man strong" (vers. 12-16). The Apostles' testimony and this miracle led to their being brought before the very tribunal which had condemned the Lord. These inquired, "By what power, or by what Name, have ye done this?" Peter therefore answered,—

"Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, . . . be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (ACTS 4 : 7-12).

The hearts of the rulers of Israel had, however, become so hardened that this startling declaration served only to arouse them to reject the Lord still further, even to refuse Him Whom God had raised from the dead. "Let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this Name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus" (ACTS 4 : 17-18). Nevertheless the Apostles prayed that boldness might be given them to continue, that "wonders may be done by the Name of Thy holy Child Jesus" (4 : 30); and this was granted them in so great a measure that it led to their being again arrested and summoned before "all the senate of the children of Israel." This council accused them, saying, "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this Name?" and when they had beaten them they once more "commanded that they should not speak in the Name of Jesus" (5 : 21-40). Threats and scourgings could not, however, prevail to silence these witnesses to whom the Holy Spirit had given utterance, for it is recorded—

"They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name. And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (ACTS 5 : 41-42, R.V.).

"Jesus" was the name by which the Lord had been made known to Israel. The Lord when on earth had

charged the disciples "that they should tell no man that He was the Christ" (MAT. 16 : 20, R.V.)—that is, the Messiah (JOHN 1 : 41); but after He had ascended they were empowered to herald this fact to Israel. At Pentecost Peter opened their testimony to Israel concerning the Lord being the Christ—"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (ACTS 2 : 36), and thereafter the Apostles "ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (5 : 42, R.V.).

"Jesus Christ" was henceforth the combination by which the Apostles frequently referred to the Lord. This title testified that "Jesus," the One whom Israel crucified, was Messiah, the Anointed One of God, Who had been promised them. Israel knew through the prophets what the title "Christ" implied; when the Lord asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ?" they knew the right answer, "The Son of David," though they were unable to say how David's Son could be also David's Lord (MAT. 22 : 41-45). Then, too, the Jews recognized the identity of the title "Christ" with "The King of Israel" (MARK 15 : 32). Peter declared, therefore, to the Jews that God had raised up Jesus as the Christ to sit upon the throne of David (ACTS 2 : 29-32).

The Lord had shown, as we noted under the sub-heading "Prophecies," what was to be the nature of the first period following His resurrection; indeed He revealed this so fully that its primary purpose and ultimate end could be known even if the record of the Acts of the Apostles had not been given. The Lord said that the sign of the prophet Jonah must be given that generation, even the proclamation of His resurrection; this testimony was, however, to be rejected, and in consequence that period would be brought to an end by the desolation of Jerusalem and the dispersion of Israel.

When considering the Lord's comparison of the Kingdom of Heaven to the Marriage of the King's Son we saw that Israel as the appointed guests were the

first to be called, and it was not until after their stubbornness had led to their city being burnt that this call of the Kingdom was sent to others. Thus it was that throughout that period prior to the destruction of Jerusalem—that is, the time recorded in Acts—the order of the preaching was always to the Jew first. The Gentiles also heard this word, as we shall notice presently, for at that time they were specially blessed with a view to provoking Israel to emulation; but it is evident from this parable that the wider heralding of the Kingdom to all and sundry appertains particularly to a time after the destruction of Jerusalem and prior to the Lord's return (MAT. 22 : 7-10, 24 : 14).

Thus at Pentecost and afterward God still continued to send servants unto His chosen people Israel, though now it was with a message such as they had not heard before, for salvation and restitution were preached to them through faith in the Name of their risen Messiah. In presenting this message to Israel Stephen and others brought to their notice that God was dealing with them then even as He had dealt with their fathers. This they did by recounting God's former dealings with their nation, tracing His ways with Abraham, with their fathers, with David, and then continuing in the same strain they included the happenings of that present time, by showing that Israel had crucified the Lord but that God had raised Him from the dead. Then also their fathers' rejection of the prophets, which Israel professed to deplore, was now cited as a precedent to bring home to them that they had done like their fathers, in that they had rejected the Messiah.

To Israel as a nation pertained the promise of the Kingdom, and it will be as a nation upon the earth that they will one day be given this their hope. Then also Christ was promised them of their royal line to be the King of Israel; thus it was that the Lord "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh" and consequently of Israel "is Christ as concerning the flesh" (ROM. 1 : 3, 9 : 5, n.v.). When Christ tabernacled in the flesh among His people Israel witness was borne to

Him that He was their King; but at Pentecost Peter bore further witness to this fact, for he announced to Israel that the Lord's resurrection, whereby His flesh did not see corruption, was a fulfilment of the promise made to David that of his seed, according to the flesh, Christ would be raised to sit upon his throne.

"The patriarch David . . . being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption" (ACTS 2 : 29-31).

The Apostles' testimony to the Lord's resurrection thus concerned that aspect of His exaltation which related to Israel, even that God had raised Him up to sit upon the throne of David. Thus, as during the days of the Lord's ministry He was from one aspect "not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MAT. 15 : 24), so likewise in resurrection the Apostles testified to Israel—"Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (ACTS 3 : 26).

Then also the Apostles' testimony to the Lord's return concerned what He will be to Israel. "He may send the Christ, Who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus" (ACTS 3 : 20, R.V.). As the Lord was spoken of to the Apostles, so they testified to Israel concerning Him. The Angels who spoke to them at the Ascension said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (ACTS 1 : 11); and when the Lord thus returns to Olivet it will be as King.

"And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, . . . and the Lord shall be King over all the earth" (ZECII. 14 : 4-9).

The Apostles' declaration to Israel that God had raised Christ from the dead to bless them was accompanied by a conditional promise. The Lord had said that Israel would be given the sign of the prophet Jonah, which necessarily implied that they would hear of His resurrection; but by this conditional promise we

see that God's grace towards them was such that He not only sent to them the message of the Resurrection but also gave them a further opportunity to receive their Messiah now that He was risen from the dead.

"Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send the Christ Who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began" (ACTS 3:19-21, R.V.).

Israel's crucifixion of their Messiah was a national offence, and this condition for His return required, in those days, a national repentance. "Repent ye . . . that He may send the Christ Who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus"; thus if Israel repented their appointed King would again be sent to them. As this was God's message to the nation at that time the Apostles addressed Israel as a whole, and called upon every one of them to repent.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ, . . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ" (ACTS 2:36-38; cp. 3:20, 4:10).

"Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted . . . for to give repentance to Israel" (ACTS 5:30-31).

The Lord's return, which, upon this condition, was then proclaimed to Israel, would bring "the restoration of all things," even those things of which the prophets had spoken. The Lord had shown that His return would be to establish the Kingdom. Thus, as we noticed when considering the expression "at hand," the Lord's second coming to earth included also the thought of the coming of the Kingdom. This provisional expectation of the Lord's return in those days thereby implied that the things which He had said, in such passages as Matthew 24, would be prefatory to His coming were then in immediate prospect; and, moreover, the hope of entering into the Kingdom, the judgment of the nations, and other such things as are foreseen in Matthew 25, were events which, because they take place at His coming, must likewise have been regarded as imminent.

The coming of Christ to earth is that event which will bring to Israel the blessings God has promised them. Thus for a Jew to have fulfilled the condition for the Lord's return in those days was patriotism in the real meaning of the term. The belief of the individual under this condition was to the interest of Israel nationally; whereas unbelief, if widespread, would mean the renouncement by that generation of those blessings which God had appointed to their nation. This principle that arises out of God's dealings with Israel as a nation can be seen in the case of that generation which came out of Egypt. Moses spake God's word to them, and Caleb and Joshua believed to the blessing both of themselves and their nation. The people generally did not, however, follow fully, and this resulted in a national disaster, for that generation was overthrown in the wilderness. Peter quoted to Israel the prophecy of Moses concerning Christ being raised up unto them,

"Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto Me; to Him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever He shall speak unto you. And it shall be, that every soul, which shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people" (ACTS 3 : 22-23, R.V.).

Israel were now required to hearken unto "all things whatsoever" Christ had spoken unto them; every soul which refused to hearken would "be utterly destroyed out from among (*ek*) the people." The point of view is clearly that of a Jew who was a member of the royal nation; if he hearkened to Christ's words addressed to him, then his position among his people would be confirmed; if, however, he, like his fathers before him, refused to hearken, then he would forfeit his privileged position, for he would be expelled from among the people. Insomuch as Israel generally were about to reject God's words to them at that time, Peter gave warning at Pentecost, saying, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (ACTS 2 : 40).

The ministry of the Twelve at Pentecost and afterward was concerned, as it had been previously, with God's dealings with Israel as a nation. John the Baptist first

preached the Kingdom to Israel, and the ministry of the Twelve after the Resurrection was said to be a continuation of John's word. Peter and Paul both set this forth. Peter declared to Cornelius "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel" and showed how "that word began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached" (ACTS 10:36-37). Paul in his first recorded address to Israel testified, "to you is the word of this salvation sent," and explained how "John . . . first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel," but that after the Resurrection the Twelve were God's witnesses to that nation: "Them that came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now His witnesses unto the people" (ACTS 13:24-30, R.V.).

The Apostles' call to Israel at Pentecost was identical with that of the Baptist, but with the addition of the declaration that Israel had now a special cause to obey, being guilty of crucifying their Messiah. John the Baptist preached "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (MARK 1:4), and the Twelve at Pentecost and afterward likewise preached to Israel "Repent, and be baptized every one of you . . . for the remission of sins" (ACTS 2:38). John was sent to "turn again" many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God in preparation for Him Who was about to come unto them, for that, as Solomon declared, was a pre-requisite to national restitution; and so likewise the Twelve bade Israel "turn again," though now, not because the Lord was coming, but because He would come at that time providing they so obeyed (ACTS 3:19-20, R.V.).

John at the first baptized with water unto repentance, but as he did so he spake of Him Who should baptize with the Holy Spirit (MAT. 3:11). The Twelve at Pentecost received this baptism in fulfilment of John's word (ACTS 1:3-5), and thereupon preached it to Israel (ACTS 2:38). This baptism was poured forth in consequence of the Lord's exaltation: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of

the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this" (ACTS 2 : 33). Thus it was given to be a witness to Israel, with the Apostles, of the Resurrection.

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, . . . The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree . . . and we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (ACTS 5 : 29-32).

Israel thus had repentance proclaimed to them with increasing power. John the Baptist first heralded that word and baptized with water, but he did no miracle. The Lord with the Twelve took up that testimony and baptism, but then evidential miracles were added. At Pentecost the Twelve again proclaimed repentance to Israel and baptized with water and worked miracles, but to this there was added, now that the Lord was exalted, yet another sign, even the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That this Spirit-baptism was added as a witness to the unbelieving Jews is seen also in that those who received this gift were empowered to speak with other tongues, or languages, and as "The Jews require a sign" so it is explained that "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1 COR. 1 : 22 ; 14 : 22).

The "apostles' doctrine" in which the believers at Pentecost continued steadfastly consisted of those things which the Lord had given them to teach. Repentance for the remission of sins was heralded to all, but the works meet for those that repented had been such as the Lord set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. The parables of Matthew 25 showed clearly that those principles would obtain in respect to entering into the Kingdom during the time which should lead up to the hour when the door of opportunity to that hope is shut, and insomuch as Pentecost had that hope in view tentatively it follows that the same principles must then have obtained. Those principles embodied the Law of Moses and thus, as we shall notice in considering the ministry of James, the Jews who looked for that hope are said to have continued to keep the law throughout the record of Acts. Paul was given wisdom to explain

the purpose and limitations of the law, but so far as God's dealings with Israel as a nation are concerned they were not relieved from the law at the cross; indeed, so far from the law being dispensed with we learn that when Israel are finally restored they will be given a heart with which to keep the law.

"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (JER. 31 : 33).

"I will . . . bring you into your own land And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (EZEK. 36 : 24-28).

In their testimony to the nation the Apostles had also a special word to the rulers of Israel. When the Lord gave the parable of the Husbandmen He concluded with the quotation, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner," and the chief priests and scribes perceived that He had spoken this parable against them (LUKE 20 : 9-19). After Pentecost Peter and John were summoned before these priests and scribes together with other dignitaries of Israel, and there declared boldly, by quoting the same scripture as the Lord cited, that they had indeed rejected the Heir even as He said unto them.

"Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel . . . This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner" (ACTS 4 : 8-11).

The period of the ministry of the Twelve introduced by Pentecost was clearly a continuation, though a further phase, of the time for the testimony of the Kingdom to Israel which commenced by the preaching of the Baptist. The Twelve proclaimed the Kingdom upon the condition of Israel's repentance whereby their Messiah would be sent to them; this condition was not fulfilled, and in consequence Jerusalem suffered desolation. The hope of the Kingdom that was had in expectation during that period will, however, be again in prospect in the future period which will reach its climax with the Lord's return. Thus, as we saw when considering the Lord's "Prophecies," the first period

following His resurrection had characteristics similar to, and therefore anticipative of, the third period when the Kingdom will be about to come.

This anticipative character of those days would seem to be illustrated in the feast of Pentecost, for this feast had the characteristics of a similar feast which came later. "Pentecost" is the Greek for "fiftieth," and the feast was so termed because it came fifty days after the wave sheaf of the firstfruits. In the Old Testament it is usually termed "the feast of weeks," also because it was reckoned as seven sabbaths and a day after the wave sheaf (LEV. 23:15-16). The Lord arose on "the first of the sabbaths (*ton sabbaton*)" (JOHN 20:1), thereby fulfilling the type of the wave sheaf; then fifty days later came Pentecost, when the Apostles were endued with power from on high.

Pentecost and Tabernacles were two feasts of rejoicing, both being associated with harvest (DEUT. 16:9-15). Pentecost was an anticipation of Tabernacles, for at Pentecost there was presented "the firstfruits unto the Lord," a foretaste of Tabernacles with its joyful harvest home (LEV. 23:39). In the days of the Apostles those of "the twelve tribes" who believed were called "a kind of firstfruits" (JAS. 1:1, 18), for they were a "firstfruits" of the "all Israel" that shall be saved when the Lord returns (ROM. 11:1-6, 16, 26); thus in those days there was a prefigurement of the fulfilling of Tabernacles, the feast which, as we saw when considering the Transfiguration, is, among other things, a type of "the consummation of the age" when the Kingdom of Heaven is established.

Peter's explanation for the pouring forth of the Spirit is among the most striking evidences which reveal that this period of Kingdom testimony during the days of the Apostles was anticipative of that latter period prior to the Lord's return. The Jews who heard the Apostles "speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" inquired "What meaneth this?" Peter therefore explained, in words plain and incontrovertible, that "this" outpouring was "that" which God

said would take place in the last days before the day of the Lord comes. That the "this" in question stands for the gift of the Spirit can be seen from Peter's words in the near context—"He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" (ACTS 2 : 33).

"Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: . . . this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: . . . The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come" (ACTS 2 : 14-20).

Peter's inspired declaration that "this" outpouring was "that" which Joel said should be in the last days before the day of the Lord comes necessarily implied that the last days were then accounted as present and the day of the Lord as at hand. This fact was affirmed so long as these manifestations of the Spirit obtained; John in his first epistle stated, "Little children, it is the last time . . . we know that it is the last time" (2 : 18), and Paul in writing to the Thessalonians spoke of the day of the Lord as an event which might come upon them, and which would not take them by surprise as it will the world (1 THESS. 5 : 1-3).

The Jews addressed by Peter did not need to be told what the last days, and the day of the Lord, would be, for that had already been foreseen in their Old Testament Scriptures. The prophets had revealed that the day of the Lord was the great occasion when the Lord returns to the Mount of Olives as King to establish His Kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and to cause the house of Jacob to possess their possessions.

"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, . . . And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, . . . And the Lord shall be King over all the earth" (ZECH. 14 : 1-9).

"For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations: . . . But in Mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions" (OBADIAH 15-17, R.V.).

The gifts of Pentecost had in prospect the occasion when Israel's hope will be received. The Old Testament

references to the day of the Lord are parallel with the Lord's prophecies concerning the sign of His coming and of the consummation of the age in a manner which establishes, beyond question, that the identical occasion is in view (JOEL 2 : 31 ; MAT. 24 : 29-30 ; ACTS 2 : 20). Thus, as we have already noticed, there was at Pentecost an immediate expectation for the coming of those things spoken of by the Lord in Matthew 24-25.

The Kingdom testimony in those days had, therefore, many characteristics of that future period of the evangel of the Kingdom which shall precede the Lord's return and Israel's restoration. The Lord said concerning John the Baptist, "If ye will receive it, this is Elijah which was for to come" (MAT. 11 : 14); but Israel would not receive, thus Elijah is to be sent to them before the coming of the day of the Lord (MAL. 4 : 5). At Pentecost there was a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy concerning the pouring out of the Spirit, but as Israel did not heed its testimony the outpouring is again to be given in the last days (JOEL 2 : 28-32). Throughout that time Israel did not realize that they were being visited, and in consequence their Temple was destroyed; but before the coming of the day of the Lord Israel will once more have the house of the Lord their God to which they will gather (JOEL 1 : 14-15).

The period of the ministry of the Twelve after the Resurrection witnessed a further failure on the part of Israel as a nation to heed those things which were then being proclaimed to them. Nevertheless many among the nation did give heed and believed; at Pentecost these numbered "about three thousand souls" (ACTS 2 : 41); after the healing of the cripple at the Temple gate "the number of the men came to be about five thousand" (4 : 4, R.V.), and the record of the collective witness of the Twelve in Acts is brought to a close by the words—

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (ACTS 6 : 7).

JAMES AND JUDE

“James . . . should go . . . unto
the circumcision.”

Gal. 2 : 9.

THE LORD'S BRETHREN

JAMES AN APOSTLE OF THE CIRCUM-
CISION

THE EPISTLES OF JAMES AND JUDE

THE LORD'S BRETHREN.

JAMES and Jude provide a striking example of the need for enlightenment in order that the Lord Jesus Christ may be known. These men, as the Lord's brothers according to the flesh, were acquainted with Him intimately, and yet while He was with them they did not believe on Him; not until the Lord had risen from the dead do we read that their eyes were opened to know Who He was. That we also may know Him it behoves us to pray for enlightenment, not simply to see Him as the world saw Him, but rather that we may be granted that insight and apprehension of which John could testify. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (JOHN 1 : 14).

After Mary had become the mother of the Lord she had at least six other children, four sons and two or more daughters. This is seen in that the Jews of "His own country" said, "Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon, and are not His sisters here with us?" (MARK 6 : 1-4). The Lord's brethren were orthodox but unenlightened; they were keen to attend the feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem yet did not know Who it was that tabernacled in their midst, "for even His brethren did not believe on Him" (JOHN 7 : 5, R.V.).

The Lord taught those who followed Him that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (MAT. 10 : 36), and in this suffering He permitted Himself to have part, for, in the words of the Psalmist, it could be said of Him, "I am become a stranger unto My brethren, and an alien unto My mother's children" (PSA. 69 : 8). At that time the Lord drew a sharp distinction between His brethren and His disciples; to His brethren He had to say, "The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth" (JOHN 7 : 7), while to His own He said, "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (15 : 10 ; 17 : 14). Although

they were the Lord's brothers after the flesh, yet they were of the world and exempt from its hatred so long as they remained in unbelief; the disciples, on the other hand, were not of the world but were objects of its hatred because they believed on Him. The Lord also emphasized this distinction in that when His brethren sought to call Him from His teaching:

"He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother" (MAT. 12 : 49-50).

The Lord after His resurrection "was seen of James" (1 COR. 15 : 7). This was evidently the Lord's brother, for He had already appeared to the Twelve, and had, therefore, been seen by the other James the son of Zebedee (ver. 5). After the Ascension the Eleven returned to Jerusalem unto the upper room, where they were abiding and there "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren" (ACTS 1 : 12-14). Thus the Lord's brethren are mentioned in fellowship with the believers immediately after His ascension; how precious is this, that the Lord's kindred should have been among the firstfruits of His sufferings!

James does not mention that he was the Lord's brother; that fact is told concerning him by others. Thus he did not make a claim to distinction upon the ground of what he was by natural relationship. James would seem to have been given grace to emphasize that essential "do" of which the Lord spake, even that which manifests faith and constitutes the bond of relationship which He accounts precious (MAT. 12 : 49-50). The Lord's brethren, now that they were His brethren indeed through faith in His Name, became well known to the believers even unto distant parts; so much was this so that Paul could cite their case to the saints at Corinth, whereby we learn that they were married.

"Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 COR. 9 : 5).

JAMES AN APOSTLE OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

The Lord revealed that Israel would continue to be especially dealt with after His resurrection and before Jerusalem was given to desolation. "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision" (ROM. 15 : 8), and the continuation of that testimony which He proclaimed to Israel required that there should be other ministers to this nation; the Twelve were among these ministers, and so also was James the Lord's brother, for he was associated with some among the Twelve in that special ministry "unto the circumcision."

"James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision" (GAL. 2 : 9, R.V.).

The Twelve addressed the nation of Israel and James was raised up to minister to those of the nation who believed. Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish world and it was in the Jewish church at that city that James exercised his ministry "unto the circumcision." His ministry to this church continued throughout the entire period during which it is mentioned in connection with God's dealings with the nation as recorded in Acts. When James was with the Twelve at Jerusalem before Pentecost (ACTS 1 : 12-15) he was a comparatively young man, for the Lord as his senior suffered about the age of thirty-three. From Pentecost onwards James is mentioned during a span of some thirty years, and this always in connection with his being at Jerusalem: at Peter's deliverance from prison he was there (ACTS 12 : 17); Paul recounts that three years after his conversion "I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (GAL. 1 : 18-19); and so in Paul's subsequent visits to Jerusalem he was always brought into touch with James (ACTS 15 : 13, 21 : 18).

James was made overseer of the church at Jerusalem at some time prior to the discussion of Acts 15. His authority at that discussion is evident, for first there was "much disputing," then Peter gave evidence, followed by Paul and Barnabas with their special experience, and finally James summed up and gave his "sentence" and his recommendations were accepted unanimously by "the apostles and elders, with the whole church" (ACTS 15 : 6-22). This position held by James is seen also in that his name is given first place whenever the Jewish saints at Jerusalem are mentioned. Paul speaks of "James, Cephas, and John" as those who were accounted "pillars" among these saints, thus placing Peter's name, which elsewhere is given precedence, as second (GAL. 2 : 9). James was the only name which came to Peter's lips when he bade the believers go and tell of his deliverance from prison; the rest of those at Jerusalem he simply included as brethren: "Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren" (ACTS 12 : 17). So likewise the writer of Acts mentions James but includes the other leaders at Jerusalem as elders: "Unto James; and all the elders were present" (ACTS 21 : 18).

"The church which was at Jerusalem" (ACTS 8 : 1) was a continuation of those who were with the Lord in the days of His ministry. Prior to Pentecost there were "about an hundred and twenty" brethren assembled at Jerusalem, and these included the Twelve, Barsabas, the Lord's mother and His brethren (ACTS 1 : 15). At Pentecost it is not said that any church began, but instead it is written that to these who already believed there were then added others: "Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (ACTS 2 : 41). The day of Pentecost thus witnessed, not the inception of a new and distinct company but a mighty increase to that which already obtained; and this increase continued, for "the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved," and soon "the number of the men came to be about five thousand" (ACTS 2 : 47, 4 : 4, R.V.).

This company, as it consisted in the days following Pentecost, had seen and heard the Lord in the days of His ministry. The original hundred and twenty had known the Lord, and so also had the multitude that were added to them, for Peter spoke of the Lord to these as "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (ACTS 2 : 22). These had rejected the Lord when He was among them, but now they repented and were baptized at the testimony of the Apostles to His resurrection.

The Lord preached the Kingdom of Heaven to Israel, and after His resurrection the Twelve proclaimed to the nation salvation through faith in the Name of their risen Messiah, together with the promise that if they, as a people, repented God would send the Christ appointed them and He would restore all things as the prophets had spoken. This was the gospel by which the church at Jerusalem was called, and it was in this hope of Israel that they continued under the ministry of James. There was a gospel committed to Paul a considerable time after Pentecost, but when it was revealed these Jewish saints at Jerusalem did not, as a community, have it preached to them; for it was only to those of reputation among them that Paul communicated privately that gospel which he preached among the Gentiles (GAL. 2 : 2). These saints thus continued knowing only the hope of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel as preached at Pentecost, and they were, in consequence, a company distinct from those being called under Paul's ministry among the Gentiles. The ministry of James to the circumcision and that of Paul to the Gentiles were in practice never mixed; the two, while contemporaneous, were not combined, and so in consequence the companies to which they ministered were, in many respects, separate and distinct.

This church at Jerusalem consisted of "the circumcision." No Gentile as such is ever said to have been received; indeed, the fact of the conversion of the

Gentiles proved to be a severe test to them. At Pentecost "Jews and proselytes" heard the word (ACTS 2:10), a proselyte being a Gentile who had been received into the Jewish faith; such partook of circumcision. One of the seven was "Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch" (6:5). Among the circumcision there were Hebrews and Grecian Jews (6:1, R.V.)—that is, Hellenists, those who spoke Greek. The missionary effort of this church was also restricted to the circumcision, for "they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, . . . travelled . . . preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only" (11:19). Many of the Jews in this church were of a decided character: "A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (6:7); and under the care of James there continued to be a large section that were zealous for the law. There were among them "certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed" (15:5), and some thirty years after Pentecost James said to Paul, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law" (21:20).

This church was not only of the circumcision as to caste, but it was also being dealt with as the circumcision—that is to say, the truth then given them was that which was particularly theirs because of circumcision. James their minister had a mission, not generally applicable to all men, but which was specifically "unto the circumcision"; the hope for which they looked was that of which circumcision was a token; and the observances they practised were those required of the circumcision.

Circumcision was ordained "to be a token of the covenant" between God and Abraham that He would be a God to him and to his seed, and that He would give them all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession (GEN. 17); in the same way the bow in the cloud was ordained in the days of Noah to "be for a token of a covenant" between God and the earth that a flood should no more destroy all flesh (GEN. 9:13). "The covenant of circumcision" (ACTS 7:8) was thus

established to Abraham's seed "throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant," and this covenant they were commanded to "Keep . . . throughout their generations" in that their males should be circumcised that His covenant might be in their "flesh for an everlasting covenant." For any to omit this essential rite would mean the forfeiture of his place among the people of the promise—"That soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant" (GEN. 17 : 1-14, R.V.).

To the circumcision there were given ordinances which, like this token, they were required to keep in perpetuity "throughout their generations." The Passover was to be kept by the circumcision "a feast to the Lord throughout your generations . . . by an ordinance for ever," and if any should fail to do this "that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (EX. 12 : 14-17); so likewise the other feasts were instituted to be kept by them "throughout their generations" (LEV. 23 : 14, 21, 31, 41; ESTH. 9 : 28), as was also the worship of God ordained first in connection with the Tabernacle, such as the "continual burnt offering" (EX. 29 : 42) and other related services (EX. 27 : 21; 30 : 8, 10, 21; 31 : 13, 16). So the Jews to this day still keep the covenant made with Abraham in that they observe circumcision, and the devout among them still perpetuate the feasts. Then also it is shown by prophecy that when Israel are given opportunity they will rebuild the Temple and reinstate its ceremonial; and this is to have Divine recognition, for Scripture, referring to that future time, speaks of "the Temple of God" (2 THESS. 2 : 4), "the holy place" (MAT. 24 : 15), and, moreover, its sacrifices are called, as of old, "the continual burnt offering" (DAN. 11 : 31, R.V.).

The ministry of James "unto the circumcision" was carried out with an observance of all things enjoined to the circumcision "throughout their generations." The Temple was standing which permitted these observances to be kept in full; it was there that these believers gathered following Pentecost (ACTS 2 : 46, 3 : 8-11) and Peter testified, and that by the express

command of the angel of the Lord (5 : 19-21, 25); then also in the last reference to this company the Temple still remained the centre of affairs (21 : 27). As during the Lord's ministry to Israel, so in the days of James, all things were done as Moses commanded, and it is nowhere said that James and those to whom he ministered were doing amiss in continuing these things, they were rebuked only when "certain came from James" and sought to compel the Gentile believers to live as did the Jews (GAL. 2 : 12). Paul in his practice as a Jew, and especially in his dealings with these of the circumcision, lived strictly in accordance with the commandments of the law. Thus it is recorded of Paul that he practised circumcision when a Jew was concerned (ACTS 16 : 3), and kept the feasts (18 : 21) and observed the law (25 : 8). Also he went up to Jerusalem to worship (24 : 11), attended the Temple, and engaged in a ceremony which necessitated that "an offering should be offered for" him (21 : 26; NUMB. 6), and that this last was not an exceptional procedure on Paul's part is seen in that he had done the same previously (18 : 18).

God's administration during the period following the ascension rendered Israel's disposition towards the preached word to be of primary consequence to the prospect of that time, for the Lord's return was then conditional upon their repentance "Repent . . . that He may send the Christ" (ACTS 3 : 19-20, R.V.). The Acts, in giving the history of that period, thus centres attention upon the nation's attitude towards the testimony then given, and in this the church to which James ministered at Jerusalem is given prominence as being composed of believing Jews. That this church was not dissociated from the nation is seen in that Paul referred to the contribution sent from the Gentiles to the poor among the saints at Jerusalem (ROM. 15 : 26) by saying, "I came to bring alms to my nation" (ACTS 24 : 17). Paul had a witness to Israel, as we shall see presently, and it was in connection with his visits to James and the church at Jerusalem that there transpired incidents which proved to be decisive factors in the issues of that time.

THE EPISTLES OF JAMES AND JUDE.

James and Jude, the Lord's brethren, each wrote an epistle—at least, they are generally attributed to them; and in these it is precious to notice their use of the Lord's threefold title "Lord Jesus Christ"; this, as from His kindred, is in itself a testimony to His Deity.

James directed his epistle "To the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion" (1:1, R.V.)—that is, to Israel scattered in other countries. At Pentecost Jews from many countries came to keep the feast at Jerusalem and there heard Peter's testimony, and it was, no doubt, largely as a result of this that there were among the Dispersion those that believed. The ministry of James "unto the circumcision" was as leader and teacher of the Jews at Jerusalem who had received that testimony of the Lord and the Twelve which was addressed to Israel, and in his epistle he ministered to those of the faith among the Dispersion who had believed that same testimony, even to such as constituted the counterpart of the church at Jerusalem. Thus in the epistle of James we have set forth that teaching in which the Jews of this calling were instructed.

"Brethren" was the term by which James addressed "the twelve tribes," for that was the usual way in which a Jew spoke to another of his nation, irrespective of whether he was a believer; thus Peter addressed the Jews as "brethren" when he witnessed to them of "Jesus whom ye have crucified" (ACTS 2:29-36), and Saul "received letters unto the brethren" to introduce him to those rulers of the synagogue who might assist him in persecuting the Jewish saints (ACTS 22:5). In writing to "the twelve tribes," or the nation, James had words both to believers and to the disobedient; to some he spoke of "your faith" (1:3, 2:1), that "He brought us forth by the word of truth" (1:18, R.V.), and of "that worthy Name by which ye are

called" (2 : 7); but to others he had to say "Ye have condemned and ye have killed the righteous (one); He doth not resist you" (5 : 6, R.V.).

The epistle of James is thus entirely Jewish in its atmosphere. Abraham is referred to from the natural Jewish standpoint of "our father" (2 : 21). The Scriptures to which appeal is made are those of the Old Testament, for at that time the New Testament was largely, if not wholly, unwritten. We read of "the Lord of Sabaoth" (5 : 4), the New Testament equivalent of "The Lord of hosts" (ISA. 1 : 9—ROM. 9 : 29), that title of the God of Israel which speaks of His lordship over the hosts of earth and heaven. Their place of meeting was the "synagogue" (*sunagoge*) (2 : 2, marg.), hence the "elders" whom the sick were bidden to call for anointing were, necessarily, the overseers of the church, or assembly, meeting in the synagogue (5 : 14).

The synagogue was a national institution attended by all orthodox Jews, and the calling of the Jewish saints to whom James ministered did not make it essential for them to absent themselves from the synagogue, or from others of their nation who worshipped there. At the discussion of Acts 15 James gave certain rules to guide the Gentiles, but as concerning the Jews he said, "For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath" (ACTS 15 : 21, R.V.). The Jews of that calling had believed Moses fully, for they received "the Prophet" of whom he spoke, even the Lord Jesus Christ; and, moreover, as we have noticed, they were obedient to those observances enjoined by Moses to Israel "throughout their generations." It was, therefore, to the synagogues that Saul went in his zeal to hunt down the believers among Israel (ACTS 9 : 2, 22 : 19, 26 : 11).

James wrote to the Jews of this calling as recognizing their attendance at the synagogue, and gave teaching in keeping therewith. This feature distinguishes the epistle of James from the church epistles of Paul, for they were sent to Jews "separated" from the synagogue

and Gentiles meeting with them (ACTS 10:9). James wrote to these Jews, not to instruct them concerning initial faith or the rudiments of redemption, but to set before them the privilege of enduring tribulation patiently, and manifesting faith by works, to the end that they might "be perfect."

"The coming of the Lord" James stated "is at hand" (5:8, R.V.), and concerning this coming he added, "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door" (5:9). James referred to the Lord's return as "at hand" because it was then in prospect upon the condition of Israel's repentance; his subject, however, was the believer's individual privilege and opportunity pending that coming of their hope, even that they should so endure and work that when the Judge appeared they might be accounted "perfect," or "approved," as concerning their life walk.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love Him" (JAS. 1:12, R.V.).

When considering the Sermon on the Mount we noted that "perfect" (*teleios*) does not relate to sinlessness, for though the Lord knew no sin yet He was made "perfect through sufferings" (HEB. 2:10); but it concerns maturity, even that by living according to the things ordained of God the end set before may be attained. As an example of perfecting James took the case of their father Abraham and showed how from this aspect he was "justified by works" in that "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect" (2:21-23). For faith to be unto salvation it was required to be of a character that manifested its existence by works, otherwise it was profitless—"What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?" (2:14, R.V.). Thus faith by bearing fruit in works was "made perfect."

"Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (JAS. 1:3-4, R.V.).

The several callings of the redeemed have, we noted, this principle of perfecting applying to them; though according to the calling the rule whereby life should be conducted to that end necessarily varies. Thus Paul besought those whose calling is "blessings in the heavenly places" to "walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called" (EPH. 4:1, R.V.), and consequently, not according to a rule which pertained to another calling wherewith they had not been called. To the calling to which James ministered law was the rule whereby they were required to live; not for salvation, but to the end that they might "be perfect."

This law by which their lives were to be judged was "a law of liberty." "So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty. For (introducing the explanation of this law) judgment is without mercy to him that hath shewed no mercy; mercy glorieth against judgment" (JAS. 2:12-13, R.V.). This rule was, as in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (MAT. 5:7); it was "the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," which, as James said to them, "if ye fulfil . . . ye do well" (2:8-9). This law was such as recompenses to a man that which he has shown to others. Thus the Sermon on the Mount gave warning, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (MAT. 7:1-2), and James has a similar word, "Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged" (JAS. 5:9, R.V.). This same principle is seen throughout his epistle—"God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble"; "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall exalt you" (JAS. 4:6, 10, R.V.).

The truly blessed life pathway according to that calling was to be "a doer of the law" (JAS. 4:11), for "He that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing" (JAS. 1:25, R.V.). The Lord illustrated this in the Sermon on the Mount by likening one who

"heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them," to a wise man that built his house upon a rock (MAT. 7: 24-27), and James emphasizes this wisdom in his question, "Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom" (3: 13, R.V.). That this doing related only to the acceptableness of their life walk is evident; for the Sermon on the Mount, while requiring that they should "do and teach" the commandments of the law, yet made provision for the forgiveness of trespasses (MAT. 5: 17-19, 6: 14-15), and James likewise required that each should be "a doer of the law" (4: 11), though it was recognized that "in many things we all stumble," and to "stumble in one point" is virtually to have "become guilty of all" (3: 2, 2: 10, R.V.). Nevertheless in this provision was made for forgiveness (5: 15).

Jude addressed "Them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ" (1, R.V.), his subject being that they should "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" because that "certain men crept in unawares" among them, and these were "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (1-4). In warning them of this danger Jude presented precedents from Israel's experience: "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not" (5), and showed that Sodom and Gomorrah "are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire" (7, R.V.).

According to a believer's sphere of blessing so is the special opposition with which he is brought in conflict. In Ephesians, where the blessings in view are "in the heavenly places," there is warning given concerning "wickedness in the heavenly places" (1: 3; 6: 12, R.V.). In Jude special warning is given, among other things, concerning that wickedness which in former days corrupted human flesh and necessitated that the earth should be visited with judgment, as in the case of those to whom Enoch prophesied who were afterwards

destroyed by the flood, and of Sodom and Gomorrah who suffered punishment by fire (7, 14, R.V.). This outrage is to recur in the last days, and as these whom Jude addressed were expected to live in those days, he counselled them concerning such and bade them keep themselves "in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (17-25).

The epistles of James and Jude did not, therefore, direct their readers to any further calling than that by which they were first called, but gave instruction whereby they might be established in that calling: Jude by giving warning concerning the particular wickedness that beset them, and James by setting forth how that by endurance and works they might "be perfect."

PETER

“He . . . wrought effectually in Peter
to the apostleship of the
circumcision”

Gal. 2 : 8.

PETER AN APOSTLE OF THE CIRCUMCISION
THE FORMER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY
THE LATTER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY
THE EPISTLES OF PETER

PETER AN APOSTLE OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

PETER was so named by the Lord when first they met: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone," or "Peter" (JOHN 1:42, R.V.). "Peter" thereafter became his ministerial name; it was as such that he was known after the Resurrection, and Paul usually wrote of him as "Cephas," evidently using the Hebrew (Aramaic) equivalent of "Peter" to emphasize that his ministry was primarily to Israel (see R.V.). The Lord, however, generally addressed him as "Simon" in His dealings with him not as a minister but personally; hence in this connection we read of Simon's own love to, and apprehension of, the Lord, and of his thoughts and failings.

The name "Peter" (*Petros*) means a "rock" or "stone"; for it is the word "rock" (*petra*) rendered a proper name by the masculine termination. The fact that this name was used in connection with his being a minister of God suggests that it indicates the nature of his ministry. The Lord did not explain in what way Peter was a rock, or stone, but it is clear that he was given a ministry which was foundational. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is said to be the foundation besides which there is no other: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 COR. 3:11, R.V.); hence the acknowledgement of Him must be that bedrock on which His called-out-ones are founded (MAT. 16:18). This word "rock" is thus used of the Lord, for it is that upon which a foundation may be laid (LUKE 6:48), either in its sense of being the rock of the earth, or a separate rock or stone; this latter sense is evidently intended in 1 Peter 2:8, where it is used of Him in conjunction with *lithos*, a detached or hewn stone: "a stone (*lithos*) of stumbling and a rock (*petra*) of offence." Christ was also typified by the rock in the wilderness (1 COR. 10:4).

"According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 COR. 3:10-11, R.V.).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation, but Paul states also that he received grace to lay a foundation whereon others might afterwards build. Peter's ministry, like Paul's, was foundational, for their ministries were analogous in this, that to each was given the privilege of being the first to receive and preach a particular Gospel. Peter was entrusted with "the Gospel of the circumcision," even as Paul was entrusted with "the Gospel of the uncircumcision." After the Resurrection Peter opened "the Gospel of the circumcision" to Israel and the Gentiles, and Paul opened his "Gospel of the uncircumcision" during Acts and "the dispensation of the mystery" after Acts. When once they had thus laid the foundations of these two lines of God's administration then others were raised up to spread their respective Gospels.

"When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; For He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles" (GAL. 2:7-8).

Peter received a commission to fulfil a service to his brethren which is also in keeping with this thought respecting his name. The Lord said to Peter, "I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish (*sterizo*) thy brethren" (LUKE 22:32, R.V.). Peter's epistles show how he sought thus to found them in the truth: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established (*sterizo*) in the present truth" (2 PET. 1:12). Peter had also a further characteristic of a foundation-layer, for he stands in a special relation to the redeemed as being the first after the Resurrection to proclaim forgiveness through the precious blood of Christ. It is significant that the name "Peter" evidently

occurs 153 times (*), the number of the fishes he drew to land, which number has characteristics suggestive of its being in some way representative of the redeemed (JOHN 21 : 11).

God's dealings with the man Peter, whom He chose so to signalize, are thus of special interest. These dealings were such as rendered Peter's apprehension of the Lord, and of those truths he was commissioned to preach, to be so a matter of his personal experience that it caused his ministry to be characterized by an intense fervour. Peter denied (*arneomai*) his Lord thrice—with what feeling then must he have thrice used that word "deny" in his testimony to Israel (ACTS 3 : 13, 14 ; 2 PET. 2 : 1). He was "a witness of the sufferings of Christ"—with such a memory how moving must his words have been when he spake of "the precious blood of Christ"; and in the Transfiguration he had beheld "the power and coming" of the Lord Jesus Christ—with what a thrill of expectation must he then have exhorted Israel, "Repent . . . that He may send the Christ!"

The record of God's dealings with Peter commence where the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom began. The Baptist first preached that word, and Peter was among those who gave heed and obeyed his baptism (ACTS 1 : 21-22). The Baptist's testimony to "the Lamb of God" caused Andrew to follow Him, and Andrew in his turn led his brother Peter to the Lord, saying, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (JOHN 1 : 41). At the time of this their first meeting the Lord had not commenced to preach "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," but immediately He did commence to preach that Gospel He called Peter to follow Him. Peter's occupation was fishing, and in calling him the Lord promised, "I will make you fishers of men" (MAT. 4 : 19). Peter then and there gave himself

(*) The Englishman's Greek Concordance lists 161 occurrences, but various readings as noted in the R.V. suggest 8 alterations, which reduce the number to 153. The pronoun is substituted in 4 places (MAT. 17 : 20 ; LUKE 22 : 02 ; ACTS 10 : 23 ; 12 : 13). "Cephas" in 3 (GAL. 1 : 18 ; 2 : 11, 14), and there is the possible omission of Luke 24 : 12. "A stone" may have to be read as "Peter" in John 1 : 42. R.V., but this addition is offset by the possible reading of *su eipas*, "Thou hast said"—a formula expressing strong affirmation, see Mat. 26 : 25—in place of "Thou art Peter" in Mat. 16 : 18.

to follow Him, and because of that the Lord honoured all that was Peter's; He used his house, hospitality, ship, net, and hook, and what blessing and enrichment came to Peter as a result! (LUKE 4 : 38-39 ; 5 : 3-5 ; MAT. 17 : 27).

As Peter followed it was given him to apprehend more concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and that by the Father Himself. This was the Lord's explanation of Peter's ability to answer "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," for He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (MAT. 16 : 16-17); and when Peter was with the Lord in the holy mount he was permitted to be an "eyewitness of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (2 PET. 1 : 16-17).

The ministry of Peter was to the circumcision; hence he was instructed in God's purposes in Israel. The Lord included him among those He initiated into the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, and to whom on Olivet He revealed the sign of His coming. Then after the Resurrection Peter was with those whose understandings the Lord opened to understand the Scriptures, and whom He instructed by the space of forty days in the things concerning the Kingdom of God.

The period of Peter's ministry saw several changes in God's administration of Israel, and these changes even Peter, who was well instructed, found it hard to understand; nevertheless as time passed their meaning was made plain. The Baptist, the Lord, and Peter with the Twelve, were all sent to Israel with the message "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"; but when Peter confessed, "Thou art the Christ," a change took place, for it was said, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem . . . and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Peter did not at the moment understand this, for having believed and preached this message concerning the Lord reigning, he could not entertain

the thought of His suffering; hence his exclamation, as prompted of evil, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee" (MAT. 16:18-23). Thereafter the Lord spoke of two apparently antithetical purposes: on the one hand, Israel continued to be told "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you," for He sent the Seventy forth with that message (LUKE 10:9), and He rode into Jerusalem that He might fulfil the prophecy concerning the coming of her King (MAT. 21:5); yet, on the other hand, in private He told the disciples repeatedly that He was about to suffer. It was only after the Resurrection that Peter was enlightened to see that the Lord had first to suffer before entering into His glory, and that Israel, having rejected the message concerning the Kingdom, were given further space in which to repent. That there were yet other changes in God's administration of Israel after the Resurrection which Peter found hard to understand we shall notice later.

Of Peter's personal characteristics the predominant was perhaps his wholehearted love to his Lord. After the Resurrection the Lord asked him thrice concerning this, and it is beautiful to notice how two words expressing love were employed (JOHN 21:15-17). To the Lord's first question, "Lovest (*agapao*) thou Me?" Peter could say "Yea, Lord," but that of itself was insufficient to express all Peter felt, hence he intensified his answer by adding, "Thou knowest that I love (*phileo*) Thee." The former word (*agapao*) is that benevolent love, such as God had towards the world that He gave His only begotten Son (JOHN 3:16), and which the law bade Israel have both to God and to their neighbour (MAT. 22:37). The latter (*phileo*) is that love which God is said to have to none but to His Son and those who believe on Him (JOHN 5:20; 16:27), and it is reserved to express that which existed between those of the faith (TIT. 3:15); a passionate love, exhibiting itself if amiss in lust, but if aright in a kiss. At the Lord's second question these two words were used in the same way, but at the third the Lord took up the word Peter had

added. "He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (*phileo*) thou Me?" This grieved Peter, yet he could say "Lord, Thou knowest (*oida*, intuitively) all things; Thou knowest (*ginosko*, by experience) that I love Thee." Peter's love was so wholehearted and unfeigned that he could thus appeal to the Lord, first to use His omniscience, and then to recall His experience of Peter during those days when they had gone in and out together, that thereby He might know how true his answer was—"I dearly love Thee!"

Whenever the person of the Lord was concerned Peter's wholeheartedness made him forward. When the Lord asked His disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter was first with the answer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (MAT. 16:15-16), And when He said to them, as many were forsaking Him, "Will ye also go away?" it was Peter who at once replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (JOHN 6:68). After the night's fishing, when, with all their experience, the disciples had failed to catch anything, the Lord said, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught," Peter replied, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net" (LUKE 5:4-5). Then when the Lord told them that He was about to go whither they could not then follow, but that they should follow afterwards, Peter showed how this thought of parting and delay was too much for him, for he asked, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee even now?" (JOHN 13:37, R.V.).

Peter's wholeheartedness, like David's, was sometimes seen in contrast to human weakness. On the occasion of the Lord walking upon the sea Peter said, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water"; yet when he ventured his attention was diverted to the storm so that being afraid he cried, "Lord, save me" (MAT. 14:27-30). However, the usual cause of Peter's inapt statements was zeal without at the moment a full grasp of the truth concerned, as in the Transfiguration he spake "not knowing what he said" (LUKE 9:33),

But the Lord used these admissions of his need for fuller enlightenment to lead him into a clearer apprehension of truth. When the Lord washed the disciples' feet Peter could not bear that He should do so menial a service to him; thus he exclaimed, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." If washing gave Peter part with his Lord then he wanted more of it—"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." This, however, was a further misunderstanding; thus the Lord led him to see that "he that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (JOHN 13 : 4-11, R.V.). When once the initial question of sin has been dealt with, then to walk in the light, having fellowship with Him, we need only that frequent cleansing from all unrighteousness (1 JOHN 1 : 7).

The attitude of Peter following his denial is certainly among the supreme evidences of the sincerity of his love. The Lord said to His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night." "But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I," and when the Lord further stated that Peter should deny Him thrice "he spake exceeding vehemently, If I must die with Thee, I will not deny Thee. And in like manner also said they all" (MARK 14 : 27-31, R.V.). The first hours of that terrible ordeal proved too much for them, they could not even watch while the Lord prayed. However, the Lord when He found them asleep gave the reason—it was not unwillingness but human inability: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (MARK 14 : 38, R.V.). After the denial, what was Peter's first impulse on hearing of the empty tomb? Was it to hide himself in shame from His risen Lord? No! "Peter arose, and ran unto the tomb" (LUKE 24 : 12, R.V.). And when John said "It is the Lord," did Peter linger in the boat unwilling to meet the One Who turned and looked at him as the cock crew? No! "Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him and did cast himself into the sea" (JOHN 21 : 7). Peter's attitude

betokened an entire forgetfulness of self by reason of his fervent desire again to be with his beloved Master and Lord.

THE FORMER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY.

"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter" (MAT. 10 : 2). "First" (*protos*) may refer to priority in time or to superiority in position. As to time, Andrew is set forth as the first of the Twelve to have met the Lord, and he afterwards found his brother Peter and "brought him to Jesus" (JOHN 1 : 40-42). "First" refers, therefore, to Peter's position; he was made chief among the Twelve. Peter's pre-eminence in relation to his fellow-apostles is emphasized in various ways; he heads each list of the Twelve (MAT. 10 : 1-4; MARK 3 : 16-19; LUKE 6 : 13-16; ACTS 1 : 13-26); he is mentioned by name while the rest are included generally "Peter and the other apostles" (Acts 5 : 29), and he was usually the spokesman of the Twelve in their conversations with the Lord (MAT. 15 : 15; 19 : 27). Then also Peter presided when they considered the appointment of one to fill the place vacated by Judas, and it was "Peter, standing up with the eleven," who opened their testimony to Israel after the Resurrection (ACTS 1 : 15, 2 : 14).

The distinctive ministry of the twelve apostles was thus in a special sense the ministry of Peter; he had the leading part in fulfilling their several commissions. Hence what we have noticed concerning the ministry of the Twelve applies also to Peter. The Twelve as a company were witnesses to the nation of Israel, and during the former period of their ministry the Lord commissioned them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (MAT. 10 : 5-7). They were to go taking no purse or scrip, which they did until the Lord withdrew this stipulation at the close of the former period of their ministry (LUKE 22 : 35-36).

Whilst Peter was thus engaged with the Twelve in their ministry to the nation the Lord gave him commissions which were his peculiar privilege: "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (MAT. 16 : 19). This figure of a key the Lord used elsewhere to symbolize possession of the means whereby any might enter in. "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (LUKE 11 : 52). This commission probably refers to Peter's receiving the Gospel of the circumcision according as it was to be preached after the Resurrection—the good news which gave entrance into the Kingdom by faith; and being given "keys" he twice opened that testimony, to Israel in Acts 2, and to the Gentiles in Acts 10. The authority to bind and loose was evidently that power exercised in the case of Ananias and Sapphira and of Simon of Samaria.

The gospel of John records the giving of yet another commission to Peter, and that by the risen Saviour. Peter's deep love to his Lord enabled him to be entrusted with that precious word "Tend My Sheep" (21 : 16, R.V.), the sheep, according to the usage of this figure in John, being those for whom the Good Shepherd laid down His life. Peter exercised this ministry in his epistles; he wrote to believers reminding them that "ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls," and, like Paul, he bade others continue this ministry of caring for the saints "Tend the flock of God which is among you" (1 PET. 2 : 25, 5 : 2, R.V.; ACTS 20 : 28).

This commission of Peter is in keeping with the purpose of John's gospel as a whole, for it concerned his care for those who had believed on the name of the Son of God (JOHN 20 : 31). We have seen that John's gospel does not centre attention upon that ministry of the Baptist and the Lord which concerned the preaching of the Kingdom to Israel, but presents an

aspect of their testimony which applies to all. Peter and the Twelve are likewise referred to, not with special regard to their ministry of the Kingdom to Israel but as they bore that testimony to the Lord which it is the purpose of John to set before men.

John's gospel uses the expression "The Twelve" without explaining why they were thus distinguished, or who they were, neither does it speak of Peter in relation to his special ministry with them. John mostly refers to them as "disciples," which term does not emphasize their special call and appointment, it being used generally of all who believe on the Lord and keep His word (JOHN 8 : 31, 15 : 8). Joseph of Arimathæa was a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews (19 : 38). During the entire period in which the other gospels state that the Lord preached the Gospel of the Kingdom—that is, from the imprisonment of John unto the last supper (3 : 24–13 : 1)—the gospel of John mentions Peter but once; and this instance is also the only occasion upon which it records the Lord addressing them as "the Twelve." It is where Peter, as speaking for the Twelve, bore that witness to the Lord which is the burden of John's gospel.

"We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God." (JOHN 6 : 69).

THE LATTER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY.

At Pentecost Peter stood up with the rest of the Twelve and proclaimed "the Gospel of the circumcision" to all the people of Israel. With the Lord's ministry as the background his testimony to Israel was—that the Jesus of Nazareth whom they crucified was their Messiah, whom God had raised from the dead; that if they as a nation repented God would again send Him unto them to restore all things as the prophets had spoken; and that with the baptism of repentance all who believed on Him should receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. His proclamation of this word was confirmed by miracles, "insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and

laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them . . . and they were healed every one" (Acts 5 : 15-16).

Several years after Pentecost, and some three years after Paul's conversion (Acts 9 : 26; see GAL. 1 : 15-18), Peter was appointed to speak unto Cornelius. This is definitely stated to be the first testimony unto the Gentiles "Symeon hath rehearsed how first God did visit the Gentiles" (Acts 15 : 14, R.V.). As Pentecost marked the inauguration of this testimony to Israel, so in like manner this incident marks its first issue unto the Gentiles; on both these occasions "the Holy Ghost fell," a thing which is not said to have happened at any other time (Acts 10 : 44, 11 : 15).

Peter was unaccompanied by the rest of the Twelve when he went to Cornelius, for his testimony was not to the nation of Israel. The Gospel it was given to Peter to open to the Gentiles was, however, the same "Gospel of the circumcision" which he had opened to Israel at Pentecost. The significance of this fact will become clear when Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is considered. Cornelius having recounted his vision, said to Peter on behalf of the assembled Gentiles, "Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord" (Acts 10 : 33, R.V.); and as no other things had been commanded him than those he preached to the circumcision Peter replied to the Gentiles by stating that the Gospel he set before them was "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel" (Acts 10 : 36).

Peter's declaration before the Gentiles of this Gospel took the form of a brief history of God's dealings with the Jewish people from the days of the Baptist down to the then present testimony of the Twelve. By this history it was shown that the "word which God sent unto the children of Israel" was that which "began . . . after the baptism which John preached," and that it was still being proclaimed to Israel, having been opened to them after the Crucifixion augmented by the testimony to the Lord's resurrection. Peter set these

things before them as to a third party; for instance, he said, "whom they slew and hanged on a tree" (ACTS 10:39), in contrast to his direct statement to Israel, "whom ye slew and hanged on a tree" (ACTS 5:30). "That word," he said, "ye know," for as Gentiles residing in the land of the Jews they had heard it being published in Israel; nevertheless not until the concluding clause of his address did Peter mention the key which was then to admit Gentiles into the blessings of this Gospel: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (ACTS 10:43).

While Peter was yet speaking there fell upon the Gentiles the gift of the Holy Spirit as divine witness to their faith: "God which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us" (ACTS 15:8). This led Peter to remember the Lord's promise, which, in the first place, was associated with His instructions to the Twelve concerning their witness to Israel (ACTS 1:5, 11:16). That the Gentiles should thus receive the like blessing as themselves was a cause of astonishment to all the believing Jews: "They of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (ACTS 10:45). "And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him," but he replied, saying, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (ACTS 11:2, 17-18).

The reason the believing Jews should have been astonished when God first granted to the Gentiles such an initial privilege as "repentance unto life" is explained by the two visions which prepared both Peter and Cornelius for this great event (ACTS 10:3, 17). Peter's vision was of a sheet let down from heaven containing

"all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and fowls of the heaven. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean" (vers. 9-14, R.V.). Peter thus declined because the Jewish people were expressly forbidden to eat those meats (LEV. 11; DEUT. 14).

"I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean . . . ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people that ye should be Mine" (LEV. 20: 24-26; cp. DEUT. 14: 2-3).

The reason that they were required to make a distinction between meats was that God had made a distinction between Israel and all other nations. The separation of clean meats from unclean was thus a token of the fact that God had separated them to be a people holy unto Himself; He accounted them as clean, providing they walked in His ways. We noticed in considering the Sermon on the Mount that the injunctions there given were addressed, in the first place, to a people accounted as redeemed.

When Peter stood before Cornelius he made it clear that but for what God had shown him he would have shunned the company of a Gentile as of a "man common and unclean," for being "a man that is a Jew" it was "an unlawful thing" for him to "come unto one of another nation" (ACTS 10: 28). Peter in implying that he would have regarded Cornelius as a "man common and unclean" was not referring to any moral guilt but simply to the fact that he and those with him were not members of God's chosen nation. Cornelius was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people" and was "of good report among all the nation of the Jews" (ACTS 10: 2, 22). He kept the ninth hour of prayer as did the Apostles (ACTS 3: 1, 10: 30, R.V.); and, moreover it was because of his alms and prayers that God appointed that he should be blessed (ACTS 10: 4).

"He said unto them, ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (ACTS 10 : 28).

At Peter's refusal to eat the things seen in his vision, "The voice spake unto him the second time, What God hath cleansed (*katharizo*) make not thou common," and when the vision was past the Spirit bade him go with the Gentiles "making no distinction (*diakrino*)" (ACTS 10 : 15, 11 : 12, R.V.). This word *katharizo*, "to make clean," is used in reference to miracles 14 times in the gospels, and this only where the healing of lepers is concerned, for under the law that disease marked a man as unclean. When God cleanses the unclean then the previous distinction between it and the clean is removed. In rehearsing the matter to the church at Jerusalem Peter declared that "God, which knoweth the heart, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and He made no distinction (*diakrino*) between us and them, cleansing (*katharizo*) their hearts by faith" (ACTS 15 : 8-9, R.V.).

The reason the believing Jews were astonished when the Gentiles were first granted "repentance unto life" and the gift of the Holy Spirit is now evident. The Gospel of the circumcision being opened to the Gentiles provided the way whereby their hearts might be made clean by faith, God having made no distinction between the believing Jew or Gentile in respect to his acceptableness in Christ.

Cornelius in his vision received a command from the angel that Peter should go unto him, even "into his house" (ACTS 10 : 22). When Peter did so he reminded the Gentiles that "it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to . . . come unto one of another nation," then also "when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them" (ACTS 10 : 28, 11 : 2-3). This "unlawful thing" of going into the houses of the Gentiles and of eating with them was thereafter practised by believing

Israelites as a recognition of this truth that the Gentiles who believed were made clean through faith in the same Gospel whereby they were saved. Peter suffered acutely from the circumcision through continuing to eat with the Gentiles, so much so that on one occasion he, together with other believing Jews, including Barnabas, was moved from walking uprightly "according to the truth of the gospel" in that when certain came from James he "separated himself" from the Gentiles, thereby withdrawing from this practice which acknowledged that, as to faith, God was making "no distinction" between Jews and Gentiles (GAL. 2:11-14).

The course of Peter's ministry, after he had opened the Gospel of the circumcision to Israel and the Gentiles, is traced in Acts from the aspect of the question which decided the issue of those days—namely, the national attitude of Israel. During the first period that followed the Resurrection the promise was that if Israel as a people repented God would bring to pass the hope of this Gospel (ACTS 3:19-21, R.V.); thus while many individuals among both Israel and the Gentiles believed unto salvation yet the prime question, so far as what would eventuate as a result of God's administration was concerned, was whether or not the people of Israel would repent. Thus Peter's ministry is recorded in Acts, not in the first place to give a picture of the man, nor to enlarge upon the progress of those who believed on his word, but rather to set forth the people's attitude to his testimony. The record of Peter's ministry is, therefore, pursued, only so far as the juncture at which he was definitely rejected by the people of the Jews.

Peter's opening address at Pentecost was to "all the house of Israel" (ACTS 2:36), and in the days that followed it was to the people generally that he testified (3:12). At that time the Apostles, together with all those who believed, had "favour with all the people;" "the people magnified them" (2:47-5:13). Peter and his companions, however, soon began to be persecuted by the "rulers of the people and elders of Israel," for they were "grieved that they taught the people," and so they

threatened them "that it spread no further among the people" (4: 1-18). The elders of Irsael were, nevertheless, restrained in their persecution of the Apostles by the strength of public opinion—"finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done" (4:21); "the captain . . . brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned" (5: 26). The high priest imprisoned Peter and the other Apostles, but an angel released them, saying, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life," and when "all the senate of the children of Israel" again apprehended them "Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people," restrained the council from slaying them (5: 21-34).

At the time of Stephen's ministry the people of the Jews who had thus far favoured the believers, and restrained their elders from killing the Apostles, were now stirred up against them: Stephen "did great wonders and miracles among the people," but certain of the synagogue suborned men, "and they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes" (6: 8-12). In consequence of this public agitation Stephen was stoned, but before he laid down his life he prayed "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (7: 60), and his prayer was answered in that this Gospel was still sent unto the people of Israel. The persecution which followed Stephen's martyrdom subsided after the conversion of Paul (8: 1, 9: 31), but the nation as such did not again show themselves inclined to receive the word.

Several years after Stephen's martyrdom "Herod the king . . . killed James the brother of John with the sword" (12: 1-2). The testimony of the Twelve as such was thereby cut off, for as a company their ranks were broken. "And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also . . . intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people" (12: 1-4, R.V.). Peter was imprisoned to please the Jews, God sent an angel and delivered him as before, but this time no command was given him, as on the previous occasion,

to "Go, stand and speak . . . to the people" (5 : 20). "When Peter was come to himself" after the angel had departed "he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (12 : 11), and having recounted his deliverance to the prayer gathering "he departed, and went unto another place" (12 : 17).

These words "he departed and went unto another place" mark the end of the record of Peter's ministry to the nation in Acts. He continued, with those who remained of the Twelve, as witnesses to Israel, for Paul later mentioned them as being "now His witnesses unto the people" (18 : 31, R.V.). Peter is also mentioned in connection with the church at Jerusalem (ACTS 15; GAL. 2), and he wrote epistles, but so far as the issue of that period is concerned interest passes from his ministry to that of the Apostle Paul. Peter's testimony to Israel thus remained in the forefront of God's purposes until an angel had to be sent to deliver him "from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

THE EPISTLES OF PETER.

In his epistles we see Peter ministering, not as a herald to the nation but as an elder tending the Lord's sheep. His epistles, like all Scripture, were God-breathed, yet in them the characteristics of the penman are clearly preserved whereby the miracle of inspiration is rendered only the more remarkable. Thus it is that we seem in these epistles to be brought very near to the heart of the great Apostle of the circumcision. Peter loved his Lord dearly, and this he evidenced in the words whereby he spake to his readers of their Saviour—"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious"; "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious" (1 PET. 2 : 3, 7). While he exalted his Lord, Peter did not exalt himself, he was chief so far as the Twelve were concerned; yet in his epistles he associated himself

with those he addressed as being a minister together with them—"who am also an elder" or "a fellow-elder" (1 PET. 5:1, R.V.).

These epistles were written when Peter was aged, and this would seem to have imparted a ripeness and mellowness to his words. Peter's youth was already past at the time of Pentecost, for the Lord had said unto him "when thou wast young"; and now many years later, having become "old," he was writing under the shadow of that ordeal whereby it was given him to "glorify God" (JOHN 21:18-19). "Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me" (2 PET. 1:14, R.V.).

Peter sent his first and second epistles to the same readers—"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you" (2 PET. 3:1). They were addressed "To the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion" (1 PET. 1:1, R.V.). The "Dispersion," we have seen, denoted that part of Israel which was scattered among the nations. Peter, therefore, wrote to Jewish believers, and in keeping with this he spake of "the fathers" and the "traditions" received from them (2 PET. 3:4; 1 PET. 1:18), and referred to Gentiles as a third party (1 PET. 2:12; 4:3). He wrote to these Jewish saints during his closing days with the purpose, not of leading them on into further truths but rather to stir up their memories in the things they had already received by the Old Testament prophets and the commandments of the Lord.

"This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance; that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles" (2 PET. 3:1-2, R.V.).

"I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand" (1 PET. 5:12).

"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth" (2 PET. 1:12).

The word as preached by Peter at Pentecost was the Gospel by which these Jewish Christians believed, and the "present truth" in which they were established. Unlike those present at Pentecost these had not seen the Lord—"Whom having not seen, ye love" (1 PET. 1:8); nevertheless they were called in expectation for the same hope. This is seen in that Peter said to them "we made known unto you the power and coming (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ," and this according to the manner shown him "when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 PET. 1:16-18). Peter had, therefore, directed them to look for the Lord to return to establish the Kingdom, for, as we have noticed, the Transfiguration was the similitude of the coming of the Son of Man and of the Kingdom (MAT. 16:28; MARK 9:1).

Peter also showed his readers how that it was "unto you" that the prophets ministered "these things which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven" (1 PET. 1:10-12, R.V.). The Old Testament prophecies were to them as a light shining in a dark place, unto which they did well to take heed in their hearts until "the day star arise" (2 PET. 1:19), the Lord's title "Star" being associated with His rising out of Israel and David: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (NUMB. 24:17); "I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star" (REV. 22:16).

Peter's Jewish readers, because they had received these things, were an exception to their nation generally. This is brought out strikingly by Peter's quotation in 1 Peter 2:7 of Psalm 118:22 as indicative of those who had, in contrast to his readers, been disobedient; for Peter had cited that same Scripture earlier in his ministry as being prophetic of those Jews who rejected the Lord. "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, . . . this is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner" (ACTS 4:8-11).

Through believing, Peter's readers were, however, called of God to be constituted what their whole nation might have been had they heeded His voice and kept the old covenant. God's conditional promise given to Israel by Moses after their deliverance from Egypt is seen to be confirmed to this calling, for Peter repeated to them the very words of that promise as it stood in the Septuagint, their Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures.

"These things shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and thou shalt report them to the children of Israel. . . . if ye will indeed hear My voice, and keep My covenant, ye shall be to Me a peculiar people (*laos*) above all nations; for the whole earth is Mine. And ye shall be to Me a royal priesthood (*basileion hierateuma*) and a holy nation (*ethnos hagion*): these words shalt thou speak to the children of Israel" (EX. 19 : 3-6, LXX).

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (*basileion hierateuma*), an holy nation (*ethnos hagion*), a peculiar people (*laos*)" (1 PET. 2 : 9).

Peter's peculiar blessings, as being a member of the Twelve, are closely linked with these of his readers, for they are to be entered into at the same time. The Lord promised the Twelve that "when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (MAT. 19 : 28); the Son of Man is said to "sit upon the throne of His glory" when He "shall come in His glory" and judge the nations (MAT. 25 : 31). Peter's readers are likewise to receive their blessings at the Lord's return, for John in his prophecy "The revelation (*apokalupsis*) of Jesus Christ" (REV. 1 : 1)—that is, as we shall shortly notice, a title for the Lord's return—is shown this royal priesthood. They are seen to be composed not of Israel only, for Peter opened this testimony to the Gentiles, and they will reign upon the earth a thousand years.

"Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth" (REV. 5 : 9-10, R.V.).

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (REV. 20 : 6, R.V.).

Peter has also heavenly blessings in the new heavens and earth that shall be after the thousand years are ended, for John saw upon the "twelve foundations" of the heavenly city, New Jerusalem, the Bride, the "twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (REV. 21 : 14, R.V.). Peter's readers will also receive blessings in that new creation, for he wrote "we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 PET. 3 : 13); the promise being that of the Old Testament where it is linked with the perpetuity of Israel's seed and name—"For as the new heavens and new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and name remain" (ISA. 66 : 22, 65 : 17). The royal priesthood having reigned upon the earth the thousand years will thus pass on into the new heavens and earth, for upon them the second death shall have no claim (REV. 20 : 6).

The Lord's return is thus the occasion when the saints of this calling shall first enter into their blessings. Peter's address at Pentecost set forth, as we saw when considering the Twelve, that "the last days" were then accounted as present and the Lord's return as at hand. Thereafter this hope was regarded as an eventuality so long as the conditions for its realization remained open to Israel. Peter therefore wrote, as did the other writers under that economy, as though the time was then short—"The end of all things is at hand," "For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God," and he spoke of the Lord as "ready to judge the quick and the dead" (1 PET. 4 : 5, 7, 17, R.V.). Peter also wrote of the Lord's coming (*parousia*) and revelation (*apokalupsis*) as the hope for which they lived in expectation. The word *parousia* indicates a person's "presence"; it is so rendered by the Revised Version in all its occurrences either in the text or margin; and *apokalupsis* ("revelation" or "unveiling") when used of a person

signifies their "appearing." Peter's readers had an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, "reserved in heaven" for them, and they were looking for their blessings to be brought to them, not before but "at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 PET. 1 : 7).

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 PET. 1 : 13).

"But insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy" (1 PET. 4 : 13, R.V.).

The exhortations Peter set forth in his epistles are beautiful indeed, and we do well to give heed unto them with all diligence. How important, for instance, is the word of 2 Peter 1 : 5-8, which shows that a believer's fruitbearing is not a matter simply of bringing other souls to the Saviour, or leading other believers on in the knowledge of the Word; but it is a matter of his own personal bringing forth of the graces—virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness and love; for when he has these things in abundance they render him fruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter's first epistle emphasizes the need for a good "conversation," or "manner of life"; and his second epistle the need for growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While the exhortations of Peter's epistles may be applied to believers of all times, yet they were, in the first place, given in view of the special needs of the calling to which he ministered. They were called having the provisional expectation for the Lord's coming, hence Peter exhorted them, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober . . ." (1 PET. 4 : 7). This expectation necessarily implied that those things which must precede His return were then a present possibility. The Lord in His discourse on Olivet showed that the antecedents of His coming (*parousia*) would be great tribulation and false prophets. Peter therefore gave exhortations in view of such circumstances. His first epistle has twelve occurrences of *pascho*, "to suffer"; as suffering must come they were exhorted not

to think it strange—"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 PET. 4:12). His second epistle warned them of false teachers—"There shall be false teachers among you," "There shall come in the last days scoffers" (2 PET. 2:1; 3:3). Believers of all times are, of course, subject to suffering and false teachers, but Peter spoke of these dangers expressly in view of the last time.

The epistles addressed to the believers of the circumcision have between them many common characteristics, yet severally they were not necessarily written to believers of the same standing as to their walk in the faith, or apprehension of their calling. James and Peter both addressed the Jews of the Dispersion; but James wrote unto such as still continued in the Synagogue, whereas Peter sent his epistles to provinces, several of which had been the scene of Paul's labours, which suggests that many of his readers were among those who had separated themselves from the Synagogue (1 PET. 1:1).

This difference between the epistles of the circumcision is seen also in the subjects with which they deal. Peter's epistles have a particular beauty and richness; he touched upon themes which Paul's epistles expound, such as "we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness" (1 PET. 2:24, R.V.), "partakers of the divine nature" (2 PET. 1:4). Peter did not, however, lead his Jewish readers on into the fulness of the things revealed for them, but instead he directed them to an epistle which Paul had especially addressed to them (2 PET. 3:15). Peter wrote as to "newborn babes" needing "the sincere milk of the word" (1 PET. 2:2), whereas Hebrews was written to such as should have been ready for "strong meat" (HEB. 5:12); Peter speaks of epistles "in which are some things hard to be understood" (2 PET. 3:16), whereas Hebrews actually refers to things "hard to be uttered" (HEB. 5:11). In Hebrews, as we shall see, Jewish saints were led on into the things pertaining to "the heavenly calling."

PAUL

“I am the apostle of the Gentiles,
I magnify mine office”

Rom. 11 : 13.

PAUL AN APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES
THE FORMER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY—
TO ISRAEL:

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
HEBREWS

THE FORMER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY—
TO THE GENTILES:

HIS EARLIER EPISTLES

THE LATTER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY:
HIS LATER EPISTLES

PAUL AN APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES.

PAUL was raised up of God in the midst of those who were Apostles before him, and was appointed to an apostleship which was distinct from, and independent of, that of all previous ministries. The Apostles among whom Paul was raised up had been associated with the Lord during His sojourn upon earth—the Twelve, James and Jude, and many others having been with Him before He ascended, and these were all joined in the several branches of the same ministry which, as we have traced, is expressly set forth as being unto the circumcision. Paul, in contrast to these, was appointed to his apostleship by the Lord after He was exalted at God's right hand, and was then set apart to be entrusted with an independent ministry addressed, in particular, to the uncircumcision.

In Galatians Paul sets this fact forth with great plainness, by declaring that he received his Apostleship, his gospel, and his authority, from the Lord direct, and not from, or through, any man. The particular stress which Paul was caused to lay upon his independence of man in this matter was not simply to differentiate himself from any of the self-styled authorities which may then have existed, but it was, as the context reveals, to establish his independence of the other God-ordained Apostles among whom he had been raised up, as the Twelve and James. Paul emphasized his declaration of independence by a threefold use of the three words "not," "neither," and "but."

First, his apostleship did not originate from (*apo*) any human authority, neither did it come to him through (*dia*) any human intermediary, but it was given him direct from Jesus Christ and this after God the Father had raised Him from the dead.

"Paul, an apostle [not from (*apo*) men, neither through (*dia*) man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead]" (GAL. 1 : 1, R.V.).

Secondly, his gospel did not originate according to (*kata*) human standards, neither was it imparted from

(*para*) any human source as something taught, but it was given him by revelation direct from Jesus Christ.

"For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after (*kata*) man. For neither did I receive it from (*para*) man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ" (GAL. 1:11-12, R.V.).

Finally, his authority to preach among the Gentiles did not originate with any human conference, neither did he go up to Jerusalem to receive the assent of those who had been Apostles before him, but his call from God was direct, and being thus appointed independently of man he went into Arabia and returned, whereby he ruled out every semblance of having received his commission from, or through, any human agency.

"But when it was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus" (GAL. 1:15-17, R.V.).

In the second chapter of Galatians Paul establishes the fact of his independence of the Apostles of the circumcision by recounting the manner, and result, of his meeting with them. This meeting did not take place until after fourteen years, when he went to Jerusalem "by revelation" to "them which were of reputation" (2:1-2); his earlier visit to Jerusalem three years after his conversion was simply "to see Peter," but, he states, "other Apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (1:18-19). When Paul met the Apostles of the circumcision the manner of the occasion bore striking testimony to the independence of his Apostleship. Paul received his gospel "by the revelation of Jesus Christ," and he went on this visit to the Apostles at Jerusalem "and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles"; his part was to do the speaking, and their part was to take the place of hearers. Thus Paul did not go up to these who were Apostles before him in order to receive from them any rights of apostolic succession; but he went up as

an Apostle with authority to communicate unto them that truth which had been revealed to him. Then also, after he had communicated this unto them, Paul affirmed how, "They, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me" (2 : 6, R.V.), so complete was the gospel revealed to him that the Apostles of the circumcision could add nothing to his ministry.

"But contrariwise," instead of adding ought to Paul, the Apostles of the circumcision were given grace to recognize that he had an apostleship of equal standing with that of Peter, the chief of the Twelve; for he had been entrusted with a specific gospel even as Peter had received that word which they preached. "They saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision" (2 : 7, R.V.). The equality of Paul's apostleship with that of Peter's was further evidenced in that God wrought for both their ministries alike—"For He that wrought (*energeo*) for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision, wrought (*energeo*) for me also unto the Gentiles" (2 : 8, R.V.). "Flesh and blood" did not reveal to Peter that which he received (MAT. 16 : 17), and "flesh and blood" did not have part with Paul's call to the ministry (GAL. 1 : 16). Then, when Gentiles were concerned, Paul, like Peter, received by a trance the word bidding him go unto them (ACTS 10 : 9-17 ; 22 : 17-21).

The result of this meeting was that the Apostles of the circumcision shook hands with Paul in whole-hearted acknowledgement of the fact that God had appointed him with an apostleship even as He had them.

"When they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James, Cephas, and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision" (GAL. 2 : 9, R.V.).

This acknowledgement did not, however, imply that Paul was henceforth called upon to unite with them in one common ministry; they saw rather that Paul's apostleship, while being equal to, was nevertheless distinct from, theirs. Thus it was that they parted, fully

recognizing that God had called them, as two separate parties, to pursue their respective ministries independently.

As in Galatians, so in his church epistles generally, Paul frequently laid this same emphasis upon the independent nature of his apostleship. The Holy Spirit that led John to evade personal references to himself until the closing verses of his gospel, and Luke to signify his presence at certain places in the history of the Acts by simply a change to the second person, could have led Paul to conceal his identity as the penman in a similar manner—as indeed he may have done in the case of the Hebrews epistle. But seeing that Paul was caused, unlike the other inspired writers, definitely to speak about himself, it is evident that his personal place as an Apostle, independent and distinct from the others, must be a fact which it is essential for us to realize, acknowledge, and keep always in mind, in order that we may be enabled clearly to apprehend, in all their distinctiveness, those things God revealed through him.

In speaking of his Apostleship Paul often affirmed that he lied not but spake the truth. "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity" (1 TIM. 2 : 7). So when recording his independence as an Apostle he interposed the statement, "Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (GAL. 1 : 20), and also in speaking of his abundant labours and sufferings he added, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not" (2 COR. 11 : 31). Categorical declarations of truthfulness such as these would not have been called for unless Paul's apostleship had been seriously disputed or discredited. Then Paul also avowed that he was not actuated by any base motives, which fact shows that his ministry had not only been discredited but actually defamed. "Some which count of us as if we walked according to the flesh" (2 COR. 10 : 2). "We have wronged no man, we

have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man" (2 COR. 7 : 2). "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile" (1 THESS. 2 : 3).

As Paul was inspired to include these extreme statements regarding his truthfulness and uprightness in epistles which he addressed to saints, it is clear that this element which resisted his ministry was a danger, not merely to unbelievers, but to believers, and moreover even to those believers whom Paul had been instrumental in leading to the Saviour. Paul's declaration of his independence as an Apostle, which we have considered in Galatians, was called forth because this subversive element was working among the saints. "There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (1 : 7), the ringleaders being a section of the circumcision who were then seeking to judaize the believing Gentiles, by imposing upon them the law and circumcision that they might have wherewith to glory in their flesh (2 : 12 ; 4 : 21 ; 6 : 11-14).

Those saints whose tendency was to look upon things after the outward appearances were a ready prey to this seductive party. The Corinthians were such (2 COR. 10 : 7), and it is evident from many of Paul's statements that he had been adversely compared with the Twelve, in order that his apostleship might appear inferior to theirs. The Apostles of the circumcision, as we have seen, themselves fully recognized that Paul had received his distinctive apostleship and gospel even as Peter received his (GAL. 2 : 6-7, R.V.), but this same recognition was not afforded to Paul by many believers of lesser discernment. Paul was, for this reason, compelled to resort to what he termed "foolish boasting" if by any means he might cause them to realize that God had constituted him "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 COR. 11 : 5).

"I am become a fool in glorying: ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing" (2 COR. 12 : 11).

That Peter was held in high esteem by the believers of those days can readily be appreciated; the Lord when

on earth had appointed him chief of the Twelve, and had entrusted him with the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and by virtue of this he was privileged at Pentecost to be the first to herald the glorious news that the Lord had risen. Paul's commission, on the other hand, was from the Lord exalted, and its committal to him was not witnessed by any man; thus his statement, "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles," called upon the saints, not to judge God-given authority by outward appearances, but by spiritual insight.

It is a principle, seen working throughout the unfolding of God's purposes, that the more glorious the revelation, the less apparent is the authority of its ministers. The High Priest ministered in but the types and shadows of heavenly things, yet he was endowed with much outward authority. The Twelve ministered in the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, yet, to the Jews of their day, they would not appear to have that same prestige as the High Priest with all his historic rights. Paul in his turn ministered in the things revealed by the Lord after He had ascended, but he, unlike the Twelve, had not been seen following the Lord in the days when He walked among men. In Paul's case this paradox is wonderful, for though he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles" yet in labours for Christ's sake he was allowed to appear "as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things" (1 COR. 4:13). Then, to pursue this principle to the extreme, we find that when Paul, in the latter period of his ministry, was given authority to announce "the mystery of the gospel" he was, for the very purpose of that excelling revelation, placed in the position of being "An ambassador in bonds!" (EPH. 6:19-20).

If, however, Paul was compared with the Apostles of the circumcision he could more than stand that comparison. They testified concerning things they had seen of the Lord, and so likewise did he. Some things were shown him by the Lord at his conversion and others were reserved until He again appeared to him.

"I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee" (ACTS 26 : 16). The Twelve were present with the Lord at the last supper, and had witnessed the order of events at His death and appearances after His resurrection; yet Paul was made independent of the Twelve even in these matters which might have been deemed their exclusive province. Paul received these things, as they had done, direct from the Lord Himself, and independent of man. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread . . ." (1 COR. 11 : 23). "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died . . ." (1 COR. 15 : 3-8).

Then with regard to Paul's rights as an Apostle, or his standing in the flesh, he was in all things equal with the Apostles of the circumcision. He had the same right to marry "as the rest of the Apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas" (1 COR. 9 : 1-5, R.V.), and also the same right to "live of the gospel" (1 COR. 9 : 6-15), and as to the flesh he could say "Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I" (2 COR. 11 : 22). But when it came to the question of the exercise of apostleship, then Paul was above their equal, for in this he used his rights less, yet laboured more. His right of material support he did not use to the full; in this he acted as willingly "abasing" himself (2 COR. 11 : 7). "What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel" (1 COR. 9 : 18, 12, R.V.). Yet in his ministry he exceeded them all. "Are they ministers of Christ? . . . I am more, in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure . . ." (2 COR. 11 : 23-32).

To these things, in which Paul excelled the other Apostles, there is yet to be added the visions and revelations he received of the Lord. "And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations—wherefore,

that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 COR. 12 : 7, R.V.). Paul's outward appearance, we learn from several passages, was not impressive to those who judged according to the flesh; his infirmities were expressly ordained that none might think too highly of the channel, but rather that the power of Christ might be evidently set forth in him. Those who received him, and belittled him not, received even the Lord that sent him. "My temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus" (GAL. 4 : 14).

Paul thus received strength both to declare that his apostleship was independent of others, and to refute every charge to the contrary. But, it may well be asked, Why should he have been led so to emphasize, and so to stand for, this fact of his distinctive ministry in his epistles which, in God's purpose, were predestined to form part of Holy Writ? Clearly it was because it is essential that we also should realize and acknowledge the peculiar character of Paul's apostleship, that by this means we may be enabled to see the things which God revealed through him in the light of their particular distinctiveness. Faith cannot go on unto fruition unless all that God has revealed is believed; hence growth in grace must perforce be evidenced in the acknowledgment of Paul's distinctive ministry which, in its final phase, filled-full, or completed, the Word of God (COL. 1 : 25). What Paul said in a special sense to the Corinthians can thus be applied to believers generally in this day—"having hope that, as your faith groweth, we shall be magnified in you" (2 COR. 10 : 15, R.V.).

The ministry of Paul has, therefore, to be studied in the light of being a revelation given of God independent of the other Apostles whom He had raised up previously. Thus with the inception of Paul's particular ministry there came to be two distinct lines of testimony: Peter, on the one hand, received a foundational ministry primarily to Israel; while Paul, on the other hand, received a foundational ministry especially for the

Gentiles. The Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, His sacrifice for sin, and His resurrection and exaltation, was alike the centre of both ministries; but inasmuch as Scripture differentiates them as being respectively the gospel "of the circumcision" and "of the uncircumcision," it is evident that they have certain peculiarities which render them separate and distinct.

"The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter" (GAL. 2 : 7).

God called Paul and gave him grace to be "A minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles" (ROM. 15 : 16, R.V.); this ministry was, indeed, the express reason for which he was enlightened. "It was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (GAL. 1 : 15-16, R.V.). Thus at the instant of his conversion the Lord spoke to him of "the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee" (Acts 26 : 12-17, R.V.). As "Peter," and not "Simon," was the ministerial name of the apostle of the circumcision, so the Roman title "Paul," and not the Hebrew "Saul," was the name by which Paul was known in his ministry to the Gentiles. Paul was so called for the first time, according to the history of Acts, on the occasion of his first recorded testimony unto the Gentiles (ACTS 13 : 9), and thereafter the title Saul was no more used of him, the only subsequent occurrences of that name being in his own accounts of how the Lord spake unto him on the Damascus road. Then also his name is usually given precedence after this juncture when his ministry to the Gentiles is shown to have opened, instead of the former "Barnabas and Saul," the arrangement is generally "Paul and Barnabas" (ACTS 13 : 7, 43).

As the Apostle to the Gentiles Paul had also a testimony to the nation of Israel. When Ananias was told of Paul's ministry the Gentiles were mentioned first, by reason of what should be the important issue of his ministry; yet it was also foreseen that he should bear testimony unto the people of Israel. "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (ACTS 9 : 15).

Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles was, in fact, directly related to his testimony to Israel, for during the former period of his ministry he magnified this his office as a means to urge his kinsmen unto repentance. "I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office; if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them" (ROM. 11 : 13-14).

The Ministers which have come before our notice thus far have all been concerned with the outworking of God's purposes in Israel; hence in order to preserve this chain of thought we will first consider the course of Paul's testimony to Israel, and then trace his testimony to the Gentiles. This will also enable us to see Paul's several ministries in the light of the setting in which they were given him. Paul received these ministries in respect to certain aspects of God's purposes in both Israel and the Gentiles; thus he said concerning himself that he was made a minister "of the new covenant" (2 COR. 3 : 6), and "of the reconciliation" (2 COR. 5 : 18), and of "the mystery" of this present dispensation of God (COL. 1 : 24-29).

Before passing on to trace the course of Paul's testimony there is yet another feature of his ministry which we must notice. Paul is especially set forth in Scripture as God's pattern man; he followed Christ as we should now follow Him. It was given him to emphasize this repeatedly. "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 COR. 11 : 1, R.V.). "I beseech you, therefore, be ye imitators of me" (1 COR. 4 : 16, R.V.). "For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us" (2 THES. 3 : 7; 1 THES. 1 : 6, R.V.). This distinction of Paul is of itself sufficient to arouse us at once to the peculiar significance of his ministry to us-ward. The implication is great: we are directed to follow Christ, not as did the Twelve when He ministered to the circumcision, but as Paul followed now that the Lord is exalted at God's right hand.

"Be ye imitators of God, as beloved children." This injunction is tremendous! How can it be? The seeming impossibility is explained by the example that follows—

“And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell” (EPH. 5 : 1-2, R.V.). God, whom no man can see, has thus shown us how we may imitate Him by the example of His Son; His love was manifested by the gift of His Son (1 JOHN 4 : 9), and the Lord Jesus revealed what it means to imitate Him by the gift of Himself to God on our behalf. This injunction is not addressed to the world generally, but to His “children,” even those who have received “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (EPH. 1 : 7), we are not asked to imitate to receive redemption, but rather having been redeemed we have the precious possibility of treading our life walk well-pleasing to Him.

The Lord Jesus Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. How then can we, who are compassed with infirmity, imitate Him the perfect One? God has set before us His servant Paul as the answer, a man of like passions as ourselves. “Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 COR. 11 : 1, R.V.). Thus the imitation of God is exemplified in the work of Christ, and the imitation of Christ is interpreted to us by the life of Paul.

The aspect of Christ’s work which Paul reflected is, therefore, set before us as a pattern to copy. The work of Christ spoken of in connection with our imitation of Him was to God “an odour of a sweet smell” (EPH. 5 : 1-2), a term descriptive of a very delicate pleasure; it was not therefore the cause that necessitated His gift that is in view (the consequence of sin could not please God)—it is rather His love in making the gift possible. Paul in writing to the Philippians made clear that “the things which are Jesus Christ’s” are His saints (2 : 20-21); thus as he gave himself for their furtherance and joy of faith; he, like his Lord, was, as it were, giving himself a sacrifice to God. “Yea, and if I am poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all” (PHIL. 2 : 17, R.V. marg.). Then also, in referring to the Philippians’

gift to him, he used the very term which, as we have seen, is spoken of God's pleasure in the work of His Son. "The things which were sent from you, an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (PHIL. 4 : 18).

Paul's peculiar things that were his as an Apostle are necessarily inimitable; no one, for example, has a right to assume that place which was his as being the sole recipient of "the mystery" (COL. 1 : 26-27), for now that Paul has fulfilled his peculiar part of being the first to make known that revelation, it is henceforth the precious privilege of all blessed thereunder to share in its ministry. The One Body is built up "by that which every joint supplieth," for "unto each one of us was the grace given" (EPH. 4 : 7, 16, R.V.). In all things which Paul imparted to others, in these he was a pattern. "The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you" (PHIL. 4 : 9, R.V.).

Of the things that should be imitated Paul made mention of his care for others (1 COR. 10 : 33; 11 : 1). In this Paul gave himself with absolute devotion, especially for his fellow-believers. His care for the saints was concerned with their being led to apprehend all that God revealed for them through him, and that they might walk in full accord therewith. When saints turned back from the truths they had received through him, or when they fell short of walking in the liberty of his gospel, then Paul's very heart was wrung in deep concern that they might stand perfect and complete in all God's revealed will. Paul in all this did not act as compelling but rather as constraining the saints to respond: "not that we have lordship over your faith, but are helpers of your joy" (2 COR. 1 : 24, R.V.). He likened his care towards them to that of a nurse and father (1 THESS. 2 : 7-12, R.V.).

Then also Paul wrote—"Brethren, be ye imitators together of me" (PHIL. 3 : 17, R.V.), in seeking to constrain those blessed under the economy committed through him to desire, like himself, to press on unto that excelling

knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. To Paul God made known further glories of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of God's foreordained purposes in Him, and having received these he sought himself to "press on if so be that I may apprehend that for which I was apprehended of Christ Jesus," and he counted all else but "loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (PHIL. 3 : 7-17 R.V.).

As Paul's epistles are pondered, and these many indications of his labours to establish the believers in his gospel are noticed, we cannot but realize how great is his ministry to the saints. For our life's pathway to be walked understandingly and acceptably before God it is of prime importance to heed Paul's ministry as being both addressed to us and appointed for us as a pattern to imitate. Then also, to be led on into that excelling knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord it is essential to receive those truths revealed through Paul, for in these alone is made known the fulness of what God has made His Son to be. Let us then bow our knees before the throne of grace and beseech that there may be granted to us that gracious enlightenment into these truths, such as Paul requested for the saints (EPH. 1 : 15-23); and that receiving these truths we may thereby, like the Apostle himself, be permitted to go on more fully to "know Him," our glorified Redeemer and Head. May this be our precious privilege for His holy Name's sake.

THE FORMER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY— TO ISRAEL.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

PAUL was raised up to the people of Israel as a minister distinct from, and independent of, those who had spoken to them previously; nevertheless from Paul's lips they now heard the same testimony that Jesus is the Christ (ACTS 17 : 1-3; 18 : 5), the King (17 : 7), for he took up and continued that proclamation to Israel how

that the promise God made unto their fathers He had now fulfilled unto them as their children in that He had raised Christ from the dead (13 : 32-33), and the miracles which were given in confirmation of that word he did in a "special" manner (19 : 11-12). Peter had borne this testimony to the Jews in the land, but now Paul was raised up to take it to those of the dispersion also. In his first recorded address to the Jews of the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia Paul referred to the Jerusalem Jews as a third party. "They that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers . . . desired . . . Pilate that He should be slain" (13 : 27-28), for these Jews of the dispersion had not been so directly responsible for the crucifixion of their Messiah. Now, however, his ministry was to bring to the nation of the Jews scattered throughout the organized world this testimony, that as in Jerusalem, so in all parts, even as far as unto Rome, the Jews might together as a people stand answerable for their attitude towards the Christ of God.

That Paul's testimony concerning the Lord to the nation of Israel was essentially the same as Peter's can be seen by comparing their first recorded addresses to the Jews and Proselytes (2 : 10 ; 13 : 43). Peter, after declaring the significance of the time as indicated by the outpouring of the Spirit, set forth how that David was dead and buried, and that of the fruit of his loins Christ had been raised up to sit upon his throne, this raising up having been fulfilled in His resurrection according to Psalm 16 : 10, whereby He saw no corruption (ACTS 2 : 27-31). Paul, in his address, after first tracing the nation's history to the establishment of the Kingdom under David, likewise set forth how that David fell asleep and that of his seed God had "raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus," this raising up being fulfilled in His resurrection according to Psalm 16 : 10, whereby He saw no corruption (13 : 35-37). This word "corruption" (*diaphthora*) is peculiar to these two addresses (2 : 27, 31 ; 13 : 34, 35, 36, 37). Christ being now raised from the dead, no more to see corruption, they testified to Israel forgiveness through His Name, and

also their hope of restoration. Peter set this last forth very clearly in his second address, declaring to Israel that upon the condition that they turned again God would send Christ unto them, and restore all things as the prophets had spoken (3 : 19-21, R.V.). Paul likewise spoke to them of the "sure mercies of David" (13 : 34), these "mercies" or "blessings" (R.V.) of David being that everlasting covenant which God is to make with Israel (ISA. 55 : 3).

The Lord revealed Himself to Paul direct. His testimony to Israel that Jesus is the Christ was not, therefore, something he received from the Lord when on earth, neither had it been handed on to him from the Twelve or James, but he proclaimed it to them as a revelation direct from the ascended Lord. Paul's ministry thus came to Israel as a further evidence that God had raised up Jesus of Nazareth whom they crucified. As having been laid hold upon by the Lord direct, Paul himself became a personal representment of the truth of the gospel, and as such he constituted a touchstone by which Israel might be proved, for their attitude towards him sized up, or crystallized, their general disposition towards the gospel. Thus it is that Acts, in tracing the course of Israel's rejection of the re-offer of their Messiah, henceforth concentrates attention on the nation's attitude towards Paul's ministry, and shows how that it was around his person that the storm of their rejection raged.

The people of the Jews had known Paul well in the days before the Lord called him, for in making his defence before Agrippa many years later he could say, "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify" (ACTS 26 : 4-5). His education at the feet of Gamaliel and his advancement "in the Jews' religion" above many his equals would have placed him among the leading lights of the nation (ACTS 22 : 3; GAL. 1 : 14); then his house-to-house search would have made him well known among the common people (ACTS 8 : 3);

while his notorious persecution of the saints caused his fame to spread even unto Damascus (9:13). The miracle of Paul's conversion must, therefore, have shaken the whole of Jewry. This conspicuous zealot left Jerusalem for Damascus an envoy of the High Priest with letters to the synagogue authorizing him to arrest as many believers as he could find; but though he went forth in haste yet he never returned as one who had fulfilled his mission. The astonishing thing the Jews heard was that this their champion now preached the faith which once he destroyed, the reason being that Jesus, Whom they crucified, had revealed Himself to him as Lord.

The great reversal that took place in Paul's life at the instant when the Lord laid hold upon him exposed to Israel the worthlessness of those things in which they trusted. He had personified all that Israel esteemed expedient; he was an "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (PHIL. 3:5), "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (ACTS 23:6), one "instructed according to the strict manner of the law" of their fathers and "zealous for God even as" they were in their persecution of the believers (ACTS 22:3; PHIL. 3:6). Yet whereas he had thought he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" he now preached, suffered, and was ready to die for, that Name (ACTS 26:9; 9:27-29, 16; 21:13); he then had a "confidence in the flesh," but now he worshipped God, having "no confidence in the flesh"; the righteousness which was his according to the law he counted loss for "the righteousness which is of God by faith" (PHIL. 3:8-11).

Then also the ministry given Paul cut at the very ground of Israel's national self-reliance, for although according to the flesh he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews yet now he received grace to be an Apostle of the Gentiles (ROM. 15:16). During the former period of his ministry this apostleship was used to urge Israel to give heed. "I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them"

(ROM. 11 : 13-14). The Lord Himself had set before Israel the example of the Gentiles for this same purpose; in the synagogue at Nazareth He reminded them of the widow of Sarepta, and Naaman the Syrian, but instead of this encouraging them to give heed it rather raised them to attempt His life (LUKE 4 : 25-30; cp. MAT. 12 : 41-42). Paul's Apostleship to the Gentiles was thus used to shame Israel. They did those things the Jews failed to do; they "turned to God," whereas Israel would not turn. But as when the Lord used the Gentiles for an example, so again Israel reacted by rejecting the word still further, and this proved to be the filling up of the nation's sins.

"Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 THESS. 2 : 16).

Paul's ministry to Israel was from the outset associated with their opposition to that word and the consequent rejection of the nation for a season. Paul himself is first introduced when they stoned Stephen; and he was first sent forth on a long missionary journey after Peter had been rejected by all the people of the Jews. Then the issue of his first recorded address in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia was, so far as the Jewish hearers generally were concerned, that he and Barnabas "shook off the dust of their feet against them" (ACTS 13 : 51); which act was in the nature of a testimony against them as a city, for, as we have seen, the national hope of Israel when rejected necessitates a national or collective retribution (MAT. 10 : 14-15). Paul's subsequent visits to that city are not said to have been for the purpose of preaching to the people but rather for the confirmation of believers (14 : 21-22; 15 : 36; 18 : 23).

The course of Paul's ministry in consequence of Israel's disobedience is clearly prefigured in his first recorded miracle. Elymas, a Jew, through withstanding the word being spoken to the Gentiles, was blinded for a season; but Sergius Paulus, the first mentioned fruit of his testimony among the Gentiles, believed in consequence of this miracle of blindness wrought upon

the Jew (13: 6-12). Paul's testimony to the Gentiles was the result of, and in proportion to, the degree of Israel's rejection of that gospel; each step they took in disobedience was overruled to bring the Gentiles more fully into blessing. He was sent "to open their eyes" (26: 17-18), but of Israel it was written "He hath blinded their eyes" (JOHN 12: 40).

Paul's ministry was, from this aspect, divided into three stages. First, as Saul, he testified to Jews only; then, as Paul, he commenced to go unto the Gentiles also; and finally, when Israel as a nation were set aside, he became a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles (EPH. 3: 1). The Acts of the Apostles deals with the first two only, for these had in view God's dealings with the nation.

At the instant of his conversion Paul was told of his mission to the Gentiles, but he was not authorized to go unto them until some years later. "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee" (ACTS 26: 17, R.V.). Paul's ministry to the nation of Israel required first place; thus when his eyes were opened "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God . . . and confounded the Jews at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." When as a result of this "the Jews took counsel to kill him" he fled from Damascus to Jerusalem (9: 20-23). At Jerusalem he preached "boldly in the name of the Lord . . . and disputed against the Grecian Jews; but they went about to kill him" (9: 28-29, R.V.). While there Paul received in the Temple a vision, saying, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning Me . . . Depart; for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles" (22: 17-21, R.V.). Thus Paul went "first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles" (26: 20).

Israel's rejection of the Twelve had now reached its climax, even to the extent of James being killed to their pleasure, and Divine intervention becoming necessary

to deliver Peter "from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (12 : 1-11). Thus it was at this juncture that Paul's ministry was brought into the forefront of God's dealings with the nation, and with this it was given him to commence to go unto the Gentiles also. At Antioch the Holy Spirit separated Paul and Barnabas "for the work whereunto I have called them" (13 : 2), which work they fulfilled in their journey among the Jews of the dispersion, during which God "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (14 : 26-27).

As Paul went from city to city he entered first into the synagogue, and only after the Jews there had proved unheeding did he turn to the Gentiles. Thus far Scripture has used the plain term "synagogue," but at this juncture, and in connection with Paul's witness afterwards, we read frequently of "the synagogue of the Jews," this qualification being added to emphasize that in the synagogue Paul's testimony was strictly to Israel (13 : 5; 14 : 1; 17 : 1, 10, 17). At Antioch in Pisidia Paul preached in the synagogue, "and when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath . . . but when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy" (13 : 42-44). Paul's explanation to them was—

"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (ACTS 13 : 46).

During this witness to Israel Paul made three journeys among the dispersion, after each of which he returned to Jerusalem, and throughout these his pathway was directed according to the Jews' rejection of his testimony. Let us briefly trace this. His first journey included the provinces of Phrygia and Galatia. At Salamis (13 : 5), Antioch (13 : 14), and Iconium (14 : 1) he preached the word of God first in the synagogues of the Jews, but at Antioch "the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts" (13 : 50); at Iconium the Jews

constituted the opposition—"the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles," causing an assault to be made so that they fled (14 : 1-6); and at Lystra "certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium" came and persuaded the people so that they stoned Paul (14 : 19).

After visiting Jerusalem on the question of circumcision, when Judas and Silas were entrusted with the epistle, or decrees, for the Gentiles (15 : 22-27), Paul set forth with Silas on his second journey. Revisiting Phrygia and Galatia, the scene of his previous itinerary, he confirmed the disciples, and being forbidden, as yet, to speak the word in the province of Asia (16 : 6) he passed over into Macedonia and Achaia, districts of Europe. Here at Thessalonica (17 : 1), Berea (17 : 10), Athens (17 : 17), and Corinth (18 : 4) he again first visited the synagogues of the Jews. But at Thessalonica "the Jews which believed not . . . set all the city on an uproar" (17 : 5); at Berea "the Jews of Thessalonica . . . came thither also, and stirred up the people" (17 : 13); and at Corinth "the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul" (18 : 12).

After a brief visit to Jerusalem (18 : 22) Paul embarked on his third journey. This time he again revisited Galatia and Phrygia, the scene of his first journey (18 : 23), and Macedonia and Achaia, the scene of his second (19 : 21 ; 20 : 1). In the last named province a further "plot was laid against him by the Jews" (20 : 3 R.V.). But now Paul gave testimony in Asia, having been forbidden to do so on his first journey (16 : 6) and only briefly touching this province on his second (18 : 19). At Ephesus he went, as before, to the synagogue, but when divers were hardened "he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus" (19 : 8-9). Paul spent three years in this city, preaching "not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia," "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (19 : 20, 10). But in Asia, as in the other provinces, Paul suffered "by the plots of the Jews" (20 : 18-19, R.V.).

The Jews of Phrygia and Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia, and of Asia, thus rejected Paul even to the extent of plotting his life. This testimony to the Dispersion being ended, Paul looked forward to another. "And now," he said, in bidding the Ephesian elders farewell, "I go bound in spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me" (20 : 22-23). What these bonds should be was made known when the Judæan prophet Agabus came to Cæsarea and, binding his own hands and feet with Paul's girdle, declared, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (21 : 11).

Jerusalem, the centre of the Jewish world, was Paul's next place of testimony. The Jews there were to deliver him bound unto the Gentiles; nevertheless he was not to quit Judæa until the nation of the Jews had been pronounced guilty. The first assault was made by the multitude of Jews who, roused by a false rumour, would have lynched him, but he was delivered (21 : 27-35). This mob had no considered reason for their excitement, for the Asiatic Jews who were a minority had inflamed them; thus Paul, with soldiers as his guardians, made from the castle steps a defence, to which they gave heed until he mentioned the Gentiles, but at that word they cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live" (22 : 21-22). However, no such hasty action could now be taken; he must be tried. Paul was then brought before "the chief priests and all the council" for it to be ascertained "wherefore he was accused of the Jews"; that sitting ended in "a great dissension," the soldiers having "to take him by force" "lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them" (23 : 1-10). This was followed by a desperate plot of the Jews to kill him, but Paul, protected by a small army, was taken unto Cæsarea there to be safely kept in Herod's judgment hall, reserved for proper trial (23 : 12-35).

Paul in due time stood in the dock. Rome occupied the bench, and the Jewish people, as represented by their leaders, were called as the plaintiffs. The picture is remarkable, for the city over which the Lord cried "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee" (MAT. 23 : 37), had now to send representatives to Cæsarea, there to hear testimony from a witness whom they could not kill, one with the very power of their Roman overlords as his bodyguard. In the quiet and sober atmosphere of a judicial court, with a third party as judge, Paul further testified to Israel; but in this place of deliberation they gave their considered voice against him. These proceedings were protracted; "two years" elapsed between his first and second hearings (24 : 27), and "many days" passed before the third (25 : 14). Was ever such opportunity afforded a false witness to recant? Yet for all this Israel remained unmoved and unrelenting; their rejection of Paul was deliberate, and no further grace could possibly have been granted them.

It was as a people that the Jews made suit against Paul. At the first "the Jews which were of Asia" saw Paul in the Temple, and these immediately "stirred up all the people and laid hands on him," so that "all the city was moved" (21 : 27, 30). Paul in his defence addressed them as "Brethren and fathers" and set forth, speaking in Hebrew, how God's dealings through him were of the same standing as those with their fathers, for Ananias—whom he described as "a devout man according to the law, having a good report of the Jews"—had been sent unto him with this word, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee" (22 : 1, 12-14). Then when Paul came up for trial the nation as such were presented to the judge as his accusers. Felix was thanked by their spokesman Tertullus "that by thy providence evils are corrected for this nation," whereupon he set Paul before him as one such national evil—"a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (24 : 2, 5, R.V.). Agrippa was

likewise asked by Festus to "behold this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews made suit to me" (25 : 24, R.V.).

The Jews took this action against Paul solely because he was set before them as witness to the hope of Israel. This single issue was soon made manifest, the misdoings they fabricated about him being wiped aside as a mere pretext, for they could prove none of them. Festus, having listened to their "many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove" (25 : 7), crystallized the real issue in his statement to Agrippa. "Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (25 : 18-19). Paul in his defence before Agrippa made this clear. "And now I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. And concerning this hope I am accused by the Jews" (26 : 6-7, R.V.).

What was the verdict? Felix adjourned the case, being "willing to show the Jews a pleasure" (24 : 27). Festus likewise failed to do him justice for precisely the same reason, for he, "willing to do the Jews a pleasure" (25 : 9), asked Paul if he would go "up to Jerusalem, and there be judged." "But Paul said, I am standing before Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews I have done no wrong . . . no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar" (25 : 10-11, R.V.). There was now no question of his being released until he was heard at Rome, but Agrippa tried him to ascertain the nature of the imputation. Paul was announced by Festus as a "man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews made suit to me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer" (25 : 24). The verdict was, "This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds" (26 : 31). By the acquittal of the accused the accuser

is implied guilty. Paul thus sailed for Rome exonerated from every charge, leaving the Jewish people convicted of having rejected the hope of Israel.

On reaching Rome Paul sought, as before, the Jews first. "Paul called the chief of the Jews together," or, as the Revised Version margin has it, "he called together those that were of the Jews first" (28 : 17). To these Paul set forth the nature of his case that they might be made sensible of the issue in question; he explained how the Jewish people had brought it against him, for though he "had done nothing against the people, or the customs," nor had he aught to accuse his nation of, yet he was "delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans," and when they would have released him "the Jews spake against it," thereby constraining him to appeal unto Cæsar. Their nation elsewhere having thus bound Paul because of his witness to the hope of Israel, he now called them that they might also have opportunity to hear. "For this cause therefore did I intreat you to see and to speak with me: for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (ACTS 28 : 16-20, R.V.).

On the day appointed these Jews, having now a knowledge of his case, "came to him into his lodging in great number." Paul's witness at Rome was to be the same as he gave to the Jewish multitude from the castle steps at Jerusalem, for on that night the Lord said to him, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (23 : 11). Paul thus testified to these Jews "concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening" (28 : 23), as he had done to "the Jews throughout the whole world" since the first preaching at Damascus. But as elsewhere so now also in Rome, Israel did not show a general acceptance, for "some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not" (28 : 24).

Upon this Paul took the place of judge; he whom the Jews had bound dismissed his own accusers. First he

summarized their state by quoting the prophecy of Isaiah 6 respecting Israel as a "people," whereby it was shown that their condition was such that God's long-suffering towards them had now, at that time, no possibility of receiving response. Then Paul gave forth their sentence: "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (28 : 28). Up to this juncture salvation had been sent first to Israel. Peter preached "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel" (10 : 36), and Paul, addressing the Jews and Proselytes in the synagogue, declared "To you is the word of this salvation sent" (13 : 26, 43); but now that Israel stood condemned, salvation was definitely sent unto the Gentiles.

Paul's quotation of Isaiah 6 declared that the Jews were now too debilitated by blindness and deafness to turn again. "Lest haply they should . . . hear with their ears . . . and should turn again" (ACTS 28 : 27, R.V.). We noted that the Lord in giving the Parables of Matthew 13 had said that this prophecy was then being fulfilled; but now Paul's sentence signified that this hardening of Israel's heart, which had been going on and increasing, had definitely reached its climax; they had not, and now could not, turn again. Because this was their state Israel could not then be healed. "Lest haply they . . . should turn again, and I should heal them" (28 : 27, R.V.).

That Israel should "turn again" was the condition upon which their hope of the restoration of the Kingdom had been promised them since the days of the Baptist. We have traced how John at the first was sent that he might turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God; his preaching was, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Then after him the Lord, the Twelve, and others also, proclaimed unto them that same word. Israel crucified their King, but God raised Him up and sent Peter unto them to preach yet further, "Repent . . . and turn again," with the promise that if this condition was fulfilled then He would "send the

Christ" unto them, and restore all things as the prophets had spoken (ACTS 3: 19-21, R.V.). The period introduced at Pentecost had, therefore, the Lord's return and the Kingdom as an immediate prospect; but now Paul's pronouncement decided the issue which had been in question—Israel were unable to fulfil this condition and consequently this their hope was necessarily deferred.

This deferment of the hope of Israel is, however, only for the time being. Psalm 80 foresees how that after Israel, as pictured by the vine, had been so impoverished as to be "burned with fire" and "cut down" they shall cry "Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved" (PSA. 80: 3, 7). Paul also spoke of the time when Israel "shall turn to the Lord," showing how the veil which has been over their eyes in the reading of the Old Testament shall then be taken away (2 COR. 3: 12-16). In that day all things that were in prospect during Acts will be realized.

The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, according as the Lord had foretold (LUKE 19: 42-44), which took place shortly after Acts 28, was Israel's punishment for not having repented or received His ministers. The Lord had warned them that if they repented not they would perish in like manner as the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices and those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell (LUKE 13: 1-5); and in the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son He had depicted that if they rejected His servants they would be destroyed and their city burned (MAT. 22: 7). Thus it came to pass that Israel's disobedience brought all this upon them.

The "desolations" of Jerusalem which have obtained since Titus overthrew the Temple (LUKE 21: 20) were, as we saw under the Lord's "Prophecies," a punishment to be imposed upon Israel only after every possible opportunity for repentance had been afforded them, it being the most severe which God would ever bring upon His chosen nation. Thus it is that the Acts of the Apostles demonstrates to the uttermost that Israel

reached a point when their turning again and healing became out of the question. As on that previous occasion when Jerusalem was given to desolation so now at Acts 28 it could be said again, "there was no remedy" or "healing" (2 CHRON. 36 : 15-16, R.V. marg.).

HEBREWS.

In Hebrews Paul had a ministry to Jews as individuals. He there presented to each reader his personal responsibility to heed the word God had recently spoken, and his privilege of pressing on to lay hold of that promise set before him. The Acts records God's dealings with Israel as a nation until that juncture when their disobedience brought upon them this present era of Jerusalem's desolation and their dispersion; but in Hebrews we learn that while the nation as such were disobedient there was given to individuals therein this privilege of entering into even greater blessings than those which the people were refusing. This had been God's way with His people of old; when national unbelief was rife He committed a fuller unfolding of His purposes to such as were faithful.

That Hebrews was written by Paul seems evident. The writer did not include himself among "them that heard Him" (2 : 3) and thus was not of the Twelve or the Lord's brethren. His language is that of Luke and Paul, for of the 260 or so words common to them, but not used by other New Testament writers, about a quarter occur in Hebrews. Luke, however, was evidently a Gentile, for he is not listed with those "who are of the circumcision" (COL. 4 : 11, 14); Paul, on the other hand, being himself an Hebrew, could write them in the second person. Peter referred the Jews of the dispersion in the provinces of Asia Minor to an epistle Paul had written expressly unto them (2 PET. 3 : 15-16), and Hebrews has features which may identify it as being that epistle. The writer was known to those addressed, for he said "Pray for us" (13 : 18); he had, according to the Authorized Version, been among them in bonds (10 : 34); he identified Timothy with himself

(13 : 23), and mentions "they of Italy," which may be a reference to Priscilla and Aquila (13 : 24; ACTS 18). Then, finally, it bears Paul's characteristic salutation—"grace" (13 : 25; 2 THESS. 3 : 17-18).

The Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in this epistle with great majesty. He is seen as "the brightness of" God's glory, "the express image of His person" (1 : 3). The Father Himself addressed Him as God (1 : 8), and commanded the angels to render Him that honour which may be given to none but God—worship (1 : 6). Hebrews is not, however, concerned so much with the Son's inherent glories as with those with which the Father has now invested Him in consequence of His having become Man and returned to glory. Statements such as these betoken a glory acquired. "His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things," "Having become by so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent Name than they," "Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows," "Thou crownest Him with glory and honour" (1 : 2, 4, 9; 2 : 7, R.V.).

"Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, Who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (8 : 1, R.V.). It is in this epistle alone that the Lord is spoken of as High Priest; the title does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament save in the historical references to its earthly bearers in the Gospels and Acts. This aspect of the Lord's exaltation had, therefore, a particular bearing upon these Hebrews. It was a fuller unfolding of His glory than that which saw Him as heir of David's throne as heralded to the nation at Pentecost, for this concerned His glory in the heavens and those offices which are His there.

The Lord's place as High Priest, while it resulted from His having taken hold "of the seed of Abraham" to become "one" with those whom He sanctified (2 : 5-18), was, nevertheless, an office He had received because He was in heaven. "Now if He were on earth,

He would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law" (8:4, R.V.). The order after which the Lord was made High Priest was that of Melchisedec, which belongs to heaven, and not that of Aaron, which was appointed for the earth. This priesthood did not pertain to Israel, but it was that after which theirs was modelled. These two orders are set in contrast; the less was blessed of the better, and as the tribes gave tithes to Levi, so in Abraham the whole nation, including Levi, gave tithes to Melchisedec. The Levitical order could not make perfect, its high priests were appointed by the law without an oath, they were many because death prevented continuance, and they needed to offer sacrifices repeatedly. But the Lord, having become High Priest of the Melchisedec order, could make perfect; He was appointed with an oath to an unchanging priesthood, seeing He ever lives, and His sacrifice has been accomplished once for all in that He offered up Himself (7:4-28).

As High Priest after this heavenly order the Lord is also a minister of that Tabernacle which exists in heaven. "An high priest, Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (8:1-2). This heavenly tabernacle was that pattern after which Moses was enjoined to model the earthly. Israel's tabernacle and its effects were thus "the copies of the things in the heavens" (9:23, R.V.). The high priest had a ministry separate from that of the other priests in that he alone was permitted to enter the holy of holies (*hagion*, plural), which he did annually on the day of atonement. This word *hagion* ("holy place") has the distinction of being the most used of all the words peculiar to Hebrews; in the singular it signifies the first compartment, and in the plural the second, or inner sanctuary of the tabernacle (9:2-3). The Lord as High Priest was thus "a minister of the sanctuary (*hagion*, plural)," and this holiest of all, into which He entered, was verily "heaven itself."

"For Christ entered not into a holy place (*hagion*, plural) made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (HEB. 9 : 24, R.V.).

In His capacity of High Priest after the order of Melchisedec the Lord is also spoken of as the Mediator of that new and better covenant (7 : 21-22 ; 8 : 1-7). The earthly tabernacle pertained to the first, or old covenant; in it were the ark and tables of the covenant (9 : 1-11), while under that first covenant the earthly tabernacle was dedicated and cleansed by blood, for the law considered even inanimate things to be defiled through contact with sin. But now as surety of the new covenant the Lord has entered the heavenly sanctuary; these "heavenly things themselves" likewise required to be cleansed and this was effected when He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (9 : 11-27).

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus" (3 : 1, R.V.). To these to whom Hebrews is addressed the Lord was the High Priest of their "confession," and this being so they were "partakers of a heavenly calling." This further unfolding of the Lord's glory is thus linked with a higher calling of the redeemed. Their calling being heavenly, they looked not for abiding blessings here. "For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come" (13 : 14, R.V.). Abraham had this calling, for he "looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God"; and so also had other worthies of Old Testament times, for they desired "a better country, that is a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city" (11 : 10, 16, R.V.). The name of that city is "the heavenly Jerusalem" (12 : 22).

The Old Testament Scriptures record the promise to Abraham of an earthly inheritance, but do not mention this promise of an heavenly calling; they foretell that a new covenant is to be made with the houses of Israel and Judah whereby the nation would be established (JER. 31 : 31-36), but do not show that this covenant

was also to include heavenly things; indeed, they do not appear to contain any detailed reference to that city—God evidently revealed these heavenly things especially to the faithful. The Hebrews epistle, however, in revealing the Lord's glory in the heavens, reveals also this heavenly calling more fully, and the new covenant is now shown to embrace heavenly things. Here, as in Galatians, the first covenant is associated with Sinai, the second with the heavenly Jerusalem (GAL. 4 : 24-26 ; HEB. 12 : 18-24).

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant” (HEB. 12 : 22-24).

This heavenly calling does not seem to have been promised to the nation as such, but rather that as individuals they might go on to lay hold of the promise of heavenly things. These two callings are, however, correlative: Israel's earthly calling is a counterpart of the heavenly; their earthly tabernacle and its vessels were “the copies of the things in the heavens” (9 : 23, R.V.). Then the heavenly Jerusalem has upon its twelve foundations the twelve names of the Apostles whose ministry was to the circumcision, while upon its twelve gates are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (REV. 21 : 10-14, R.V.). Both these callings are blessed under the new covenant and both will come in during the same period as is seen in the Revelation.

That some should have blessings greater than others is a feature of God's dealings seen throughout Scripture. Jacob, acting on belief in God's Word, even though it displeased his favourite son, blessed Ephraim above Manasseh (HEB. 11 : 21 ; GEN. 48). Some called for “the heavenly calling” are termed “the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (12 : 23, R.V.). The Hebrews would appreciate from the rule respecting the firstborn that for this church to be so qualified it must be in some way a selective calling. With the institution of the Passover there was given also the rule respecting the special standing of the firstborn, which provided that when the nation passed over to inherit the land the

firstborn sons even in the land should pass over unto the Lord as His special heritage out from among His people (EXOD. 13:11-16). The church of the firstborn is "enrolled in heaven." This word "enrolled" (*apographo*) is rendered "taxed" in Luke 2:1-5; it involved a person's registration at his native town—thus Joseph, being of the house of David, registered at Bethlehem. The homeland of this church is in heaven; thus it is there that they are enrolled.

This hope of heavenly things did not set aside those things which were Israel's as a nation on earth. The Tabernacle worship is regarded as having been imposed until the time of reformation, as is shown by the use of the present tense in Hebrews 9:8-10, R.V.; the sacrifices are likewise spoken of as obtaining and the altar as being served (8:4; 10:1; 13:10-11). The Levitical priesthood and the first covenant were faulty, and so room was found for another priesthood and a second covenant (7:11; 8:7). This new covenant had, however, for the present been superimposed upon the old, for so far as the nation is concerned the old is not abolished until the Lord returns to establish the new with them, and to bring them into the blessedness of their earthly inheritance (ROM. 11:26-27). "For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment . . . and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope" (HEB. 7:18-19, R.V.). The very ratification of the second covenant had rendered the first old, and speaking in prospect of the Lord's return it could be said that the old was nigh to dissolution.

"In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away" (HEB. 8:13, R.V.).

Hebrews, in urging individuals to seek after heavenly things, did not therefore enjoin that the earthly should be abolished. They were bidden to leave those rudiments in which they were tutored and to go on from thence unto these things which made for full age, but in so doing they were not to overthrow or cast down those first principles of truth. "Therefore leaving the principles

of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not overthrowing (*kataballo*, from *kata*, "down," *ballo*, "to cast," hence "to cast down," and so in 2 COR. 4:9, and REV. 12:10) the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of the laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (6:1-2). These baptisms and other primary things were taught under the economy of the first tabernacle (9:10), but now, God permitting, they had this privilege of pressing on unto further things, even "things that accompany salvation" (6:9).

"Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp" (13:11-14). The camp out from which these Hebrews were exhorted to go forth must of necessity be that in which they were first found, even Israel as a people. This going forth is illustrated by a sacrifice which was "burned without the camp"; the bodies of all beasts whose blood was brought into the tabernacle were burnt without the camp (LEV. 4:1-21), but here the reference is to those whose blood was brought "into the holy place (*hagion*, plural) by the high priest," even that which was taken within the veil on the day of atonement (LEV. 16). The Lord had become the antitype of that sacrifice. He had suffered without the gate and entered into heaven itself. They were bidden, therefore, to leave the camp and to go forth unto Him, seeking their inheritance in that heavenly city to come. "For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come" (13:11-14, R.V.).

"Therefore leaving . . . let us go on unto perfection . . . and this will we do, if God permit" (6:1-3). "Perfection," we saw when considering the Sermon on the Mount, implied the attaining of an end, the issue of life; and in this case it concerns the pathway of these of the heavenly calling. Their position is likened to that of Israel in the wilderness, for they too were hearing a gospel concerning entering into rest; they were warned, therefore, to "give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of

disobedience" (3 : 7-11 : 11). Numbers 14 is the very atmosphere of this warning, for Israel's failure there recorded is analogous to that against which Hebrews bids its readers give earnest heed. That generation were pardoned for their rebellion in not going on to enter into the land, even as they had been pardoned since the day of their redemption (NUM. 14 : 10-21); nevertheless God said "I will . . . disinherit them" (12), and when afterwards they presumed to enter He did not permit this because they had "turned back from following the Lord" (43, R.V.). Of Caleb, however, the Lord said "Because he . . . hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land" (24).

These whom Hebrews addressed were in fact "much more" answerable than that generation in the wilderness, insomuch as the word now sent to them was greater (12 : 25; 10 : 28-29; 2 : 2-4). They were urged, therefore, not to be "slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (6 : 12). The eleventh chapter presents a selection of Old Testament saints who did obtain a good report through faith (11 : 2, 39). They "received not the promise" as yet, "that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (39-40, R.V.). The promise in question was that heavenly city, new Jerusalem, in which both those worthies of Old Testament times and these of "the heavenly calling" addressed in Hebrews are together blessed (11 : 10, 16; 12 : 22; 13 : 14).

THE FORMER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY— TO THE GENTILES.

HIS EARLIER EPISTLES.

PAUL's ministry to the Gentiles marked the introduction of a fresh phase of God's dealings with mankind, for to him was committed a preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ which before had been kept silent, but which then was made known unto all nations for faith obedience; and in this God was pleased to reveal

that changed relationship between Himself and the world by its reconciliation to Himself through Christ.

"Now to Him that is able to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal (age times), but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets (prophetic writings), according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith." (ROM. 16: 25-26, R.V.).

What Paul is caused to term "my gospel" is here declared to be a distinctive preaching of Jesus Christ; for the second "according" in this passage would seem to introduce, not a further truth essential for establishment, but rather a particularization of the manner in which Paul's gospel proclaimed the Lord Jesus. "My gospel, even the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of a mystery kept silent through age times but now made manifest." Thus Timothy was exhorted to "Remember Jesus Christ . . . according to my gospel" (2 TIM. 2: 8, R.V.); and elsewhere Paul speaks of the message with which he was entrusted by God's command as having been promised before age times but as now manifested in its own season. The cross made this testimony possible, but the season when it should be borne did not come until Paul was appointed to make it manifest.

"In hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie, promised before times eternal (age times), but in its own seasons manifested His word in the message wherewith I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Saviour." (TIT. 1: 2-3, R.V. marg.; cp. 1 TIM. 2: 5-7; 2. TIM. 1: 9, R.V.).

The "gospel of God" is ever "concerning His Son," for apart from Him God has no good news for man. The several gospels God committed to His ministers all concerned His Son; the difference between them lay in what it was they testified concerning Him, and to whom their distinctive testimony concerning Him was addressed. Paul's gospel was defined as being a message concerning Jesus Christ according to the revelation of a mystery kept in silence through age times but which was now to be made known unto all nations for faith obedience. This mystery is to be distinguished from

“the dispensation of the mystery” revealed in Paul’s later epistles, for that was to be made known, not to all nations, but expressly to the saints (COL. 1 : 25-27).

Paul’s ministry as the Apostle of the Gentiles was not, therefore, that he simply took one general gospel and extended it among the uncircumcision, but it was that to him was committed a preaching of Jesus Christ which before was silenced but which now was made known unto all nations. That Paul’s “gospel of the uncircumcision” was a specific message, and therefore distinct from that which Peter had previously opened to the Gentiles, is evident from the fact that Paul went up by revelation to Peter and the other Apostles at Jerusalem “and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles” (GAL. 2 : 2). Thus Peter, having already given his testimony unto the Gentiles, had afterwards to be informed of Paul concerning a particular gospel which had been revealed unto him for the uncircumcision.

This gospel of the uncircumcision was not introduced by Paul until after the Twelve as such had been rejected by the nation of Israel; not until that juncture in their apostasy had been reached was there the “but now” of the revelation of this preaching of Jesus Christ. Immediately upon his conversion Paul “confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (ACTS 9 : 22), and, as we have traced, he thereafter continued to bear that testimony concerning the Lord to the people of Israel throughout the former period of his ministry as recorded in Acts. But Paul, although marked out from the first to be the Apostle of the Gentiles (GAL. 1 : 15-16), did not open his special testimony concerning the Lord to them until some years after his conversion. The Twelve were rejected by Israel in that Peter had to be delivered “from all the expectation of the people of the Jews” and James was killed to their pleasure (ACTS 12), and it was then, and not before, that Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles commenced. Thus Paul had not his distinctive gospel which he preached among the Gentiles to lay

before Peter at his first visit to Jerusalem, but he received it before his subsequent visit as recorded in Galatians (GAL. 1:18; 2:1-2).

The Twelve ministered the gospel of the Kingdom to Israel, a word which had in view their hope of restoration and through that the blessing of the nations as foreseen in many Old Testament prophecies. Peter, their chief, as having committed to him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, received the privilege of being the first to testify unto the Gentiles concerning the Lord's resurrection (ACTS. 15:14). To him was entrusted "the gospel of the circumcision"; thus the particular message he testified to the Gentiles was "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel" (ACTS 10:36). The Lord had said that "this gospel of the Kingdom"—which was the word sent unto Israel—"shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations," and this not only when Peter opened that testimony to the Gentiles but more particularly in the days which will immediately precede the Lord's return, when the Kingdom will be near at hand, for when it shall have been preached in all the world "then shall the end come" (MAT. 24:14).

Israel's rejection of the Twelve did not bring about the immediate withdrawal of that testimony from them, for, as already noted, Paul gave to them a further space of testimony concerning "the hope of Israel" (ACTS 28:20). But what it did bring about was the committal to Paul of his gospel of the reconciliation, a word which made known the standing of the Gentiles before God, not as related to Israel's restoration but as men now reconciled to God. Israel's casting away could not in itself be of any merit to effect the reconciliation of the world—that great work had been done by the Lord Himself (2 COR. 5:18-21); it is rather that Israel's fall led to the publication of the word of reconciliation to the world. Israel were for the time suffering loss through unbelief, yet this word overruled their failure for the Gentiles' gain.

"Now if their (Israel's) fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? . . . For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (ROM. 11:12-15, R.V.).

The "prophetic writings" in which this preaching of Jesus Christ is made known must be Paul's epistles, for the Old Testament cannot reveal it as it was then kept silenced, neither can the writings of the New Testament other than Paul's, for it was his gospel, a revelation peculiar to him (ROM. 16:25-26). John's gospel records how God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and how He died that the world through Him might be saved; but it is reserved for Paul's gospel to reveal the changed relation between God and the world which was thereby brought about as expressed by that term, peculiar to his epistles, "reconciliation."

The reconciliation deals with men as men and thus underlies those circumstantial distinctions such as circumcision and uncircumcision. Two men alone figure as heads—Adam, the "one man" through whom sin entered into the world, and "the One Man Jesus Christ" by whom the gift of grace has abounded unto many (ROM. 5:12-15, R.V.). In this the Lord Jesus is set forth as "the Man" (1 TIM. 2:5-7), the "last Adam," "the second Man, the Lord from Heaven" (1 COR. 15:45-47). Under these two heads all the uncontaminated race of men are involved. "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (ROM. 5:18). "For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead, For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 COR. 15:21-22).

Adam's offence "brought sin into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." But Christ's obedience took that offence out of the way, and He thereby became the meeting-place between God and men. God's question with the world is now entirely centred in the Man

Christ Jesus; the reconciliation of the world through Him has changed the whole responsibility of men. Aforetime trespasses were not imputed unto them, but now Paul's gospel in bringing further light to the nations, brought also the liability of judgment according thereto. Paul speaks of "the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (ROM. 2:16).

"But all things are of God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God" (2 COR. 5:18-20 R.V.).

The world is reconciled, but it is the individual's responsibility to "be reconciled." Paul is not here beseeching the believing Corinthians to be reconciled (the "you" and "ye" of verse 20 do not figure in the original); he is rather stating what his word was to all—"as though God did beseech by us . . . be reconciled to God." Thus to be reconciled brought the "much more" of salvation by Christ's life: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (ROM. 5:10). Such are placed upon another plane, even resurrection life, a new creation in Christ Jesus.

"And He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him Who for their sakes died and rose again. Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new. But all things are of God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ" (2 COR. 5:15-18, R.V.).

Two addresses of Paul to the Gentiles are recorded in Acts and these provide examples of his preaching of the reconciliation. There is the basic oneness of mankind: "He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (17:26, R.V.); "We also

are men of like nature with you" (14 : 15, marg.). Their former exemption from full responsibility: "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked," "Who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways" (17 : 30 ; 14 : 16, R.V. ; cp. 2 COR. 5 : 19). Then the change now brought about by the revelation of this word: "But now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent," "Ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God" (17 : 30 ; 14 : 15, R.V.). The Lord is presented as "the Man" raised from the dead, and He it is Who shall judge the world in righteousness: "Inasmuch as He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance (offered faith, A.V. marg.), unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (17 : 31, R.V.).

While Paul concluded Romans with the statement concerning what it was given him to term "my gospel, even the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of a mystery which hath been kept silent through age times but now . . . is made known to all nations for faith obedience," yet he opened the epistle with the reference to "the gospel of God, which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures . . . by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience of the faith among all nations" (1 : 1-5). This gospel, promised afore, is clearly that concerning justification by faith and imputed righteousness, for that word is set forth as being witnessed by the law and the prophets. "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus unto all them that believe ; for there is no distinction" (3 : 21-22, R.V.). This justification was Abraham's precious experience, and that when in uncircumcision, David described "the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works" (ch. 4), while Habakkuk provided the key text—"The just shall live by faith" (1 : 17).

Romans, chapters 1 to 5: 11 set forth this righteousness of God whereby the sinner is justified by faith and receives imputed righteousness, and many Old Testament portions are put forward in confirmation. This righteousness is "unto all them that believe, for there is no distinction" (3: 22, R.V.), which fact was also foretold "The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith" (GAL. 3: 8, R.V.). Nevertheless, in the hearing of this word the Jew had then a prior right: "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (ROM. 1: 16). The exposition through these chapters of this gospel, promised afore, reaches its climax with the word "reconciliation,"; "Our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received the reconciliation" (5: 11, R.V.); and thus introduces in the verses which follow that wonderful setting forth of Paul's preaching of Jesus Christ, where that which was brought in through Adam is set over against that which is now brought in through Christ.

Paul's former ministry to the Gentiles, which commenced after Israel had rejected the Twelve, continued throughout the period covered by the remaining chapters of Acts, even unto that juncture when Israel's national apostasy reached its climax in that he was led to quote Isaiah 6 and to say, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (ACTS 28:28). During this former period of his ministry to the Gentiles, Paul wrote his earlier church epistles—namely, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. These epistles were addressed to assemblies of believers to whom his gospel had "come," by whom it was "received," and according to which they might be "established," (ROM. 16: 25; 1 COR. 15: 1-2; 2 COR. 11: 4-7; 1 THES. 1: 5, 2: 13; 2 THES. 2: 14). These churches were composed of both Jews and Gentiles (ROM. 9: 24; 1 COR. 1: 24); thus in these epistles Paul addressed certain words expressly to the Jews (ROM. 2: 17, 7: 1; 1 COR. 10: 1; GAL. 3: 23-24), and others to the Gentiles (ROM. 1: 13, 11: 13; 1 COR. 12: 2; GAL. 5: 2).

These earlier epistles show how Paul strove that those called by his gospel might be established therein, and not be moved away from it by such as sought to impose on them aspects of God's purposes not primarily addressed to them. Paul's gospel was the gospel to those for whom it was given; it was that Word of God which was expressly addressed to them. However, the epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians show that saints were even then being moved away from this gospel where-with they were called by those who sought to introduce into it things which belonged only to such as were called according to the ministry of the Apostles of the circumcision. The distinctiveness of Paul's gospel of the uncircumcision was thus not generally recognized from the first. If, then, his ministry was not held in all its separateness by those very churches he was himself instrumental in founding, how much less clearly might it be expected to have been held by the churches which were formed in the days following his death! One of the most valuable lessons early church history affords is the evidence it bears to the confusion which arose out of not keeping distinct his ministry of the uncircumcision from that of the Apostles of the circumcision. It is to the inspired Apostle of the Gentiles himself that we must go to find in its purity the revelation God gave through him.

Under Paul's ministry the Gentiles were, therefore, called by a gospel which was committed unto him after Israel had rejected the Twelve. But the Gentiles thus called were also blessed in a special manner in consequence of the hardening which befell Israel. Paul was a minister of the reconciliation, a word with the world as its scope; but he was also a minister of the new covenant, which covenant, as has been seen, concerned Israel's blessings (2 COR. 3 : 6, R.V.; JER. 31 : 31). It was into these blessings that the Gentiles were then brought.

A hardening in part had befallen Israel (ROM. 11 : 25, R.V.); an election only received the blessing by grace—"That which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened

... unto this very day" (ROM. 11 : 7-8, R.V.). The position was illustrated by the figure of an olive tree. This was Israel's "own olive tree"; those of them which believed remained as branches in their olive tree, but those who were hardened forfeited the privileges which were theirs by promise, for though by right they were "the natural branches" yet through unbelief they were "broken off" (ROM. 11 : 13-27).

"But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, was grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree." (ROM. 11 : 17, R.V.).

This hardening in part which befell Israel was, however, overruled to the blessing of the believing Gentiles; for they as "a wild olive" were grafted into Israel's olive tree in place of the natural branches which were broken off. The olive tree remained unalterably Israel's, but the Gentiles were grafted in thereto and thus became "joint-partakers" (*sugkoinonos*) with the true Israel of the root and of the fatness of their olive tree. These Gentiles were not, therefore, simply blessed through Israel as many will be in the restoration of the Kingdom, but they were actually identified with Israel in their blessings. This inclusion was made "contrary to nature" when the natural branches were broken off through unbelief, but it will not be contrary to nature for the natural branches to be grafted in again to their own olive tree whensoever they turn again to God.

"And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wast cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree." (ROM. 11 : 23-24, R.V.).

In his earlier church epistles Paul therefore addressed the Gentiles who had been constituted joint-partakers with Israel, and in this he spoke to them of the same calling of which he wrote to the Jews. His epistles Galatians and Hebrews were evidently sent to believers of the same district (1 PET. 1 : 1; 2 PET. 3 : 1, 15), the former principally, though not exclusively, for

Gentiles; the latter, as its title indicates, for Hebrews. In writing to the Galatians, as to the Hebrews, Paul spoke of their calling as being associated with the heavenly Jerusalem. "But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother" (GAL. 4:26, R.V.).

As partakers in this heavenly calling, in which Israel have the prime place (REV. 21:10-14), Paul set before the believing Gentiles the expectation for the hope of the Lord's coming (*parousia*) and revelation (*apokalupsis*), the occasion of which will be, as we have seen, the time for the receiving of both the heavenly and earthly callings associated with Israel's name. Thus in Paul's earlier epistles, as in Peter's epistles, the readers are bidden to look for their hope to come not before, but at the Lord's revelation: "Waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 COR. 1:7, R.V.); "Set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 PET. 1:13, R.V.).

The Lord spoke to the Twelve of that iniquity which is to mark the time of His near coming as something they might see: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place" (MAT. 24:15); and so likewise the epistles to the circumcision, and Paul's earlier epistles to the churches of the Gentiles, speak of these things as something the readers might themselves witness. In Thessalonians a similar set of circumstances are in prospect as antecedents of the Lord's coming to those which the Lord foretold in Matthew 24: "The day of the Lord . . . will not be except . . . the man of sin be revealed . . . so that he sitteth in the temple of God" (2 THES. 2:2-4, R.V.). These things were then in immediate expectation: "To wait for His Son from heaven" (1 THES. 1:10); "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (ROM. 13:12); "Upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 COR. 10:11, R.V.); "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (ROM. 16:20). Then, in view of the shortness of the time, Paul advised the unmarried to remain unmarried, and the married to be as though they were not married (1 COR. 7:29).

The participation of the Gentiles in the hope of Israel had, at that time, a bearing upon its expectation, for under Paul's ministry the Gentiles were thus brought into blessing in order that it might provoke Israel to emulation: "Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (ROM. 11 : 11, 10 : 19). We have seen that the Lord's return was then made conditional upon Israel as a people turning again; thus Acts, in recording that period when the opportunity was afforded them for so doing, refers to the Gentiles being blessed mainly from the viewpoint of the effect that their inclusion made upon the nation of the Jews. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles at that time was, from this aspect, virtually a ministry to the Jews, for the proof of the gospel in the faith of the Gentiles constituted a testimony to unbelieving Israel.

The nation of Israel is thus seen in the background in Paul's earlier epistles. The fact of the veil which was upon Israel's heart in the reading of the Old Testament was dwelt upon (2 COR. 3 : 14). The tongues and miracles which were then accepted features in church life and missionary work (ROM. 15 : 19; 1 COR. 12 : 10; GAL. 3 : 5) were given primarily as a witness to the Jews (1 COR. 1 : 22, 14 : 21); while Israel's resistance to the word being taken to the Gentiles was shown to be that which filled up their sins.

"Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." (1 THESS. 2 : 16).

Paul's earlier ministry among the churches of the Gentiles was brought to a close by his efforts to collect from them a gift for the poor among the Jewish saints at Jerusalem. The pillars at Jerusalem recognized that Paul had received his apostleship of the uncircumcision even as they had that of the circumcision, and that both parties should pursue their respective ministries independently. This being so they could add nothing to Paul—his God-given ministry was complete in itself; but they did request one thing, that he should "remember the poor" (GAL. 2 : 10). Paul, in fulfilling this

suggestion, was caused to use this gift to symbolize the nature of the Gentile's blessings—they ministered to Israel in these material things in appreciation of the fact that they had been made partakers of their spiritual things.

“For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things” (ROM. 15:20-27, R.V.).

The labours of Paul in collecting this gift provide a link between his earlier epistles. Galatians records the suggestion “remember the poor” (2:10). In 1 Corinthians Paul wrote “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order in the churches of Galatia, even so do ye . . . And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me” (16:1-4). At the time of writing this first epistle to the Corinthians Paul was anticipating a visit to Macedonia, where was Thessalonica (1 COR. 16:5). The Corinthians evidently proved very liberal in their gift so that Paul boasted of them to the Macedonians (2 COR. 9:1-2), but the Macedonians in their turn so exceeded themselves in their offering, even “beyond their power” (2 COR. 8:1-4), that it behoved Paul to write a second epistle to the Corinthians giving further exhortation concerning this gift lest, if any Macedonians accompanied him when he came to them, he might be ashamed for having boasted of them in this matter (2 COR. 9:3-4).

Romans was written when the gift was complete and Paul was about to go to Jerusalem to take this ministry to the saints (ROM. 15:25-28). In contemplating this Paul had a grave misgiving, for he besought the Romans to strive together in prayers with him “that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judæa, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints” (15:30-31). This ministry was, as he said to the Gentiles, “the proof of

your love," "the proving of you" (2 COR. 8 : 16-9 : 15, R.V.); but there was a very real question whether such a proof of the Gentiles' faith would be acceptable to even the believing Jews at Jerusalem.

Paul thus bade farewell to the churches of the Gentiles and went up to Jerusalem (ACTS 20 : 38). James and the elders there glorified the Lord at his declaration of the things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry; but as for the thousands of believing Jews who were zealous of the law, this gift was not sufficient to still their enmity towards his ministry to the Gentiles. Jerusalem itself was eventually raised to an uproar and when Paul was allowed a hearing they gave him audience only to this one word—"Gentiles" (ACTS 22 : 21-22). Then when he mentioned this gift during his trials it did not cause the Jews to withdraw their accusation (ACTS 24 : 17). Paul's ministry to the Gentiles did not, therefore, move Israel to repentance, and so when the whole nation had proved unresponsive it was given him to speak that final word :—

"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (ACTS 28 : 28).

THE LATTER PERIOD OF HIS MINISTRY.

HIS LATER EPISTLES.

THE Lord Jesus Christ foretold, as we saw under the sub-heading "Prophecies," that the interval between His ascension and return would be divided into three clearly distinct periods; the first and last would have the hope of the Kingdom in prospect, but the intervening period would be characterized by the desolation of Jerusalem and dispersion of Israel. The Lord's statements concerning this present period, and also the Old Testament prophecies relating thereto, present only the negative aspect of God's dealings, even that this period constitutes an intermission in His dealing with Israel as a nation, a pause during which the immediate hope of the Kingdom being restored is suspended.

The Acts gives the history of the first of these three periods, when that generation of the Jews was granted space in which to hear of the hope of Israel. In this the Acts records only the former period of Paul's ministry, the record of his many hearings being pursued, not to their end in his eventual appearance before Cæsar, but only so far as they concerned God's dealings with Israel. Paul's earlier ministry had, therefore, the nation of Israel in view; yet while he thus testified to the nation it was, as we have seen, given him to speak to the believing Hebrews, and to Gentiles as partakers with them of the heavenly calling associated with Israel's name. Paul spoke of this heavenly calling while Israel were being dealt with as it is closely connected with that pertaining to the earth, the one being the counterpart of the other, both being embraced within that new covenant promised to Israel, and having the Lord's coming as their hope.

The setting aside of Israel, as recorded at the close of Acts, was not a matter which was of consequence to the nation only but it vitally involved the hope of the saints. The callings then in view were all related to the special place held by Israel, the Gentiles being blessed either as partakers with them, as illustrated in Romans 11, or as subordinate to them as the nations which enter the earthly Kingdom. The hope of these callings is the Lord's coming, and that coming, both in its heavenly and earthly aspects, is always associated with God's dealings with Israel. The setting aside of Israel not only implied that they had failed to fulfil the conditions for the Lord's return as set before them at that time (ACTS 3:19-21, R.V.); it meant also that the circumstances which were foretold as being the setting for the Lord's return would not obtain so long as Israel were cast off. The desolation of Jerusalem is in fact the direct opposite to the rule of the Kingdom of Heaven, and so long as the temple is not standing there does not exist even the local conditions essential for the appearance of that abomination in the holy place which is to be the definite indication that the Lord's return is near

at hand (MAT. 24 : 15 ; 2 THESS. 2 : 8-4). Israel's temporary dismissal meant, therefore, that the hope of the restoration of the Kingdom is for the present postponed, and the expectation for the realization of that heavenly calling connected therewith is, in consequence, also deferred.

Paul's latter ministry entered upon the second period of which the Lord spake. The last incident recorded in Acts, where Israel were declared to be blinded beyond avail, proved to be the specific epoch which marked the commencement of the present era, the outward evidence of that sentence being seen in the destruction of Jerusalem which followed shortly afterward. The later epistles of Paul, which set forth his ministry after that juncture, are his prison epistles Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Timothy, and Philemon. The pastoral epistles 1 Timothy and Titus may also belong to this latter period of his ministry.

When Paul's prison epistles are opened the atmosphere is found to be, not one of frustration at the seeming defeat of the word which had till then been heralded to Israel, but rather of praise and ecstasy in the wonder of God's will in Christ which is there revealed. The viewpoint from which this present age is here regarded is Christ seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly places; there is no failure in God's power in exalting Him "far above . . . every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come" (EPH. 1 : 21, R.V. marg.). This, however, is not all, for there is here revealed what the Father has caused Christ's present exaltation to mean to the redeemed, even that He "gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (EPH. 1 : 22). Israel is blinded that they cannot as yet turn to Him; the world at present knows Him not; but He is, nevertheless, Head over all even now to us who are called to be the Church which is His Body. This high calling has been revealed "to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known

through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (EPH. 3 : 10-11, R.V. marg.).

After Israel had rejected the Twelve it was, as has been seen, given Paul to announce to the Gentiles his "gospel of the uncircumcision," which set forth the standing of man before God as having been reconciled to Him through Christ irrespective of such distinctions as Jew or Gentile. This gospel concerned only man's standing in God's sight; the callings then in view were all associated with Israel's privileged position, no hope being as yet revealed for the Gentiles should Israel fail. But now that Israel had been definitely set aside in unbelief Paul received, in addition to this gospel, a further revelation for the Gentiles—"the dispensation of the mystery," wherein is made known God's present purpose in Christ to form a calling in which Gentiles and Jews are united in absolute equality apart altogether from those purposes where Israel has precedence, and above and beyond any hope previously foreseen.

Paul remained a prisoner for some time after Israel had been set aside (ACTS 28 : 30), and concerning this he wrote "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles" (EPH. 3 : 1). During Acts Paul suffered because he was a chosen vessel to go unto the Gentiles (ACTS 22 : 21); though up to the end of Acts it was for Israel's hope that he was imprisoned: "because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (ACTS 28 : 20). But now Paul was a prisoner at Rome on behalf of the Gentiles because he had received a revelation from God expressly for them, something subsequent to the gospel he had already preached, a truth concerning the Lord's glory which even those who had been fully instructed in his earlier ministry could not apprehend without a special God-given enlightenment.

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles—if so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my

understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets" (EPH. 3 : 1-5, R.V.).

Paul was a prisoner that he might "make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (EPH. 6 : 19, R.V.), and "to speak the mystery of Christ" (COL. 4 : 3). Indeed, from this aspect Paul regarded his prison as his embassy, and his warders as his bodyguard, that there he might make these things known unmolested. Paul here bade the Ephesians consider his "knowledge in the mystery of Christ" in the light of his having been entrusted with this further revelation, the "dispensation of the mystery" (EPH. 3 : 1-9, R.V.). The mystery of Christ is not something about, or relating to, Christ; but it is Christ Himself (COL. 2 : 2, R.V.)—Who He is, and what God has purposed He should be. This mystery was made known in other generations though not "as it hath now been revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets." The dispensation of the mystery, on the other hand, was not previously known at all, for it had been "hid from all ages and generations" until it was revealed to Paul; but when this was revealed it gave him a fuller understanding of the mystery of Christ, thereby showing that this dispensation concerns something vital to Christ Himself (EPH. 3 : 1-9; COL. 1 : 25-27, R.V.). To find those glories the Father has given the Son, as they are specially set forth in Ephesians and Colossians, is to find the blessings which God has now given us in Him.

These words of Paul respecting his prison ministry were written to a church which had been fully instructed in all things which he taught during the former period of his ministry, so much so that when he bade the Ephesian elders farewell he called them to record that he had not shrunk from declaring to them "the whole counsel of God" (ACTS 20 : 17-38). Paul summarized the earlier period of his ministry as being restricted to the proclamation of "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" (ACTS 20 : 22). The truths Paul had till then received

thus constituted a fuller unfolding of God's purposes within the limits of the things promised before. For instance, the new covenant was foretold by Jeremiah, and Paul was made a minister thereof, but in this it was given him to make known further truth concerning that covenant as set forth in Hebrews. This summary Paul made of his earlier ministry must be capable of bearing the same emphasis as the statement that his gospel was a preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of a mystery made known unto all nations (ROM. 16 : 25-26); it follows, therefore, that the mysteries of which Paul was then a steward were—like the mysteries of the Kingdom which the Lord spake by parable—an unfolding of certain hidden features respecting the things spoken by the prophets, and not the revelation of other things outside the bounds of those which had been foreseen.

To these Ephesians Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of the Gentiles, now wrote stating that he had received a revelation to commit to them which they had not heard before—"How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (3 : 3-4). Paul did not appeal to them to remember his spoken ministry when he was among them, complete though that was for the time then being; but he directed them to what he had written subsequently, by the reading of which they could perceive this further revelation with which he had been entrusted. Paul's reference here to the things he had already written to them does not necessarily imply that he had sent a previous epistle to the Ephesians which, to our unutterable loss, has not been preserved to us. It would seem rather that Paul referred back—as he does in the opening words of the chapter, "for this cause"—to what he had written in the foregoing part of this epistle, whereby he indicated that these earlier chapters constitute an unfolding of this mystery.

From the foregoing facts it is clear, therefore, that after Israel were, for the time being, set aside in

unbelief, Paul as a prisoner on behalf of the Gentiles received the ministry of setting forth a further revelation concerning the present exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had said of Israel at the close of his testimony to them as a nation, "their eyes they have closed, lest haply they should perceive with their eyes" (ACTS 28: 27, R.V.); but now he declared that his ministry was "to enlighten (*photizo*) all as to what is the dispensation of the mystery" (EPH. 3: 9). This revelation is, however, expressly for the saints. The gospel of salvation as preached to the world at large remains the same as during Paul's earlier ministry; but now the "all" that may be enlightened into "the dispensation of the mystery" are the saints; for it is "to His saints to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery" (COL. 1: 26-27).

Paul's prayer recorded in Ephesians 1 shows that this further revelation which was committed to him can be known only by a God-given initiation, for although this is now written in the Scriptures yet it must remain unnoticed until He gives the opened understanding. Paul stated that he prayed for them "because of this" or "for this cause" (*dia touto*) (1: 15, R.V.), indicating that the requests were necessitated in consequence of the revelation set forth in the preceding verses, even that they might now know things which he had not previously set before them. Then also he added that he prayed this for them "after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints," showing that these requests were made not for all men but for faithful saints, as such only are fitted to receive them.

Paul opened this prayer by asking that they might first be granted gifts essential in order that they would be able to receive an understanding of the things mentioned later in the prayer. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation (*apokalupsis*=unveiling), in the knowledge (*epignosis*=full knowledge) of Him, the eyes of your understanding (heart, R.V.)

being (having been) enlightened (*photizo*, as in 3:9) that (to the end that) ye may know (*oida*=to know intuitively, as a matter of fact) what is ——” This wonderful request for wisdom, revelation, and enlightenment was made as a prerequisite to their apprehension of the things God had made known to Paul for them. It was not that they might receive some further revelation, but rather that their eyes should be opened to see the things now revealed in this epistle addressed to them.

This “spirit of wisdom and revelation” which Paul requested for the saints was “in the knowledge of Him”—that is, of the Father. As saints they did, of course, already know Him, but the desire expressed in this word “knowledge” (*epignosis*) is that they might have a fuller knowledge, or acknowledgement, of Him. The three items of the prayer which follow show that this fuller knowledge relates to the Father’s purposes, even that they might “know what is . . . His calling . . . His inheritance . . . His power.” It is clearly a definite initiation that is here besought for believers, even that their eyes might be enlightened by grace into God’s present purpose in His Son. This being so would it not be well for us to appropriate this prayer to ourselves, even to ask the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that it may, if He sees fit, be granted an answer in our individual case? Let us then, having bowed the knee, seek its answer as revealed in the writings of Paul contemporary therewith.

The first of the three things Paul requested that their hearts might be enlightened to know was—“what is the hope of His calling.” The calling wherewith a saint is called, and the hope for which he is to look, is no small item of God’s dealings with him; indeed, it is clear from the exhortation “to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called” (EPH. 4:1, R.V.) that a knowledge of one’s calling is essential in order to know the manner of life which is in accordance therewith. When Paul was among the Ephesians he would certainly have pointed them to that heavenly calling of which

the Gentiles were then made partakers, and to its hope of the Lord's coming, yet now in writing to them of this further revelation, "the dispensation of the mystery," he seeks that they may be enlightened as to "what is the hope of His calling!"

This word "calling" (*klesis*) is rendered "vocation" in Ephesians 4: 1, as signifying category of standing; its use in reference to social distinctions shows how in that connection a man's "calling" may consist of his being a servant (1 COR. 7: 20-21). "The calling of God" is a term used of "the election" given to Israel, for it was God who appointed them to the great office of being His peculiar earthly people (ROM. 11: 28-29). "The heavenly calling" is a name for that election who, in contrast to the earthly calling of Israel, are appointed of God to be blessed in that heavenly country, the heavenly Jerusalem (HEB. 3: 1; 12: 22; 13: 14). The prayer before us speaks of "His calling," for, like that given Israel, it is of the Father; but later in Ephesians, where the thought is our walk according thereto, it becomes "the calling wherewith ye were called," so that it is spoken of to us as "your calling" (4: 1-4, R.V.).

What then is this "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (PHIL. 3: 14) which is revealed in Paul's prison epistles? This prayer speaks of it as "the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (EPH. 1: 22-23), a calling which is identified with the Lord in that place where He is now already Head over all things. When the Lord ascended He "passed through the heavens" and was "made higher than the heavens" (HEB. 4: 14, 7: 26, R.V.), so that now He is "far above all heavens" (EPH. 4: 10); and in Ephesians it is said that the Father "hath raised us up together (*sunegairo*), and made us sit together (*sugkathizo*) in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (2: 6). All believers are "in Christ"; the distinction between their several callings lies in what they are made to be in Him. "The Church which is His Body" is identified with Christ in these two aspects of His exaltation which are not said to be given to those of other callings, even that we are raised and seated together with Him in the heavenly places.

This expression, "in the heavenly places" (*en tois epouraniois*), is peculiar to Ephesians; it differs from the usual term "in the heavens" in that the adjective "heavenly" (*epouranios*) is used in place of the noun "heaven" (*ouranos*). This adjective qualifies a thing as being "heavenly" in situation, origin, or character, in contrast to things "earthly" (*epigeios*) (1 COR. 15 : 40); in this expression, however, it is preceded by the article, the substantive being therefore implied. The consistent usage of the phrase in Ephesians determines that here it is not "things" that are implied, as in its use with the article elsewhere (JOHN 3 : 12); but it is definitely "places" or "realms," thus indicating a locality. The Scriptures speak of "the heavens" and "the heaven of heavens," and it would appear—by reason of the special use for which it is reserved—that this term "the heavenly places" signifies the highest realms of the heavens. The expression is in the dative plural; the dative here signifies "in" or "within," thus referring to existence in those places. It is there, "in the heavenly places," where the Father is, and where He has made the Son to sit at His right hand far above every name that is named (1 : 20-21)—it is there that He has made us, as members of the Church which is His Body, to sit together with Christ (2 : 6), and where we are blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings (1 : 3), then also beneath the Lord the high dignitaries of heaven, the principalities, powers, and world rulers, find their place there (3 : 10, 6 : 12, R.V.).

Within this high calling of "the Body" (*sussoma*, EPH. 3 : 6) the Gentile and Jew are united in absolute equality, every difference which elsewhere had separated them being here taken away. This calling constitutes "one new man" (*kainos*, new in reference to kind—that is, different) which the Lord has created of the twain—that is, of the Gentiles who "once were far off" and of the Jews "that were nigh": "having reconciled them both in one body unto God through the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (EPH. 2 : 11-16). This equal blessing of the Gentiles and Jews in the Church

which is His Body is a contrast to the standing of the Gentiles blessed in other callings; for even in the heavenly Jerusalem, the Bride, the name of Israel is predominant (REV. 21:10-14). When "the hope of Israel" was alone in prospect the Gentiles were blessed as partakers in Israel's spiritual things, like a branch grafted into a tree which was not primarily its own; the "decrees" (*dogma*) that "were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem" (ACTS 15:1-16:5) then served to differentiate between believing Jews and Gentiles, but now the calling of the Church His Body has been revealed, within which the Lord "hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances (*dogma*)" (EPH. 2:14-15).

The calling of the Church which is His Body is distinct from the heavenly and earthly callings associated with Israel's name. The place of its blessings is higher, for as seated together with Christ it is far above the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (EPH. 1:20-23, 3:10, 6:12, R.V.), whereas those of the heavenly Jerusalem are associated with the Lord in a realm which is only so far as "to an innumerable company of angels" (HEB. 12:22). The Body of Christ is now being built up "into a fullgrown man (*aner*=male, or husband) (EPH. 4:12-13, R.V.); the heavenly Jerusalem, on the other hand, is to appear as "a bride adorned for her husband" (REV. 21:2). Those blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" are said to have been chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (EPH. 1:3-4); but the nations which the Lord will separate at His coming are to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them "from the foundation of the world" (MAT. 25:34). Paul's later epistles reveal this calling of the "one new man" in the dispensation of the mystery, an economy not promised before, but these epistles do not mention the new covenant promised before to Israel, whereunder both the heavenly and earthly callings associated with their name will be received.

This high calling is given us of God in superabounding grace. The very word "grace" (*charis*) is used in Ephesians in a fuller manner than elsewhere; only here in the New Testament is grace linked with "glory" and "riches" (1 : 5-7), and even the latter word is intensified by "exceeding" when used to describe God's attitude towards us when we shall be seated together with Christ in the heavenly places. "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus" (2 : 7). The verb "to grace," or "highly favour" (*charitoo*), occurs but twice in the New Testament: first of Mary, who was highly favoured to be the vessel chosen to prepare the Lord's earthly body (LUKE 1 : 28), and then in Ephesians of us who have been chosen to constitute the Church which is His Body, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath highly favoured us in the Beloved" (1 : 6).

Paul's request was "that ye may know what is the hope of His calling" (EPH. 1 : 18). The One Body is the calling wherewith we are called, but what is its hope? Here it is termed "the hope of His calling," even that we should know what this hope means to Him; but when the thought is our walk according to this calling, then we read, "ye are called in one hope of your calling" (EPH. 4 : 4). The Lord Jesus Christ is our hope: "Christ Jesus our hope" (1 TIM. 1 : 1, R.V.), "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (COL. 1 : 27); and He is the hope of all the redeemed; all look for Him, and when He is seen every expectation will be gloriously fulfilled. The hope of a calling, however, has the specific thought of when and where the Lord will be seen; as the calling is blessed, so, of necessity, is the time and place in which its expectation for Him will be realized. Israel's calling pertains to the earth, and so their hope of seeing the Lord will be realized at His coming (*parousia* and *apokalupsis*). Then also the heavenly calling associated with Israel look to meet the Lord as He comes from on high (1 THESS. 4 : 17). During Paul's earlier ministry "the hope of Israel" (ACTS 28 : 20, 26 : 6-7) was in

prospect; thus at that time it was for the Lord's coming that the saints were directed to look.

The hope of the calling of the One Body would appear from Paul's prayer to be something other than the Lord's coming. In the first place his request was not that the saints might know somewhat more concerning a hope with which they were already acquainted, but it was that they might know the more fundamental matter, even "what is the hope." The Ephesians certainly knew of the hope of the Lord's return, for Paul had, as we have noticed, instructed them fully in all things as spoken during his earlier ministry; but this prayer suggests that a hope was now revealed which had not been previously known by them. Then also, before the saints could know "what is the hope," it was essential that they might first be granted a spirit of wisdom and revelation, and enlightenment of heart. Such a prerequisite was not, however, necessary in order that the hope of the Lord's coming might be known; indeed, the fact of His coming had been heralded publicly since Peter opened the testimony to Israel as recorded in the opening chapters of the Acts. The word "know" in this request "that ye may know what is the hope of His calling" is not *ginosko* (to get to know by experience or research) but *oida* (to know as a matter of fact), which suggests that this hope is not to be seen by searching the Scriptures only, but that this searching must be aided by a God-given insight. We here set forth what we feel assured is the hope of the One Body; but let the reader himself be confirmed as to whether or not this is so, by prayer that enlightenment may be given in his searching of the Scriptures.

The peculiar blessings of the Church which is His Body is that God has identified us together with Christ in His being raised and seated in the heavenly places (EPH. 2:6). The word "raised together" (*sunegeiro*) occurs only in Paul's prison epistles; it refers not alone to our identification with Christ in His resurrection (COL. 2:12), but it also bridges the gap between our being quickened and seated together with Him in the

heavenly places (EPH. 2:6). Paul bids us, therefore, to seek the things that are above, even where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and adds to this exhortation the statement of our hope: "When Christ, Who is our Life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with (*sun*) Him be manifested in glory" (COL. 3:4, R.V.). This word "to manifest" or "appear" (*phaneroo*) is used of the Lord's appearances after His resurrection (MARK 16:12-14), and of His coming again (1 JOHN 2:28; 1 PET. 5:4), when those who have that hope shall see Him as He is (1 JOHN 3:2). Paul, however, does not here refer only to seeing the Lord at His manifestation, but to something more, even that we shall be identified with Him in His manifestation. This high calling has, therefore, a distinctive threefold identification with Christ; its blessing is that it is raised and seated together with Him in the heavenly places, and its peculiar hope is that of being "manifested together with Him in glory." The term "in glory" is sometimes used in a local sense as indicating not only a state but a place—"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory" (PHIL. 4:19); and it may be that "in glory" here refers not only to how but also to where we shall be manifested together with Him.

The Pastoral epistles make a special use of the noun "manifestation" or "appearance" (*epiphaneia*). This word occurs once elsewhere—"The manifestation of His coming" (2 THES. 2:8, R.V.). In these epistles, however, it occurs five times, and that always concerning the Lord Himself—once of His past appearance (2 TIM. 1:10), the rest of His future appearing. "Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (TIT. 2:13, R.V.); one thing may be intended here—"the blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory." That glory will certainly appear at the Lord's coming, but it is not necessarily confined to that event; we are blessed in the place where the Lord is now. It follows, then, that His glory will one day appear to us there, and that before He leaves to manifest Himself to this world.

The remaining references refer to the need of vigilance until that day (1 TIM. 6:13-14; 2 TIM. 4:1, R.V.), and to the crown of righteousness to be awarded unto such as love His appearing (2 TIM. 4:8).

Paul does not mention the Lord's *parousia* or *apokalypsis* in his later epistles. As these epistles are concerned with the revelation of the dispensation of the mystery it would appear that this omission of any reference to the Lord's coming is not due solely to the fact that it has been postponed pending the resumption of God's dealings with Israel nationally, but it is also because the One Body, which is being called out under this dispensation of the mystery, and during this period of Israel's dispersion, has another hope. The Church which is His Body is in God's purpose seated together with Christ in the heavenly places; there will, therefore, be an occasion when it shall be with Him in that place where He is now exalted, and for this to be it is not necessary for Him to leave that place, as it is in the case of those callings whose blessings pertain to realms other than where the Lord is at present.

The one place where the Lord's coming might appear to be implied in Paul's prison epistles is Philippians 3:20, but this depends on how the term *ex hou* is to be understood in this occurrence. The Authorized and Revised versions regard it as adverbial—"from whence": "for our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour" (R.V.). If, however, the relative is used in its primary sense then it agrees in number with the singular "citizenship" and not with the plural "heavens": "Our commonwealth exists in the heavens, out of which commonwealth also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." This would suggest that it is from the standpoint of our citizenship that we shall see the Lord, which citizenship has its existence in the heavens.

There is considerable circumstantial evidence in Paul's later epistles which tends to confirm the fact that the hope of the One Body is distinct from that of the Lord's coming. This is seen in the general reversal

which was brought about in the life of the saints by the change to this expectation for another hope. Paul did not now include himself as before among those who might be alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord (1 THESS. 4 : 17), but instead he looked forward to certain martyrdom (2 TIM. 4 : 6), and sought if by any means he might attain unto "the out resurrection out from among the dead" (PHIL. 3 : 11). Then in addressing the saints Paul could no longer speak of matters respecting their hope as something they knew perfectly (1 THESS. 5 : 1-2), but he, as we have seen, prayed that their understandings might be enlightened to know what their hope was (EPH. 1 : 18). Moreover, instead of exhorting them that it was well to refrain from marriage in view of the possible nearness of the Lord's return (1 COR. 7 : 25-29), he now advised the younger ones to marry and appointed that the leaders among the saints should be married men (1 TIM. 3 : 2, 5 : 14).

Our hope of the Lord's appearing is a present hope. Israel's apostasy resulted in His return being deferred, but, nevertheless, we are to "live . . . looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (TIT. 2 : 12-13). There is nothing conditional respecting the consummation of the present dispensation; the fulfilment of the purposes of the mystery is not stated to be made dependent upon any unanimity among the saints in their acknowledgement of this revelation. Then also there is no specific evil sign foretold to indicate that the end of this period is near, as there is in the case of that future time which will issue in the Lord's coming (MAT. 24 : 15 ; 2 THESS. 2 : 8); the last days as foreseen in Paul's later epistles are referred to only in general terms, showing what was to be the trend of man's misdoings (2 TIM. 3 : 1-5). There are, however, many things taking place in our days by which we may well infer that the time when God will again deal with Israel as a nation is fast approaching.

The Church which is His Body is now growing: "The building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain

unto the unity of the faith, and (even) of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (EPH. 4 : 12-13, R.V.). This building up will continue until this calling attains its coming of age, and it is towards this end that the growth of the individual members in the fuller knowledge of the Son of God now contributes. Pending that time we are "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (EPH. 1 : 13-14, 4 : 30); but when that time shall come then the Lord will "present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (EPH. 5 : 27).

Paul's prison epistles not only reveal the calling of the One Body and its hope, but they also set forth the distinctive manner of life which should be theirs who are called with this calling (EPH. 4 : 1). This walk differs in several important respects from that which was the rule under the new covenant administration during Acts, and which will again be in order when God's dealings with Israel are resumed. Spiritual gifts, as healing, tongues, and miracles, which accompany the preaching when Israel are in the forefront of God's purposes, find no mention in connection with the dispensation of the mystery. Paul himself was in full possession of these gifts up to the time when Israel were set aside (ACTS 28 : 1-10), but after that juncture his healing ministry is shown to have ceased (2 TIM. 4 : 20; PHIL. 2 : 25-30). Through not recognizing the distinctive nature of Paul's prison ministry many take the Corinthian epistles as their guide for to-day. The expediency of adopting only some commands and of passing by others, which such a practice renders inevitable, cannot but prove detrimental to a believer's attitude toward the Scriptures. Consistency demands that all the commands, if they apply to ourselves to-day, should be capable of bearing the same emphasis; this equal compliance with all the rules is not, however,

possible; for many of the circumstances—as for instance that presented in 1 Corinthians 14: 20-33—do not now obtain under the present dispensation of the mystery.

The assurance of a truth is given upon believing and not before. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is” (HEB. 11 : 6). The man who comes to God believing that He is will certainly receive the assurance of the fact; but it is not man’s place to presume that he may reverse this divine order by demanding that before he will attempt to come to God he must first assure himself that He is. Then as to the truth of salvation it is written —“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (ROM. 8 : 16); but this wonderful God-given certitude is experienced upon believing on the Lord unto salvation, for it cannot, by reason of its nature, be granted before. The sinner must come to the Saviour no matter how foolish the sceptic may declare such faith to be; but once he has come then he receives this deep heart assurance of sins forgiven, and acceptance in Christ, which gives a settled peace despite the opposition of science falsely so-called. So it is with the dispensation of the mystery: if a believer acknowledges it, then the full assurance of understanding is given; if, however, he but regards this truth as a matter for discussion, and speculates on the probability or otherwise of there having been given Paul such a revelation, then he will but tread an endless circle, ever returning to the same point, never going on into the fulness of truth.

That which is spoken of Christ in respect to a truth is ever its most plainly stated feature; and when this is seen and believed then the details of the truth may be filled in afterwards. The statement “Christ died for us” (ROM. 5 : 8) is explicit, and after that all-important fact is believed and confessed then it is that we may apprehend those many aspects of His death as set forth in the first eight chapters of Romans. Then the words “Because I live, ye shall live also” (JOHN 14 : 10) show clearly the reason for the believer’s certainty of life to come, all the many questions regarding that future

life being but incidental to this great basic fact. Thus it is with regard to the dispensation of the mystery; there is the statement, so glorious in its plainness, that God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and that "when Christ our Life shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory." This is for us to believe and praise God for; and when we have thus made the truth our own then the many details and distinctions of this our calling and hope may in time be shown us.

The dispensation of the mystery revealed through Paul the prisoner thus made known this calling of the Church which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, and its hope of the manifestation in glory. The present period, which had been foreseen only as an interval in God's dealings with Israel as a nation, a pause during which the callings which before were in view would cease to be in the forefront of His purposes, is now shown to be occupied with the growth and completion of this high calling, never promised before, which is to show forth His glory in the heavenly places. But why is it that we should have been appointed to so great a calling? The answer is found in Him and not in ourselves; it is all "according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace" (EPH. 1 : 5-6). Abraham was required to believe God concerning the blessings given him, and not to question why he should be blessed above all before him. Israel were separated from among the other nations to be "Israel My glory," and not by reason of any virtue of their own. So with ourselves: it is for us to believe God concerning these all spiritual blessings in Christ, and to rejoice that it is for His glory in the heavenly places that He has so highly blessed us. Let us then render to Him that ascription of praise with which this glorious revelation is introduced—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (EPH. 1 : 3).

JOHN

“John . . . should go . . . unto
the circumcision”

Gal. 2 : 9.

JOHN AN APOSTLE OF THE
CIRCUMCISION

HIS GOSPEL

HIS EPISTLES

THE REVELATION

JOHN AN APOSTLE OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

JOHN was one of the Twelve whom the Lord ordained to be with Him in view of the testimony to Israel. Peter, as we have seen, was appointed chief of the Twelve; he took the leading part in all things relating to their distinctive ministry to the nation, and in this John had a special place with him. John was Peter's companion in witness during the beginning of the latter period of their ministry as traced in the opening chapters of Acts, and many years afterward these two were together at Jerusalem in association with James the Lord's brother as recorded in Galatians 2. This special companionship between Peter and John is seen during their earlier ministry; they were the two commissioned to prepare the passover (LUKE 22 : 8), for the Lord in sending forth His own frequently appointed that they should go in pairs (MARK 6 : 7 ; LUKE 10 : 1 ; 19 : 29); and at the Resurrection they were the disciples who ran to the empty sepulchre (JOHN 20 : 1-10). Then also Peter and John with James were chosen from among the Twelve to be with the Lord at the raising of Jairus' daughter, and at His Transfiguration (LUKE 8 : 51, 9 : 28), and during His agony in the garden He caused that they should accompany Him the farthest; then it was that these three, with Andrew also, asked the Lord privately concerning the time of His coming (MARK 14 : 33, 13 : 3).

The ministry of John as one of the Twelve has already been before us, for it was included in our consideration of their distinctive collective ministry. John's association with the other members of the Twelve began with the baptism of John the Baptist (ACTS 1 : 21-22), and after the Lord had appointed them he had part in their commission to go unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, proclaiming "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (MAT. 10 : 5-7). Then in the latter period of their ministry, as recorded in Acts, John shared in the testimony to

that generation of the Jews that God had raised up Jesus as the Christ to sit upon the throne of David. As a minister of the circumcision (GAL. 2 : 9), John's calling and hope is connected with Israel; the Lord promised the Twelve that "in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (MAT. 19 : 28). In the heavenly Jerusalem John's name is among the twelve inscribed on the twelve foundations (REV. 21 : 14).

John had, however, a ministry which was his peculiar privilege, and so, as in the case of Peter, his ministry calls for a consideration separate from that of the Twelve in general. John's independent Ministry is seen in the scriptures it was given him to write. In these he ministered beyond the limits of that generation of Israel; for his gospel has the world in view, and the Revelation concerns a time yet to come. This consideration of John's ministry has been reserved until now for two reasons: First, because his gospel presents the Lord Jesus Christ and His ministry from that aspect which is not restricted to those purposes wherein Israel and their Kingdom have the precedence, but which extends to the needs of all men during the present period of Israel's dispersion. Secondly, because the Revelation constitutes the sequel to the ministries to Israel which have been before our notice, for here is foreseen the time for the eventual realization of the hope of Israel which was preached from the days of the Baptist to the end of Acts, but which is for the present deferred pending the resumption of God's dealings with Israel.

HIS GOSPEL.

The distinctive purpose of the gospel of John has already been before our notice in considering the ministries of the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ, and Peter. This purpose is clearly stated in the gospel itself, "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is

the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (20 : 31). John's gospel thus treats of Who the Lord is, even the Son of God, whereas the other gospels deal mainly with the Lord in His capacity of a minister to the circumcision. Then also this gospel does not concentrate like the others on how that generation of Israel rejected the Lord, but it bears testimony to the fact that many individuals believed on Him through His words and works, and through the witness borne to Him by others.

John, as being the writer of this gospel, had a ministry which was beyond the bounds of his apostleship to the circumcision, a word to the world and to saints which is not restricted to the dispensation under which he was first called. John's gospel is, as we have seen, written from the point of view of the needs of all men, especially now that God's conditional dealings with Israel are for the time being settled by the statement—"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (1 : 11). This gospel ministers to us to-day in two main ways. First—The Lord is presented to all men as the way of life, as seen in verses such as John 3:16 which have been used so wonderfully in bringing sinners to the Saviour. Secondly—The Lord is presented to the believer, manifesting the glory of Who He is that we may get to know Him the more fully. The growth of the One Body to-day is "unto . . . the knowledge (*epignosis*) of the Son of God" (EPH. 4 : 13 , R.V.), and John's gospel by thus revealing the Lord Jesus Christ in all the wonder of His person, ministers to this our growth.

It is precious that John should be the disciple inspired to write this full and glorious presentation of the Son of God, for he was one who knew the Lord intimately when He tabernacled among men. John wrote his gospel under the beautiful title "The disciple whom Jesus loved" (13 : 23, 20 : 2, 21 : 7, 20-24). The Lord loved all his own that were with Him in the world (13 : 1), but John was especially singled out and given the privileged position of reclining on Jesus' breast at meals, there enjoying an intimacy with the Lord which even Peter

did not share (13 : 23-26). John's love to the Lord was, therefore, perceptive; he it was who first recognised that One standing by the lake-side, for he said, "It is the Lord." Peter's love, on the other hand, was demonstrative, for on hearing John's word he immediately cast himself into the sea in his fervour to reach his risen Lord (21 : 1-8). John, as having this understanding love to the Lord, was given the precious privilege of exhorting believers to love the Lord Jesus, and because of this to love each other, and in his gospel and epistles this love to the Lord is inseparably linked with the thought of understanding Who He is.

Because John in his gospel and epistles so set forth the love of God it does not follow that he was effeminate; indeed, the facts would suggest that the reverse was the case. He and his brother James were surnamed "Boanerges" by the Lord, which is "Sons of thunder" (MARK 3 : 17). Whatever that may imply it does not savour of timidity; that they were men of resolution is evident from their suggestion that fire should be called from heaven to consume the Lord's rejectors. Then John was among the number who made bold to forbid those whose actions they disapproved (LUKE 9 : 54-56). But if John was brave by nature he certainly grew more so in company with the Lord, as witness the council's impression—"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were illiterate and unprofessional men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (ACTS 4 : 13).

HIS EPISTLES.

The presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ in John's epistles is like that in his gospel. There is the same use of the Lord's titles "the Word" and "the Saviour of the world" (JOHN 1 : 1, 4 : 42; 1 JOHN 1 : 1, 4 : 14), and the same frequent reference to Him as the "Son." Then also John's gospel and epistles are similar in subject and tone; there is the same world-inclusive aspect of redemption

in view—"He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (JOHN 1:29, 11:52; 1 JOHN 2:2); and the like emphasis on the new commandment of love (JOHN 13:34; 1 JOHN 2:7-8; 2 JOHN 4-6). John's gospel and epistles are, however, different in this, that his gospel was not addressed to believers only, for it is said that these things were written that the reader might believe on the Son of God unto life eternal (20:31); his epistles, on the other hand, were sent definitely to believers, the first to a company who knew the truth (2:21, 5:13), the second to "the elect lady," and the third to believing "Gaius."

John's first epistle deals with themes which to the saint are both precious and solemn; there is the precious assurance of life in Christ through believing God's testimony concerning Him, and the solemn responsibility of personal love, purity, and faithfulness. This epistle speaks of what a believer is, as witness the beautiful sevenfold occurrence of the present indicative, first person plural, of the verb to be—*esmen*, "we are" (2:5, 3:2, 19, 4:6, 17, 5:19, 20). Then John makes frequent use in this epistle of a group of words the very tabulation of which serves to indicate his subject. There are those which concern the world of evil from which the believer is called: "world" (*kosmos*) occurs 23 times, "liar" (*pseustes*) five, "sin" the noun (*hamartia*) 17, and the verb (*hamartano*) 10. There are the words of deliverance, such as "to believe" (*pisteuo*), which occurs 10 times, "life" (*zoe*) 13, "light" (*phos*) six, "witness" the noun (*marturia*) six, the verb (*martureo*) seven, while the verb "to beget" (*gennao*) 10, is here used only in connection with the thought of being born of God. Then also there are those referring to the believer's privilege and responsibility as "to abide" (*meno*) occurring 23 times, "to overcome" (*nikao*) six, "to know" (*ginosko*) 24, and "commandment" (*entole*) 14 times.

While John speaks in these epistles of many things applicable to believers at all times, as for instance "the blood of Jesus Christ," the glorious privilege of being

"in Him," and of getting "to know Him," yet he speaks also of things which show that these epistles relate primarily to believers dealt with under the economy which obtained following the Lord's ascension and which will again be operative immediately preceding His return. These things, which thus indicate the place of John's epistles, are common to the earlier epistles of Paul and the epistles of the circumcision—namely, the expectation for the Lord's coming (*parousia*) (2: 28), the fact that the time was regarded as short (2: 18), and spirit utterance. That this last was so is evident in that John warned them not to believe every spirit and gave, like Paul in 1 Corinthians 12: 3, a test with which they could differentiate whether the spirit was of God or of evil (1 JOHN 4: 1-3). This differentiation between spirits can be made only at such times when God gives His own utterance by spirit possession—namely, during that period introduced at Pentecost (ACTS 2: 1-4; 1 COR. 12) and again in the last days before the day of the Lord come (JOEL 2: 28-32). This form of utterance is nowhere mentioned in connection with the dispensation of the mystery; hence John's test is not now of use to distinguish between the spirits, though it is invaluable as a means to demonstrate that the spirits with which present-day mediums make contact are evil.

The sign John gave to prove that the time was short was the presence of antichrists: "Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour" (2: 18, R.V.). The Lord foretold that this should be an indication that His coming was near: "Many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (MAT. 24: 5). John's epistles are the only Scriptures where the actual term "antichrist" is used (1 JOHN 2: 18, 22, 4: 3; 2 JOHN 7); he was privileged especially to set forth the Lord Himself and so it was given him to denounce His impostors. Then also John was an apostle of the circumcision and thus gave this warning, for the deception of

antichrist will no doubt chiefly assail Israel. The coming of Messiah is the hope for which they look, and seeing they have rejected the true Messiah they will be ready dupes of the false, as witness the Lord's words to the Jews who were rejecting Him: "I am come in My Father's Name, and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (JOHN 5 : 43).

THE REVELATION.

When considering the Lord's "Prophecies" we saw how He foretold that three distinct periods would divide the time between His ascension and return; the first and last being especially concerned with His dealings with Israel, the intervening period being a pause in those dealings. The first of these periods has been before us in considering the ministries exercised during the days covered by Acts. Peter at Pentecost opened the testimony of those days by declaring that "this" gift of the Spirit was "that" which Joel said should be poured forth in the last days before "the day of the Lord" (ACTS 2 : 14-20)—the day of the Lord being the great occasion foreseen in the prophets when the Lord returns to Olivet as King, to establish that Kingdom which shall never be destroyed and to cause the house of Jacob to possess their possessions (ZECH. 14 : 1-9; OBAD. 15-17, R.V.).

The day of the Lord which the gifts at Pentecost were said to betoken did not, however, come; instead Israel's rejection of the risen Messiah brought upon them the present period of their dispersion and of Jerusalem's desolation. God's present purpose in Christ during this pause in His dealings with Israel is, as we have seen, revealed in Paul's latter ministry, even that He is now calling out "the Church which is His Body," an election wherein the Jew has no special privilege, and whose blessings and hope are altogether distinct from, and greater than, anything promised to Israel. The hope of the Lord's return and the restoration of the Kingdom

to Israel as anticipated during Acts thus gave place for the time being to the outworking of the dispensation of the mystery; nevertheless that hope is again to be in prospect in the third period of which the Lord spoke, for then the time for its realization will have arrived.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 : 1) which John received is a detailed programme of what is to take place in that third period, and a description of the Kingdom which shall then be established. This is evident in that Revelation is wholly concerned with things which the Lord, in His prophecy on Olivet, said should be in the days immediately preceding His coming and Kingdom. John states: "I was (became) in the spirit on the Lord's day," "A door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter. Straightway I was (became) in the spirit" (1 : 10, 4 : 1-2, R.v.). Thus John was transported in spirit to see things which shall take place hereafter, in heaven and on earth, in the day of the Lord. That day of the Lord is not only the time when the Lord establishes His earthly Kingdom but from Peter's epistles we learn that the day also embraces the occasion when the present heavens and earth pass away (2 PET. 3 : 10). The Revelation, therefore, spans a time beginning from the things which shall betoken the Lord's return and extending to the final passing away of this heaven and earth some thousand years later (chapters 20 and 21).

The Revelation is addressed collectively to the seven churches which are in Asia: "What thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia" (1 : 4, 11). The book in its entirety thus treats of things in which all these churches are concerned, while in chapters 2 and 3 a word is spoken to each church individually according to its special need. The seven churches are referred to as being coexistent (1 : 11, 2 : 23); and the time when they thus exist must, of necessity, be the time when the circumstances here foreseen will obtain; even in that end time. Thus,

whatever application these seven epistles may have had to churches in John's day their full interpretation belongs to that period immediately preceding the Lord's return to earth. That the circumstances of the churches addressed in the seven epistles are those of the great trial foreseen in the book as a whole, is evident, for to Philadelphia it is written—"Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to try them which dwell upon the earth" (8 : 10, R.V. marg.).

This programme of events provided for the churches of the last days reveals what shall be the particulars of that time. The temple with its altar is here seen standing once more, and, moreover, it is to be divinely recognized, for it is spoken of as "the temple of God" (REV. 11 : 1-2; 2 THES. 2 : 4). "The temple which is in heaven" (REV. 14 : 17, 15 : 5) is so qualified to distinguish it from this on earth, for into the court of this temple the nations shall be given access (11 : 1-2). Jerusalem is referred to as "the holy city" and "the great city"; indeed, so great will it be that seven thousand perish in an earthquake destroying a tenth of the city (11 : 1-18). Then also Babylon will have become the metropolis of the world (chapters 17 and 18).

We have seen how at that time the "gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come" (MAT. 24 : 14, R.V.). Thus the Divine titles in Revelation are those which especially relate to the earthly Kingdom. "The God of heaven" (REV. 11 : 18; 16 : 11) occurs only here in the New Testament; in the Old Testament this title is connected with His dealings from heaven among the nations (e.g., 2 CHRON. 36 : 28; DAN. 2 : 18, 19). "Jesus Christ . . . the ruler of the kings of the earth" (1 : 5), "The Lord of the earth" (11 : 4, R.V.), and "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19 : 16), are titles connected with the earthly aspect of the Kingdom. Then also there are those which show that He is the promised Heir of David's throne: "I am

the root and the offspring of David," "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," "He that hath the key of David" (3 : 7, 5 : 5, 22 : 16).

While this gospel of the Kingdom is then to be preached among all nations, yet in this purpose the Jew will still retain the prior place. The churches to whom Revelation is addressed are essentially Jewish, for they are warned of "the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (2 : 9, 3 : 9). In the temple of God the same distinction between Jews and Gentiles will be made as in the temple of old, the Gentiles being allowed access only so far as "the court which is without the temple" (11 : 2). This difference between Jews and Gentiles is retained also in the saints who come out of the great tribulation, for those of Israel are numbered as an hundred and forty and four thousand, whereas those of the nations are left unnumbered (7 : 1-17).

The prophecy of Revelation repeatedly alternates between first, a vision of things transpiring in heaven, and then the effects of those things upon earth. Heaven will then no longer be silent but shall speak; and the things meted out, awful though they be, are righteous, and are declared so by the host of heaven and by the redeemed. Wickedness will then have come to a head, and these plagues preparatory to the Lord's coming will be inflicted that men may repent. "And the rest of mankind, which were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and the idols" etc. (9 : 20, R.V.). Thirteen times do we read of "them that dwell upon the earth"; twelve speaking of the deception and judgment into which they shall fall—and one of "the everlasting gospel" which an angel is to proclaim unto every nation. Such will be the state of mankind that this gospel will ask for little more than the acknowledgement of God as Creator: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (14 : 6-7).

The seven seals, trumpets, and vials unfold the programme of the terrors to be brought upon the earth. The manner in which they do so may be likened to the use of a microscope. A microscope is employed first with low-power lenses to view the object in the large, then the power is increased until the greatest magnification is concentrated upon the chief point of interest. The seven seals cover the entire period of these terrors (6 : 1-17); the first four, with their wars and famines, treat of the time which the Lord termed "the beginning of sorrows" preparatory to the great tribulation (REV. 6 : 1-8; MAT. 24 : 6-8); the sixth, with its darkened sun and moon, brings in the time "immediately after the tribulation of those days" when "they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven" (REV. 6 : 12-17; MAT. 24 : 29-31). The seven trumpets (8 : 1; 11 : 19) go over the days of these terrors in greater detail; the seventh again brings up to the time when "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ" (11 : 15-18). The seven vials (15 : 1-16 : 21), in which "is finished the wrath of God," are entirely concentrated upon the actual time of the great tribulation, for the first brought affliction "upon the men which had the mark of the beast"; the beast did not arise, nor did men receive his mark, until Satan was cast out of heaven at the beginning of the final three-and-a-half years (12 : 13-13 : 18). The seventh vial again converges upon the occasion of the Lord's return, when a great shaking shall change the very face of the earth (16 : 17-21).

This future period will evidently be comparatively short. The Revelation is concerned with "the things which must shortly, or speedily, come to pass" (1 : 1, 22 : 6); and uses such expressions as "Rest yet for a little season" (6 : 11), "There shall be delay no longer" (10 : 6, R.V., marg.). Then the various subdivisions of that period are brief, such as "the hour and day and month and year" (9 : 15, R.V.), "forty and two months" (11 : 2, 13 : 5), "five months" (9 : 5, 10), "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (11 : 3; 12 : 6), "ten days"

(2 : 10), and "one hour" (18 : 17). The shortness of that time is not in the sense in which a thousand years is as a day with God, but it is shortness in the sense in which man understands the term, for when it is said that the devil had "but a short time" the reference is to the three-and-a-half years prior to his being bound (12 : 12-14).

That the period will be about twenty years seems evident from the prophecy of Daniel, 9 : 24-27: "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks" (verse 25). From the commandment to build Jerusalem unto the dedication of the temple was forty-nine years, hence the meaning of the "seven weeks" ($7 \times 7 = 49$). At this dedication Israel were restored after the period of desolations following the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar (2 CHRON. 36 : 13-21). "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city . . . to bring in everlasting righteousness . . . and to anoint the most Holy . . . And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off" (DAN. 9 : 24-26). Sixty-two of these seventy weeks were, therefore, completed between the dedication of the temple and the Crucifixion, thus leaving eight weeks—that is, fifty-six Jewish years of 360 days to cover the time from the Crucifixion to the eventual bringing in of the Kingdom. This prophecy foretold, however, that a pause would occur in the course of these weeks—even the present period of desolations introduced when Titus destroyed the temple: "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary . . . desolations are determined" (ver. 26). The time of God's dealings with Israel after the Crucifixion was about thirty-five years if reckoned to their setting aside in Acts 28, of forty years if it is to be reckoned to the actual destruction of the temple. Thus after the present interval of desolations has ended there remains of the fifty-six years only some sixteen or twenty-one to be fulfilled in God's dealings with Israel before the Kingdom shall come.

The clear understanding of the Revelation, and of such parallel prophecies as Daniel and Matthew 24, must necessarily belong primarily to the enlightened saints who shall live in that coming age. We can, however, see in outline the general sequence of events. The early phase of that time is termed "the beginning of sorrows," as we saw under the Lord's "Prophecies." Then the commencement of its last seven years will be marked by the making of a covenant with an evil one, but at the beginning of the final three-and-a-half years that evil one shall take away the daily sacrifice: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (DAN. 9:27). This event betokens the advent of "the great tribulation" (MAT. 24:15-29; MARK 13:19-24; REV. 7:14, R.V.); in heaven Michael—the great prince who stands for the children of Israel—and his angels shall prevail to cast the Devil and his angels out of heaven and down to earth (DAN. 12:1; REV. 12:7-17). Then the beast is to arise, whom all the world shall worship, having authority to continue throughout the term of the great tribulation, and to him it is given to make war with the saints and to overcome them (DAN. 7:25; REV. 13:1-10).

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (MAT. 24:29-30).

The Lord is then to come, and the hope of the Kingdom, foreseen by the prophets, preached by the Baptist, and which had subsequently been in prospect throughout the times of God's dealings with Israel, will then at last be realized. Then "shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed . . . it shall stand for ever" (DAN. 2:44); and it shall be said, "The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever," "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (REV. 11:15, 19:6). Then also will be the time

when Israel shall be delivered, and the saints shall be given the Kingdom: "The ancient of days came . . . and the time came that the saints possessed the Kingdom" (DAN. 7 : 18, 22, 27 ; 12 : 1).

At the Lord's coming there is to be a selective resurrection of the redeemed: "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus . . . they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (REV. 20 : 4-5). This resurrection is the first of the two here in view, one before and the other after the thousand years; not the first of all the resurrections—there was one company of saints raised after the Lord's resurrection (MAT. 27 : 52-53). The first resurrection referred to here is of those whose blessing it is to reign with Christ during the thousand years. Then also at the Lord's coming there is to be a judgment of the nations in respect to their entry or otherwise into the Kingdom (ISA. 66 : 15-18 ; MAT. 25 : 31-46 ; REV. 19 : 11-21).

The thousand years, or Millennium, will see the nations ruled in righteousness, the Devil having been put under arrest "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled" (REV. 20 : 1-3). At that time the full blessedness of the Kingdom will be centralized at Jerusalem; it is there "in all My holy mountain" that the lion shall eat straw like an ox, and the child shall play on the hole of the asp (ISA. 11 : 1-9). Those that escape the judgment at the Lord's coming are to be witnesses to the distant nations: "I will send those that escape of them unto the nations . . . that have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the nations" (ISA. 66 : 15-21, R.V.), Mankind, although given this great opportunity, is, however, to prove a failure; for "when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth . . . and they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed

the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (REV. 20 : 7-10).

The great white throne is then to be the judgment scene of "the rest of the dead"; this judgment is "according to their works," but the actual issue of life or death is dependent on their being found written in the book of life: "And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (REV. 20 : 5, 11-15, R.V.). With this event God's dispensations toward man end, heaven and earth pass away, and "a new heaven and a new earth" take their place (REV. 21 : 1). John sees there, in that new creation, the holy city new Jerusalem, and also the nations and kings of the earth who shall bring their glory and honour into it, and rejoice in the light thereof (REV. 21 and 22).

The New Testament Ministries will then have realized their several hopes—the calling of the Church which is His Body made known in Paul's later ministry having its blessings in the heavenly places; the callings heavenly and earthly, which are the expectation of the ministries concerned with God's dealings with Israel, finding their place in the new heaven and earth. And what shall the purpose of these things be? The Lord in His prayer for His own declared, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent" (JOHN 17 : 3). As this is to be the glorious occupation of all the redeemed throughout the ages to come, let us each, like Paul, even now seek "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (PHIL. 3 : 8).

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