

John - Commentaries by John Gifford Bellett

Short Meditations, Bethesda (5:1-16)

THE Lord is seen occasionally at Jerusalem, in John; but not so in the other Gospels. But unlike what He is in Galilee, where thousands followed Him, in Jerusalem He is a solitary man -as we may observe in John 2; 3; 5; 7; 9; 10.

At His last entrance into the city, I mean by the road from Jericho, through Bethany and the Mount of Olives, which is recorded by all the evangelists, I know He is followed by a multitude-but that is no exception to what we have observed, that He was a solitary man in Jerusalem; though in the midst of thousands, when in the parts of Galilee and around all the shores of the lake of Tiberias.

In John, too, the feasts are treated as though they were by-gone elements. They are spoken of much in the way that St. Paul in his epistles would speak of Mount Sinai or the legal ordinances. They are called, in this Gospel, " the feasts of the Jews "-chapters 2, 5, 6, 7 -save indeed in chapter 8:1, where the passover of that day is honored by our evangelist, as a divinely-instituted feast, because the Lord was then about to fulfill it, as the true paschal Lamb.

There are peculiarities in John, and very characteristic of this-that in John, the Lord is at the end of His question with the Jew, and is standing as among sinners, disowned by the world that was made by Him, and rejected by His people to whom He had offered Himself. See chapter 1:10, 11.

It is in perfect and consistent wisdom that the Spirit of God has not told us what feast this was which had now drawn the Lord to Jerusalem. It mattered not which of them it was; for He was about to show Himself in the city of the Jews, the city of the feasts and solemnities of that people, as One that would supersede them all, and all that belonged to them. So that, we have not only a feast there on this occasion, but we have the sabbath-day, and the religious rulers of the people, the temple, and this singular and wonderful ordinance of Bethesda, all before us in this scene.

This pool by the sheep-market at Jerusalem, or Bethesda, was a certain provision made in the grace of God in the behalf of His people at Jerusalem. The system established in Israel did not provide it. It was extraordinary and occasional-as the raising up of a judge or a prophet had been in earlier days, or the mission of an angel, now and again, as to a Gideon or a Manoah. So the stirring of this pool. But withal, it was a testimony to the fact, that there were resources of mercy and of power in the God of Israel for His people, beyond all that was then ordinarily dispensed to them. Its very name intimated this: Bethesda, " house of mercy." And as being this, it was a pledge to Israel of Messiah. It told of Him beforehand, as ordinances and prophets had done.

But-Jesus beside the pool of Bethesda, as we see in this chapter, is a sight that, in the spirit of Moses at the bush, we may well turn aside to see. If He had, of old, been reflected in that water, He stands there now to dry it up. Nay more, He stands in contrast with it.

This sight reminds me of the Epistle to the Hebrews. There the apostle sets the Lord Jesus beside the ordinances of the law, as here the Lord sets Himself beside the pool close by the sheep-market, which was as one of them. And the same thing takes place here in John 5 as in that Epistle.

There was a witness to Christ in each of these. Bethesda bore witness to Him; the ordinances of the law did the same. But, let Jesus stand beside the pool, or be brought beside the ordinances of the law, we shall find contrast to be as strong as similitude. We have but to listen to the Lord here, and to the Spirit in the apostle there, in order to learn this clearly and fully.

" Wilt thou be made whole?" was the only word which the Lord took with Him when He addressed the poor cripple at that place. Was he ready to put himself, just as he was, into His hand? Was he willing to be His debtor? Could he trust himself, with his need and infirmity, alone with Jesus? This was all. And surely this, in its simplicity, is in complete and full contrast with the cumbrous, weighty machinery of Bethesda. No rivalry, no delay, no uncertainty, no help sought and rendered, are here as they are there. Here with Christ it is, " Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life." It is, " Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." But neither of these voices, nor anything like them, is heard from the troubled bosom of that strange, mysterious water. The angel that stirred it at certain seasons had never awakened such sounds as these.

" Wilt thou be made whole?" Simple, and weighty, and full of consolation!

The Lord was then in Jerusalem. He was in the great center and representative of human religiousness, surrounded at that moment by its rich and various provisions. It was the sabbath. It was a feast-time. The city of solemnities was in one of its palmy hours. The temple was at hand, the Pharisees were around, and a great multitude of expectants and votaries gathered about the pool by the sheep-market, the ordinance or angelic ministry of Bethesda. In the midst of all this He stands. But it is as a new thing, another thing. He takes no notice of the feast-day, nor of the sabbath, nor of the temple. His words sound as though they pronounced the doom of all these. " Wilt thou be made whole?" was their funeral knell. The poor cripple whom they addressed may at once free himself whether of rivals or of friends. Those who might have struggled with him, or those who might have aided him, he may now equally overlook. And he need not wait. Delay and hope may be exchanged for present enjoyment. He need neither doubt nor tarry. Ordinances and angels, and helpers and rivals, delay and uncertainty, all were thus blessedly and gloriously disposed of by Jesus in his behalf. When Jesus appeared, when the Son of God stood beside this pool, the only question was, would the poor cripple leave all for Him, and in that way stand by and see the salvation of God.

What a word was this, in the midst of such a scene, and at such a moment! "Wilt thou be made whole?"

The poverty of the pool is exposed. It is seen to be but a "beggarly element." It has no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth. And after this same manner, the Spirit exposes "the worldly sanctuary," and all its provisions and services, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There the apostle, under the Holy Ghost, sets Jesus again beside Bethesda, beside the system of ordinances that had gone before, and exposes them all in their poverty and impotency. There had been a reflection of Christ in these ceremonies of the temple, as there had been in this water by the sheep-market; but the reflection has no substance-it was a shadow-and it was gone when the true light filled the place. Jesus alone is glorified. When the Spirit brings Him in, in that Epistle, He keeps Him in, saying of Him, " Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." And here, the Lord Himself speaks to the poor cripple of nothing but of His own healing power: " Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." He was to carry that which once, while he was hanging over the pool, bore him. He needed nothing else. He knew the healing of the Son of God, and he was free.

Thus it might have been with him. He represents this to us. But, perhaps, he was but an unconscious type of the way of the Son of God with sinners. For, personally, he does not seem to enter into the scene. Instead of being abstracted and fixed by the Lord, instead of looking up in the Stranger's face with wonder and delight at the words addressed to him, and at once transferring himself, just as he was, in all his sorrow and need, into His hand, He talks of

his present condition. Natural this is, I know; done every day; the common way of man. We need not wonder at it, nor that this man was afterward found in the temple, instead of being, like the Samaritan leper of Luke 17, at the feet of his Deliverer. These are but the ways and workings of the legal, religious mind, whether in Judea or in Christendom; for it has no ear for the proposals of grace. And again I say, we need not wonder at this one man, this cripple that was healed, when we see at that moment " a great multitude of impotent folk " lingering round that uncertain, disappointing pool, though the Son of God was abroad in the land, carrying with Him and in Him salvation without money and without price, without doubt or delay, for all who would come to Him; and that, too, in defiance of all hindrance or rivalry, and independent of all help or countenance.

All this reads us a lesson. Indeed it does. The pool thickly frequented, Jesus passing by unheeded! The pool sought unto, while Jesus has to seek, and propose Himself! What a picture of the religion of the heart of man! Ordinances, with all their cumbrous machinery, waited on; the grace of God that brings salvation slighted! or at least this grace has to propose itself, to be preached and pressed, like Jesus at Bethesda, while these ordinances, like that pool, are crowded by willing votaries every day.

But further. This pool has its neighborhood, as well as itself, for our inspection; the scene has its accompaniments or its accidents for our further instruction.

We read here, "And on the same day was the sabbath."

In the other Gospels, when the Lord is challenged for doing His work on such a day, He answers either from the case of David eating the show-bread; or from the priests doing work in the temple; or from a word of the prophets, " I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" or from the fact that they themselves, His accusers, would lead out their ass or their ox, on the sabbath, to watering. But here, on this occasion, in John's Gospel, being challenged on this same ground of healing on such a day, He says, " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Wondrous sentence! But let me first notice how characteristic of John it is. The Lord does not here, as in the other Gospels, on like occasions, as we have just seen, put Himself in company with David, or with the priests, or with the words of the prophets, or with the ways, the common accredited ways of men, but with God. It is not what David had once done, nor what the priests would do, nor what men, even His accusers themselves, were doing every day; but what the Father had ever been doing in this needy, ruined world, that the Lord pleads as the standard of His actings. And on the distinguished occasion then before Him, restoring the cripple at the pool of Bethesda, He had given a sample of this.

This is full of character. But surely, it is full of wonder too. " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Man at the beginning forfeited the sabbath. By sinning he broke the rest of creation. He lost the garden, and became a drudge in the earth, that he might get bread by sweat of face, and live. But when man thus lost his rest, the Lord God left His, and at once began to work again.

He had hallowed the seventh day, in memory of His having finished His creation-work. He rested then. And having rested, He enjoyed His rest, walking with the creature whom His hand had made in His own image, after His likeness, in the garden which He had formed and furnished for him. But when sin entered, and the creation-rest was gone, the Lord God not only began at once to work, but to work for His self-ruined creature-as we read, " The Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them," clothed the man and the woman, who had now reduced themselves to the condition of guilty, exposed sinners.

Wondrous display of God! The glorious framer of the heavens and the earth, the One whose fingers had just garnished the sky above us, and whose creatures were filling and furnishing the ground we tread on, now turns His hand (to His praise be it remembered forever) to make a covering for a sinner. God in grace, the Father of our Lord Jesus, thus began to work. And so, onward through Old Testament days, He was active in love, showing mercy. He was not enjoying His rest as Creator of a finished work, but working, in grace, in the midst of ruins, on new-creation principles, as patriarchs and prophets and Israel, and the ordinances of the law, and this very pool of Bethesda had, in their several ways and seasons, been witnessing. And now, on this model, Christ had come forth to work-as the healed cripple of this chapter witnesses. So that, standing at the margin of this mystic water, and with the healed man before Him, He could say, " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Wondrous! The rest was left, and work was re-commenced. The pillar of the wilderness was " a like figure " of this. After leaving Egypt, Israel forfeited the rest of Canaan which had been promised them, and on to which they had gone, and on to which they were journeying. And they had to wander outside of that rest for forty years. But the cloudy pillar, or rather the glory that dwelt in it, would be a wanderer also. If Israel, like Adam, had forfeited their rest, the Lord God of Israel would fain be without His

And thus the cloud went about with the camp, rehearsing again the divine grace of the Lord God at the beginning. The God of Israel was as the God of creation had been; for He "is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

The gospel is a great system of working as by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And on the authority of what has been done, on the title of what God Himself has wrought in the accomplished redemption of sinners, Jesus, in the gospel, still turns to guilty, helpless man, and says to each and to all, " Wilt thou be made whole? "

Surely the sequel is well weighed. Bethesda reflects the Son of God, the Savior. The house of mercy, and the Lord and Dispenser of mercy, are in company. But while it reflects Him in its measure, it sets Him off in somewhat larger measure. It causes the glory and the riches of His grace to shine forth the brighter because of its own faint and dark ground; and as in the Mosaic ordinances, so in this pool at the sheep-market, we have Him as much by contrast as by similitude.

Let me add, as a reflection upon this pool near the sheep-market, that the relief which grace provided, in the age of the law, was only occasional; as I have already noticed; as by a judge or a prophet-and as also the angel stirring this water now and again witnesses.

But now, in this age of the gospel, grace or the salvation of God is the standing thing, the thing ministered. " This is the day of salvation." And yet, I doubt not, there are special or occasional seasons of the Spirit's peculiar working and visitation. There are " times of visitation" now, as there had been of old; though it be fully true, that the present is a dispensation of grace, as the former had not been. The city of Corinth had such a time vouchsafed to it, as Jerusalem had before it. (Luke 19:41; Acts 18:10.) Individuals, likewise, have such times (1 Peter 2:12); and indeed if Bethesda witnessed this at Jerusalem in other days, times of revival, as we call them, have witnessed the same in course of the age of Christendom.

The Evangelists: Meditations on the Four Gospels, Lamb of God, The (21:25)

Blessed the Jesus whom we know

In love's unwearied paths below,

Tracked by evangelists when here,

Is He who is ascended there;

And faith still knows Him as the same,

And reads with confidence His name.

God's glory shone in that blessed face,

In power, dignity, and grace.

'Twas not the light of Sinai's brow,

Which made all Israel to withdraw;

There was not there a single beam,

However dazzling it might seem,

Which told the heart to get a veil

To hide it, lest it faint and fail.

"Master, where dwellest Thou?" they say,

And, gladly bidden, there they stay;

And in that new, though holy ground,

A dwelling-place their spirits found.

Conscience another set apart

In converse with his wakened heart;

But for the fig-tree's shade is given

Jesus, and then an opened heaven.

"Come see a Man that told me all,"

Was a convicted sinner's call;

And those who at her bidding come,
Like her, with Him soon find their home.
E'en she for whom the angry hill
Would yield its stones to stone and kill,
The accursed, condemned, and guilty one,
Remains at ease with Him alone.
Thus'mid our ruins once it shone,
'Mid its own glories now'tis known;
But we can bear it brightest there,
Since we have learned it dearly here.
Lord, I desire to trace Thee more
Than e'er mine eye has done before;
Each passage of Thy life to be
A link between my soul and Thee!
For we shall see Thee as Thou wert,
When every utterance of Thine heart,
Through all Thy works of love divine,
Made all our need and sorrow Thine.
And we shall see Thee as Thou art,
And in Thine image bear our part,
In glory Thou, in glory we,
Bright in the heavenly majesty!
No part of Thy blessed life below
But in its fullness I shall know,
Retouched by Thee, regained by me,
In realms of immortality!
With burning hearts we'll then rejoice
In echoes of that well known voice,
Which to two burning hearts of old
Did mysteries of grace unfold:
The voice that stilled bold nature's strife,
The voice that called the dead to life,
Which said in sympathy, "I will,"
And spoke in power, "Peace, be still."
The hand that touched disease away,
And proved the sinking Peter's stay;
That raised the widow's child, and then
To her fond arms gave back again;

The hand that washed the feet all clean,
Speaking the heart that beat within;
The lifted hand that blessed them here
When parting, but to bless them there.
The arms which still are what they were
When little children's home was there.
The bosom, too, the same as when
John the beloved leaned thereon.
Here changes wrought no change in Thee,
The same from first to last we see;
In life and resurrection Thou,
Jesus! wert one both then and now.
In sweetest, gentlest forms of grace,
Amid Thine own Thou took'st Thy place;
The draught of fishes on the shore
Bespoke Thee risen as before;
And the spread table told of One,
The same, past, present, and to come.
Fed in the wilderness of old,
The camp of God nor bought nor sold,
But stores of heaven were oped each morn,
And angels' food, or heaven's corn,
Conveyed on dew, supplied the place—
Grand, gorgeous miracle of grace!
And Thou, Lord Jesus, in Thy day,
Again didst food in deserts lay;
Yet not in grandeur of the past,
But dearer—what shall ever last—
'Twas Thine own heart that felt the need,
'Twas Thine own hand the bread supplied.
'Twas Thine own lips the blessing breathed—
Heart, hand, and lips the service weaved.
These were Thy sympathies with us,
And we shall ever know Thee thus.
'Twas joy to Thee, while here on earth,
To mark the progress of that birth
Which leads poor sinners into light,
Forth from the gloom of nature's night.

'Twas joy to Thee while here on earth,
To hail the bold approach of faith,
The faith that reached Thee through the crowd,
Or, though forbidden, cried aloud.
For love delighteth to be used.
Faith's earnest thoughts are ne'er refused.
And this same joy and love in Thee,
We know unchanged eternally.
The look, the sigh, the groan, the tear,
Which marked Thy spirit's pathway here,
We own them still, O Lord, in Thee,
Thy mind, Thy heart, Thy sympathy!
Of Calvary I speak not here;
Blood sealed our only title there:
It has its own peculiar place
Amid the mysteries of grace.
But the loved home at Bethany,
And neighboring, lone Gethsemane,
Poor Nazareth and Bethlehem,
And faithless, proud Jerusalem,
The mount, the wilderness, the sea,
The villages of Galilee,
The gate of Nain, and Sychar's well,
The coasts of Sidon, all will tell
The One who travelled here before,
And tell us we need ask no more,
But stand, with welcome, soon to be
At home forever, Lord, with Thee!
Thus, memory knows Thee, through the Word,
In all Thy ways and doings, Lord!
And memory no fiction weaves,
But turns to truthful, living leaves,
The footprints of a real past,
Which shine, and hold forever fast.
'Tis not descriptive words of Thee,
But illustrations clear we see.
God's glory in Thy face portrayed
Bright, living likeness without shade.

Those who see Thee the Father see
Wondrous and priceless mystery!
The heavens Creator-glory tell,
His power and Godhead they reveal;
But these are hints by which we frame
Some of the secrets of His name:
But all He is, by sinners known,
In one blessed Image He has shown.
We have not there to guess and spell,
We read in lines, fair, bright, and full;
We read it in our Saviour's face,
And, now, all doubts and searchings cease.
The sinner looks, wayfaring men,
The poor, and babes and sucklings then;
All learn Thee as Thou art and wert,
And thus Thou art forever learnt.
Whate'er of Thine has once been shown,
That same is, sure, forever known
Thy virtues, like Thyself, all fair,
No seed of change or loss is there:
Each feature of Thy heart and mind
Forever shineth, in its kind:
"Because'tis Thine," makes this all plain,
It must be still, for it has been:
"Jesus the same, and ours forever"—
No strength of hell this bond can sever.
But this we pray—for know we well
The world's and nature's dangerous spell,—
Thus may our hopes and fears be past,
And with Thyself our lot be cast!
Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard,
What Thou in glory hast prepared
For him who loves and waits for Thee
In thine own world with Thee to be;
With Thee, Who art no stranger here
Though we as yet be strangers, there.

The Lord may be traced in this scripture, as One Who ranges, if I may so express it, through different regions of divine glory, in the calm and perfect sense of this, that they all belong to Him, and are fully and properly His own.

In His intercourse with Nathanael, the Lord Jesus shows Himself to be the One Who touches the deep springs that are in man, conversing in power with the spirits of all flesh, re-making man also, re-creating him after His own mind, and stamping a new character upon him, as for eternity. He lets this Israelite know, that He had been with him under the fig-tree, ere Philip had called him; and that He was there with him, re-modeling his mind and character, giving him, as it were, a new condition of being, making him, according to the divine oracle in Psa. 32, "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

It was the Spirit of God that alone could thus converse with Nathanael's soul, and form him anew, as was done under the fig-tree. And thus it is, that Jesus here rises on the conscience of that Israelite in the glory of God; and under the weight and sense of that glory Nathanael worships Him.

This is a very wondrous moment. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Jesus, the power which Jesus uses in divine sovereign grace. The Lord Jesus is before us here, as the Jehovah of the day of Gideon. Jehovah addressed Gideon according to His own counsel about him, or as such an one as His own Spirit was making him. "Thou mighty man of valor," says the Lord to Gideon, though at that time he was but a poor man of Manasseh, threshing wheat in his father's threshing-floor at Ophrah. But, in the counsel of God, and by the energy of the Spirit, Gideon was the leader of the host of Israel against Midian; and the angel spoke in divine intelligence to him, or as the One who knew the purpose of God respecting him. So is it here. Jesus addressed Nathanael, as Nathanael was under the operation of the Holy Ghost, imparting to him the character of a guileless Israelite. This operation had been going on with Nathanael in the solitude of the fig-tree, an operation which Jesus was divinely acquainted with.

Jesus was thus visiting the soul as God alone can visit it. He was touching the very springs within, and forming man after a new model. And in this most blessed and wondrous way, we track Jesus through one peculiar region of divine glory, and see Him there, in the power of His own Spirit, doing divine work. And He is there, as at home, as One that had title to be there without wrong or robbery. For what, I may ask, of divine prerogative is not His? What region of divine power may He not survey and measure as His own? Be they deep or high, be they where the Spirit of God alone can move, be they where the finger of God alone can work, where the strength of God alone can be felt, or the wisdom of God alone can enter, Jesus will occupy them all, as all His own. And thus we find Him, as we pass on through this fine scripture.

There was a marriage in Cana, and Jesus is invited. He goes; and He is there in His despised rejected form, as among men. Man has objects worthier of his regard; and Jesus is nobody in the presence of the bridegroom, and the guests, and the governor of the feast. But, though the world knew Him not, it was made by Him. And accordingly He touches the springs of nature here; as afore, in the person of Nathanael, He had touched the spirits of men. He re-creates, He re-forms, the material found in the kingdom around, as He had already done with the materials found in the kingdom within. He turns the water into wine, at this marriage feast in Cana.

This was what the finger of God, that once garnished the heavens, alone could do, the voice of God that once said, "Let there be light, and there was light." But in this Jesus is seen in another region. He is God still, but God acting in another place or sphere of power, in the kingdom of nature, and not in the secret place of the spirits of all flesh. But it is the same unspeakably blessed God of glory that we track, whether here or there; and Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the stranger on earth, Jesus the guest of the marriage at Cana, is He.

But do we, I ask, delight to see the Lord Jesus thus traversing regions where God alone could find and know His way? Is this sight of His glories grateful to us? With all the grace which the thick veil of His humiliation casts over it, our spirits should have the same communion with the person of Jesus as with the presence of God. For it is God, though manifest in the flesh, we know in Him; and faith, therefore, worships. Man He was in deepest fullest verity; of flesh and blood partaker, but He was the Word made flesh. And there is no region of the divine glory that He does not tread in the calm assured power, and conscious right, which alone befit that only One to Whom they all belong.

But, again, He purifies the temple, His Father's house. Yet He does this as the God of the temple: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This was building houses as God alone could build them. "Every house is builded of some man, but He that built all things is God." To build by creation, or by resurrection, as here, is divine architecture; and Jesus is a divine builder. "He spake of the temple of His body."

He had touched, as we saw, the springs of the spirit of man, and of nature, and now He touches the very sources or foundations of the power of death. And this is another region which belongs to God—part of His dominions. And Jesus, after this manner, as we still track Him through this scripture, is still God, God in the mighty strength of God down in the place of death, as before He had been God with the voice or finger of God abroad in the realm of nature, or with the Spirit of God in the place of the spirits of all flesh. "In John's Gospel," as one has said, "Jesus is God come down from heaven." Nature is not too wide a region for Him; the spirit of man that is in him is not too secret a region for Him; or death and the grave too deep or profound or mighty a region. He visits each and all of them in divine grace, divine power, or divine triumph, and leaves every where the same witness that God Himself had been there.

We have, however, another path of the glory of Christ still to follow in this scripture.

He had been doing miracles; and it is said, "Many believed on Him when they saw the miracles that He did." But then it is added, "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

Here is God again. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart."

Jesus did not know man, or the springs and energies of corrupt nature, by reason of any fellowship with them, for He had no such fellowship. The prince of this world had nothing in Him. He was "that holy thing" — "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." But still, as this passage tells us, "He knew what was in man." He knew it all, and that it was deceitful above all things. He searched the hearts and tried the reins of the children of men. He knew all men, not one more than another, but He tried the reins; He knew what was in man. He, Who by His prophet had long ago declared that, man was deceitful above all things, now (when He stood in the midst of men) would "not commit Himself unto them."

This was divine acquaintance with man. This was fall, radical, perfect understanding of man, after the manner of the divine mind. Jesus was God in His knowledge of man. What Jehovah declared Himself to be by His prophet, Jesus is now declared to be by the evangelist. Jesus knew nothing of revolted man, or of the heart's corruption, by sympathy. But He knew it all as God, Who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men, to give every man according to his ways, as He does here. For He denies man His confidence, as "deceitful above all things," and thus, according to his ways, unworthy of that confidence.

Here again, then, the Lord Jesus takes the way of God, and ranges again through another region that belongs only to God.

We see Him thus, beloved. God He is, wherever God may be known or tracked: God, in the place of the spirits of all flesh; God, in the kingdom of nature; God, in victor-strength over death and the grave; God, as searching the hearts and reins of the children of men.

Jesus is there where God alone could be; and there, in all the settled ease and certainty of One Who knew those regions as His own. In grace unutterable He has known the homestead of the human family, and been an inhabitant of the village of Nazareth. The Son of man, He has lived and walked with the children of men, eaten of their bread and drunk of their cup, known their toils and their sorrows in all their reality, and at their hand suffered reproach and rejection and death. But He was equally at home where the Spirit of God alone could work, where the voice of God alone could be heard and command, where the strength of God alone could prevail, and where the light or knowledge of God alone could enter and search.

He ranges all the dominions of God, and is no trespasser. There is no robbery of a glory that is another's; it is His own. He is the Former of light, the Creator of the ends of the earth; the One Who touches the springs of nature, and they come forth in forms such as His fingers fashion, and His voice commands.

This is so; and we can track it all here in this scripture, without doubt or difficulty. But in the midst of all this, there is a thing betrayed, though incidentally, which, in hope of further profit, I will notice.

The mother, in a general sense, knew the glory and power of the Lord, but she knew not the season or the moral order of that glory; and this is, where-ever it appears, a great evil. She said to Him at the feast, "They have no wine," desirous that He should display Himself. She was as one that said, "Show Thyself to the world" (chap. 7:4). But she greatly erred. His time for this had not come. He will indeed manifest His power in the souls of His elect now; He will, by His Spirit, visit Nathanael under the fig-tree; He will re-create a sinner, and give him a new character for eternity; and He will own such chosen ones, and know them, and address them in their new place, and read out to them, as it were, the writing that is written of them in the Book of Life, as here in His earliest welcome of the man of Cana. He will do all this now; but He will not as yet shine in a glory that the world can appreciate. "My time," says He, "is not yet come." The mother, therefore, did greatly err: a common error, and never more common than in this day in which we live. "Show us a sign from heaven" was the craving of hearts that knew not the Christ, the Son of God, because the god of this world had blinded their eyes. But Jesus gave them another kind of sign altogether, "the sign of Jonas the prophet." He must be known in humiliation in such a world as this, if known aright. The mother took the place and part of the world in this suggestion, "They have no wine;" and she is rebuked— "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Her worldly-mindedness is rebuked. Jesus could have no sympathy with it.

Not only, however, is she rebuked; she fails also to see the glory that the Lord will display; and this has great meaning in it for us.

He makes the water wine. He supplies the table as the divine Lord, or Creator, of the feast. But the governor of the feast knew nothing of this, the bridegroom knew nothing of it, the guests knew nothing of it, the mother was not in the secret or the vision of it. It was only the servants who had this secret in the midst of them, and the disciples who had this manifestation of glory made to them.

All this has great meaning in it for us. The mother lost, in spirit, what she had (in the mind of the world) sought after. And so with us. As far as we are in spirit one with the world, so far must we be left without discoveries of the glory of the Son of God, or communion with Him. For He is not of the world; His time for manifestation in it is not yet come. It must be judged and re-fashioned, ere that can be. And according to the moral of such a truth as that, the mother, on this occasion, is rebuked and is left without the manifestation of that glory in which the Son could shine and did shine. Those, and those only, who were in the due place, the servants and the disciples, are let into the secret, and get the vision; for they filled morally the very opposite place of the mother. She was of the world, but they are nobody in the scene. The governor of the feast, had his dignity, the bridegroom his joy, the guests their good cheer, and the mother a mother's vanity and expectations; but the servants and the disciples are nothing, and seek for nothing beyond what service or discipleship called them to, and they learn the secret of His power, and behold the manifestation of His glory.

What a lesson for us in the midst of these discoveries of Him Who was "God manifest in the flesh"! We must awake, we that are sleeping with the world, if we would get more of the light of the Lord.

Where Dwellst Thou?, Where Dwellst Thou? Part 2 (1:33-39)

Thus the complete christian position is before our hearts in the testimony of John the Baptist, secured in the glory of His Person, and in the order of the divine work that brings us into it. All the divine fullness was pleased to dwell in Him. But if He is thus presented, there is also, as

we have seen necessarily going before that any might receive Him, the work of sovereign grace by which we are born of God. Then there is contained in the glory of His Person, that He was the Lamb to take away sin according to the exigencies of God's own glory and of our discovered condition-and lastly, when by His precious blood our sins had been washed away, the Holy Ghost is given to bring us consciously into our wholly new place in Christ; for if any man be in Christ there is a new creation, old things are passed away, all things are become new. We are complete in Christ, before the Godhead's fullness. What a salvation it is, complete in its three parts, presented, too, in the order in which they are made good to our souls. First, life, and with it the conviction, of our sins, for the life was the light of men; secondly, the blood of the cross, and a full and everlasting forgiveness by it; and lastly, the Holy Ghost, seal of the faith that believes God's testimony to it, that we may be established in Christ in the full christian position. Of course, as yet it was only found in the testimony of the glory of Christ, save that there was a positive actual work of divine quickening going on that any might receive Him.

Now we come to what may well challenge our hearts, as to the effect of this grace in salvation when fully known to our souls. For it is just here we have an historical incident of surpassing interest brought in, as the few given in the Gospel of John are always, to illustrate the doctrine in hand. " Two disciples of John heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." Blessed practical effect of this truth, beloved brethren, too often lacking with us! And they followed Him, not for anything more that they could get from Him, but with one object. And, oh! what it tells of the manner of the love displayed in God come into this world in Christ! So completely had He won the confidence of these two hearts in attracting them after Himself; that their object that first day they ever knew Him is to find out where He dwells, that they may dwell with Him. The fruit of His grace as He turned and saw them following is sweet to the Lord in this cold heartless world, and He draws out the expression of it by His question " What seek ye?" Can He put such a question to us? We rest in the wonderful position we have been established in. It is well. It is the basis of any proper fruit of Christianity. But what are we seeking? For let not our hearts be deceived into thinking we are seeking nothing. It is impossible. The heart was made for an object, and a personal object, and nothing but a divine one can satisfy it. So that if we are not seeking Christ, we are assuredly seeking something that is not Christ. Ah! is it not the secret of so much failure, of so little brightness and power of christian life, of so little testimony for Him in separation from the world, where there is no question of the full christian place. There is not the attraction of Christ known personally as the one bright blessed object of the heart eclipsing all else. Not so could these disciples know their place; but thus early in their knowledge of Him they were bent on one thing, " Where dwellest thou?" And the Lord accepts and ratifies the desire, as of His own awakening in their hearts, " Come and see." " He satisfieth the longing soul."

But I think we may see a more extended scope in the place this touching incident has, at the opening and as the frontispiece of this Gospel. It is the awakening of a need in the soul, to which the Gospel of John supplies the answer. The other gospels tell 'us of the Son of man that had not where to lay His head in the world He created. This is the revelation of the heavenly home of the Son of God. He dwells in the bosom of the Father. He has come to reveal it that we may find our home now in spirit, and forever there with Him where He finds His. It was just what these two disciples, if there were but two, were drawn after Him to seek. Oh to know more of the power of such an attraction! and then we shall be more prepared for the full heavenly association with Himself, to which this gospel is the blessed moral introduction. In the light of what follows in it, " Come and see" is really the invitation to look into heaven now, and become familiar with it as His home and ours.

This testimony of heavenly things comes very early. Only, before there can be the reception of it, there must come the earthly testimony of the need of our condition in view of what is heavenly. " If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" The Son of man had come down from heaven to tell of what is there-" the Son of man who is in heaven," even when thus testifying of it on: earth. (Chapter 3:12,13.) But in chapter 4 the richest heavenly things of divine grace in the Person of Jesus are presented in vain (vers. 10-15), till the Lord turns the testimony in upon what she is, and the first ray of divine intelligence enters as ever through the conscience. " He that cometh from heaven is above all, and what he hath seen and heard that he testifieth, and no man receiveth his testimony." Still there was this testimony in all its perfection, and grace working, as we have seen, that we might receive it-the Father drawing to the Son, that when we come, we may find the Son revealing the Father, as only the Son can, and in special character as the Son who dwells in His bosom. " No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Thus when the time was come, the testimony of His words and works being rejected, that He should leave the world and go to the Father, and He leads the thoughts of His people to the Father's house for the first time in scripture (chap. 14), He can say, " Whither I go ye know." As though He would say, You know heaven quite well; the Father's house is no strange place to you. How can it be possible? Philip seizes the truth, so far at least that the Father's presence must make all the blessedness of the Father's house he asks, " Show us the Father and it sufficeth us," but only to show how far he had been from discerning the proper glory of the Lord Jesus as of an only-begotten Son with the Father. " Have I been so long with you and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?"-His words and works, all that He was, made the revelation of the Father. So that however little hearts entered into it then or now, there had been revealed, and shining out in Him morally here, every characteristic trait of the divine and everlasting blessedness of heaven.

Nor was this all. He whose presence here had been the revelation of a place so new to the thoughts of His people, was now going to take His place as man, as the revealed and known center of all the joy and blessedness and glory of that place. For " I go to prepare a place for you "-Himself the home and intimate link of their and our hearts with the place, His going there all the preparation of it possible or needed, to give us our place there in spirit with Him, till He comes to receive us to Himself. Hence the word never speaks of our going to heaven, but to Him. The person makes the place, even in natural things, how much more in divine!

But there was more in His heart for us-more that we needed to connect us in power with the place thus revealed to us. He had been the manifestation in His own Person when here of all that makes heaven what it is forever. He has gone to take His place there as the One who loved us and gave Himself for us, that our hearts might follow Him there as to their own familiar home. And now from that home of love and joy and glory, He has sent the Holy Ghost to be the power of our association with Him in it, and thus of our enjoyment of such heavenly blessedness (Chapter 14:16-20.) It is the full blessed answer to the awakened longing of the soul, " Where dwellest thou?"-the " Come and see " of Jesus in answer to it, that we may "abide with him." Thus we have before us in this gospel, the main elements, morally, that go to form a heavenly people upon earth, left here to express what is heavenly, and thus only truly to represent a rejected, heavenly Christ, while waiting for Him.

When the Lord Jesus was glorified and the Holy Ghost was come, we find this expressed as the normal christian position, and the responsibility that flows from it. " As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." We are constituted such by the grace that has

called us to Himself, but not without the revelation of a new sphere suited to us as such. " What eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit." Hence " we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (2 Cor. 4:18.) But it is only by faith that this is true to us, so that we are willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord for the actual sight of them (chap. v. 7, 8), seeing through a glass darkly now but then face to face. Still the things that are eternal are revealed now that we may look at them; and more, as a risen people, " risen with Christ, seek those things which are above [and here we see the power of the link of Christ's presence there for our hearts], where Christ is, sitting on the right hand of God." (Col. 3) And we are exhorted to set our mind (for the Spirit of God supposes that our affections will be there and says nothing of them) on things above and not on things on the earth. The mind is distinct from the affections. For as it has been truly put in illustration of this difference-a man's affections may rest in his family, and his mind be all the while engrossed in his business. Now the Spirit would have our minds engrossed with Christ. For many walk, the same apostle tells us, weeping, who mind (using the same word) earthly things, and are enemies of that which is the distinctively separative power of Christianity, the cross of Christ, whatever their profession to be His. And then in one blessed expression of it he sums up the whole christian position, viewed practically, " Our citizenship is in heaven." He used a word of far reaching force for a Greek mind, who held all other relationships and interests in life subordinate to his citizenship. As though he would say: all that forms the life morally, in relationship, love, motive, object, and joy, is found for us in heaven now; whence we await in hope, too, the Lord Jesus as Savior, to change this body of humiliation into the likeness of His body of glory according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

Earnestly would I raise the question then, beloved brethren, in our souls, if in our christian place before God, have we been saved to rest in that place, or from it, as the clear starting-point, now to seek Christ for His own beauty and excellence, as our one worthy and individual object? Like one of old who could say, " One thing have I desired of the Lord that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord." But if our hearts are set for this by His grace, we 'cannot find Him in the world out of which He has been rejected. He is ascended up to the scene of which morally He had been the full revelation in His own Person here, and our hearts follow Him. He draws them there that He may satisfy the desire He has awakened, in the enjoyment of the heavenly things of His home and presence. " Come and see. And they came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day." " He satisfieth the longing soul," in ever-increasing measure, and with increasing capacity and longing 'now; in the divine fullness of it when we are with Himself forever. " Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." " I will come again and receive you unto myself." " Surely I come quickly." " Even so, come, Lord Jesus."-J. A. T.

(Concluded from page 163.)

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Where Dwellst Thou?, Where Dwellst Thou? Part 1 (1:33-39)

OH 1:33-39{There are two great parts in the revelation God has given us of Himself. There is, first- and it is of first importance to us- He reveals Himself; for how else should we know Him? We had lost every true thought of Him from Eden, so early had Satan poisoned the very springs of our being against God. The mind of the flesh is enmity against Him. But the moment was come at last when the heart of God, long yearning to tell itself out in this ruined world, was to have its full, suited expression. This we are brought to in the first chapter of John: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." Blessed thought for us!- there has been from eternity with God the Word that could fully express Him; "and the Word was God," for who but God could express God? For a moment we are introduced to the vast scene of the display of His Godhead and power in creation (John 1:3), but only to be dismissed in a word, to give way before what was infinitely greater, even the Divine Word, the Creator Himself come into the world that He had made. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Yes, it is even so, for "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"- God manifest in the flesh. And the opened eye of faith beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. For this was the character of His coming: "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Thus the light of all that God is fully revealed had risen upon this dark world. With what effect? Oh, has it to be told? None whatever, if left to itself! Such is man, such the total ruin that sin has made of us, that what is impossible physically takes place. "The light shineth in darkness." Perfect light was there; the darkness remained as it was, perfectly unaffected by it, "the darkness comprehended it not." Such the profound moral darkness in which we lay! He was in the world, and the world knew Him not: He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Do we not know and own it? Have we not had to prove it in our own souls? We saw no beauty in Him that we should desire Him. But mark the wondrous grace of the revelation. If He had shone into this world in all the majesty of His glory, who could have borne His presence? It would have been our destruction. But "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." He veiled His glory beneath the lowly garb of His humiliation, that He might bring down all the grace that was in God to us where we were in all our need of it, to draw us by the grace into the discovered truth of our condition. Had He come only to shine, we should have been left where we were, lost forever. Blessed be God, it is not so. If light is come, love is come with it, for God is love as well as light. And love is active to bring in the rays of the light into our consciences and hearts, that, being brought to know ourselves, we may know Him.

But this brings us to the second great part of the way He has revealed Himself, even the divine work, in all its completeness, by which He puts us in the presence of His glory at perfect rest. This, too, we find presented in the chapter before us, if not in its full result as to us, yet at least in the glory of Him whose work it is, and the work part of His glory. But God must work, if any heart were ever to open to His glory. Nor was the fact of an activity of divine love any new thing in itself in this poor world. God had ever wrought that there might be anything of Him, of blessing, or of good, found in it. Only all comes out clearly in the light now, and we see what the first essential work of all is, and what its character. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe in his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12, 13) When the darkness of our condition was

wholly unaffected by the presence of infinite light, when there was no heart here to answer to the infinite love that brought in the light, God wrought in that love- His word, applied by the power of the Spirit, as ever His instrument- that born of the Spirit and the Word- born of God- our poor hearts might open to receive Jesus, and that we might possess a nature capable of answering to, and (when set free) delighting in, all that was presented to us in Him. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Oh, think of the wonderful grace that wrought when there was nothing in any of our hearts that answered to anything in His, to bring us into partaking of His own nature, that we might have capacity to know and joy in Him forever! But this blessed enjoyment is not the first effect of being born of God- far from it. There must be the bringing out between the conscience and God of our sins as we never knew them before. Sooner or later self must be learned, too, to be nothing but sin. Thus we find ourselves out before God in the only truth of our condition—a condition that makes us totally unfit for His presence. What a place to be brought to, solemn and humbling, yet needed; and that is the sure mark, as it is the effect, of a work all His own. We are brought at last where Peter was in principle, as in Luke 5; "he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Blessed taking of God's side against himself, as it was; but not to be left there. No; that never would have satisfied divine love. More was needed for God's own glory- more, to give us rest in His presence. The answer to both is found in the glories in which the Lord Jesus is now presented to us in the testimony of John the Baptist. How suited and exquisite the grace, that, amid this full testimony to the varied glory of the Divine Word manifested on earth, we should find the complete work as an essential part of that glory, that was necessary if we were to have any part in it for blessing!

There are two further parts of the divine work, and they are brought out in this testimony to His glory first, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and, secondly, "He it is that baptizes with the Holy Ghost." These two parts of the work of the Son of God are needed to be added to the primary work of the Spirit of God, by which we are born anew, to complete the full Christian position. In the slain Lamb of God we find the righteous ground- now for the first time manifested- of all the work of God in blessing that there ever had been, or could be, in a lost world, but here presented according to all the perfection found in it for God, and therefore in its full, complete efficacy, even to the clearing away of sin forever, in a new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Of that first part of His work as the Lamb of God, He could say, "God is glorified in him, and if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself." And He has done it. So that, where God rests in the full settlement of every question of sin, as it affected His glory, there we rest in seeing our sins gone in His death who bore them, and we ourselves judged, condemned, and crucified with Him. It needed, indeed, the whole glory of the work that lays the foundation of the new heavens and new earth to remove the stain of a single sin from our guilty souls; but it is there, an accomplished work for us. So that the moment the eye of faith turns from self, found out in its sin, to the Lamb of God, the scene is cleared for us, as it is for God, of all we have done and been. It lay in the perfection and glory of His work as the Lamb of God, to end all that was of the first man for faith, in infinitely executed judgment, and to lay the basis, in divine righteousness, for the accomplishment of all God's counsels, for His glory and our blessing, in the Second.

But this brings us to the second part of the work of the Son of God, as He who baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. It is all here still wrapped up in testimony to the glory of His Person. But we know it as accomplished. Having finished His work as the atoning Lamb of God, He has taken His place as the accepted Man in the glory of God, and sent down the Holy Ghost. He is given to dwell within us, as each one receives the testimony of accomplished redemption, to bring us in power into the whole of Christ's own place, as man, before that glory. He baptizes with the Holy Ghost. It is no longer the mere negative taking away of all that had to be taken away in God's judgment, but the full, positive bringing in of what was to be established in its room. Not till, in fact, the work of redemption was accomplished could the Holy Ghost be given; "for the Holy Ghost was not yet, because Jesus was not glorified." And so, in the faith of our souls, "In whom ye also, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (compare Acts 19:1-6; Eph. 1:15). Given immediately upon, and the seal of, the faith that believes God's testimony to the accomplished work of a risen and glorified Christ, the Holy Ghost gives us the consciousness of our new and wonderful place in Christ. This testimony is conveyed to us in the forgiveness of sins. Hence it is at the point at which we receive the positive and conferred forgiveness of our sins, that we receive the Holy Ghost to dwell in us. Compare Acts 2:38; 10:43, 44; and the place of the introduction of the Holy Ghost, in the Epistle to the Romans, after peace with God through justification. (Rom. 5:5.) Also in type, in the case of the leper (Lev. 14:14-18), where the oil (type of the Holy Ghost) follows the application of the blood of the trespass offering.

Thus, when the Holy Ghost was come, Jesus says, "Ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." When He had made peace through the blood of His cross, and become Himself the first messenger of it to His disciples, in John 20, greeting them with, "Peace be unto you," as the last Adam, a quickening Spirit, He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit as the power of the life with which He was risen from the dead, rather than given as a distinct Person to dwell in them. For this we know they had still to wait till the day of Pentecost. The Son of God was come, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The Spirit is the power of that life now possessed in new association with the risen Christ. Hence it can be said, "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. 8:2.) It is a positive, actual deliverance, by divine power, out of the old condition in which we were into a wholly new one in Christ. Further, He is the Spirit of adoption; if we are the sons of God, by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26), because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. (Gal. 4:6.) Another blessed mark and effect of His presence is stated in 2 Cor. 3:17: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"- liberty to gaze on the unveiled glory of God in the face of Jesus, the token of God's perfect acceptance of the work, according to which we are accepted before Him in righteousness, that as we gaze, we may be changed into His image. There are also corporate effects of the gift of the Holy Ghost, as dwelling on earth, and uniting us to Christ; but these do not come within the scope of the Gospel of John; and it is profitable for our souls to distinguish the individual aspect of the baptism of the Holy Ghost from that which is corporate, for we must be established in the former before anything of the latter can be known in privilege and responsibility. J. A. T.

(To be continued.)

The fathers were spoken to by the prophets, by those who had but visions and dreams. We are now spoken to by the Son, by Him who sees face to face, who has access to all that is of God. And this lets us into heavenly things as well as earthly. This discloses the holiest things to our view, as well as the courts, because our prophet is there, while the prophets of the fathers were more in the distance, in the place of visions and dreams. J. G. B.

The Good Confession Before Pilate, Good Confession Before Pilate: Part 3, The (18:33-37)

But by this we at once discern the different purposes of God in His dispensations by Israel and by the church; for the further development of which I have judged this passage of scripture to be thus worthy of more careful notice than is perhaps commonly given to it. It is not as a King holding His citizens in rule, but as the manifestor of the Father, making us sons, as we have seen, that the Lord is now fulfilling His pleasure. Through the word and by the Spirit He is gathering all that are "of the truth" (as He speaks to Pilate), filling up the measure of His body the church, which is His fullness.

We thus from this scripture get further evidence of the distinct purpose of God in His dispensation by Israel and the church; a subject that we have often considered. But while we trace these things, may we know the power of them in our own souls more and more! Knowledge without communion with God would only expose our souls to Satan; may the Lord preserve us in so tempting a day as this!

And from all this we learn that the present absence of the Lord is to be interpreted differently as respects Israel and the church. As respects the church, it is gracious; because for them it was expedient that He went away, as by that they have received the Holy Ghost to be in them, to teach them, as the Spirit of truth, the testimony of Jesus Who was the witness to the truth, the revealer of the Father. But as respects Israel, it is judicial; and righteously so—because it was Israel's unbelief and sin that occasioned it. It was by the wickedness of the husbandmen that the Heir of the vineyard was cast out. According to all this, when the Lord left Israel He turned His back on their city, leaving it for desolation, and saying, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). He hid His face from them. But when He left His church, He left them in the act of lifting up His hands and blessing them (Luke 24:51). His face was towards them. The one action was judicial, the other gracious. When He left the Jews, He said, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me. Ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me, and where I am, thither ye cannot come." But when He left His disciples, He said, "A little while and ye shall not see Me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father." When of old the glory departed from Israel, every ray of it, as it were, was gathered up and not a trace left behind, no present mercy remained (Ezek. 11:23). But when Jesus ascended from the midst of His saints, it was but to give gifts to them (Eph. 4:12, 13); and as He said, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you" (John 14:18). As to Israel, the Lord is now asleep (Psa. 44:23); but as to the church, He is ever wakeful and active, the Advocate and Priest on high (Heb. 9:24, 1 John 2:1).

All this shows the different purpose which the Lord has as respects the church and Israel. The church during His absence is preparing through the Holy Ghost to stand in the glory of the Son; but it is the time of Israel's judgment.

And here I cannot refuse to notice the same distinct and decided teaching as to this, which we get in the parable of the talents (Luke 19).

The Lord is there presented to us as a nobleman who went into a far country, to get for himself a kingdom, and to return; who, previous to his departure, committed his goods to his servants to be occupied for him during his absence; and then on his return took account of them severally, but executed righteous judgment on his citizens, who had plainly told him before he went away that they would not have him to reign over them.

Now in this exhibition of the ways of God we shall find very clearly that the purpose (among others) of the present dispensation is to provide companions for the King in His glory, to give to Him those who shall share the throne of the kingdom with Him. The servants are distinguished from the citizens in this parable. The servants have their occupation during the nobleman's absence; but during that time the citizens are not within view at all. So is it with the church and with Israel. During this dispensation, which is the time of the Lord's absence, the church occupies the scene, and Israel as a nation are forgotten: there is neither Jew nor Greek; whereas after the return the distinction between the servants and the citizens is still as clear. The servants (found faithful) are called into the fellowship of the kingdom, and the citizens are punished for their rebellion. So again with the church and with Israel. The saints of the Most High are to take the kingdom with the Son of Man. They who have continued with Jesus in His temptations are to have a kingdom appointed them by Him, as He receives a kingdom from the Father. They who overcome are to sit with Him on His throne. The saints are to judge the world.

The servants of this parable are not the subjects, but the co-heirs with the returned nobleman; and such are the saints, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" they share the dominion with Him. They are not after the nobleman's return to bring forth their fruit, but they will then rather reap the glory of dominion with Him, as the reward of their having brought forth their fruit to Him now in this time of His absence. "Because thou hast been faithful in a very little," it will be said to the servants by the returned nobleman, "have thou authority over ten cities." But Israel, in the day of the return of their once rejected but then glorified King, are to meet the vengeance. Israel are the citizens, for Zion is the city of the Great King, and Jesus is the King of the Jews. It is as a King with His subjects or citizens that the Lord is to be associated with the people of Israel, and not as Heir with His co-heirs. And their cry, their rebellious cry, "We have no king but Caesar," in the day of the returned nobleman, the day of the revelation of Messiah the King, is to be answered thus— "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before Me" (Luke 19:27). The present absence of the Lord is not working their repentance; but rather the old rebellious spirit is judicially working in them till His return finds them ripe for the judgment.¹ And thus will that return bring the "day of vengeance" (Isa. 61:1, 2; Luke 4:18-21), "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7); of trouble such as never was since there was a nation (Dan. 12:1). In that day an alarm will be sounded, for it will be "a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Joel 2:12). "In all the land two parts shall be cut off and die" (Zech. 13:8). It will be a day that "shall burn as an oven," and, Who, as says the prophet, may abide it? (Mal. 3:2; 4:12).

But let us not forget that the nobleman has returned "having received the kingdom," and that the faithful servants have been promised their ten and their five cities. Therefore though the rebellious be thus judged, the scene of dominion is not to pass away in the judgment. The cities have been promised as the rewards of service, the kingdom has been received by the nobleman, and this earth, to which the nobleman returns (for the place of his return is the place of his kingdom), must remain for the exhibition of that kingdom, and to be the scene of those rewards. And therefore we read in other scriptures that it is "all peoples, nations, and languages," the peoples, nations, and languages of this earth which shall be given to the King and His servants. "The Son of Man shall be given dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him." Judgment then shall be given to the saints of the Most High. "The saints shall judge the world" and shall possess the kingdom (see Dan. 7:13, 14, 22; 1 Cor. 6:2).

From all this then, we gather that this present dispensation is giving a family of children to the heavenly Father, and to the blessed Son of Man, companions in the glory of His throne. These are its purposes. By the ministry of the “witness to the truth,” which is the Son, and “the Spirit” which is the Holy Ghost, the saints are made sons and daughters, for whom are prepared the mansions in the Father’s house. They are all one in the adoption of their heavenly Father, equally and surely belonging to Him, “all fitly framed together;” but in the inheritance of the glories of the coming kingdom (for which they are now getting ready) they are not one, as it is said to them, “Have thou authority over ten cities,” and “Have thou authority over five cities.”

And in this is the perfection of the ways of our God: for in this will be found all that quiets the soul while awakening it, all that would lead us forth to service, and yet never take us from our sweet retreat, the full assurance of our Father’s equal love. Oh, that the love of Christ may constrain us more and more to be willing servants one of another! This is the only, real dignity, the only true praise. “I am among you as one that serveth,” said the Lord and Master of us all. Whatever the outward aspect and bearing of our life may be, the spirit of service should be the hidden principle. “If we be beside ourselves” —what should we still be able to say? “It is unto God” “If we be sober,” what should we still be able to say? “It is for your cause.” No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself. This is the only true rule of Christian action, this the hidden and only effectual spring to set all our movements right, as under God and like to Jesus.

(Continued from page 134.)

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The Good Confession Before Pilate, Good Confession Before Pilate: Part 2, The (18:33-37)

But still, as we have observed, Pilate would have saved Jesus, could he at the same time have saved his own reputation as Caesar’s friend; and therefore it was, that he now entered the judgment-hall, and put this inquiry to Jesus, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” For as the Jews had committed the Lord to him upon a charge of having made Himself a King (Luke 23:2), if he could but lead the Lord to retract these his kingly pretensions, he might then both save Him, and keep himself unharmed. With the design of doing so, he seems thus at this time to bare entered the judgment-hall. But the world in Pilate’s heart knew not Jesus; as it is written, “the world knew Him not” (John 1:10 John 3:1). Pilate was now to find that the god of this world had nothing in Jesus. “Jesus answered, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?” Our Lord by this would learn from Pilate himself where the source of the accusation against Him lay: whether His claim to be King of the Jews was thus challenged by Pilate as protector of the emperor’s rights in Judea; or merely upon a charge of the Jews.

Upon this hang, I may say, everything in the present juncture, and the wisdom and purpose of the Lord in giving the inquiry this direction is most manifest. Should Pilate say that he had now become apprehensive of the Roman interests, the Lord could have at once referred him to the whole course of His life and ministry, to prove that, touching the king, innocence had been found in Him. He had withdrawn Himself, departing into a mountain alone, when He perceived that the multitude would have come and taken Him by force to make Him a king. His controversy was not with Rome. When He came, He found Caesar in Judea, and He never questioned his title to be there; He rather at all times allowed his title, and took the place of the nation, which, because of disobedience, had the image and superscription of Caesar engraven, as it were, on their very land. It is true, that it was despite of the Majesty of Jehovah that had made way for the Gentiles into Jerusalem; but Jerusalem was for the present the Gentiles’ place, and therefore the Son of David had no controversy with them because of this. Nothing but the restored faith and allegiance of the nation to God could rightfully cancel this title of the Gentiles. The Lord’s controversy was therefore not with Rome, but with the rebellion and unbelief of Israel, with the “sinful nation.” And therefore Pilate would have had his answer according to all this, had the charge proceeded from himself as representative of the Roman power. But it was not so. Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me; what hast Thou done?”

Now this answer of Pilate conveyed the full proof of the guilt of Israel. In the mouth of him who represented the power of the world at that time, the thing was established that Israel had disclaimed their King and sold themselves into the hands of a stranger. This for the present was everything with Jesus. This at once carried Him beyond the earth and out of the world. For Israel had rejected Him, and His kingdom was therefore not now from hence. Neither indeed could it be; for it is written, “In Judah is God known, His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling-place in Zion. There brake He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword and the battle” (Psa. 76:1-3). Zion is the appointed place for the King of the whole earth to sit and rule; and the unbelief of the daughter of Zion must keep the King of the earth away.

The Lord then, as this rejected King, listening to this testimony from the lips of the Roman, could only recognize His present loss of throne. “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence.” He had no weapons for war if Israel refused Him There was no threshing for His floor now, for Israel is His instrument to thresh the mountains (Isa. 41:15; Mic. 4:13; Jer. 51:20), and Israel was now refusing Him. Out of Judah is to come forth the corner, the nail, and the battle bow, and the house of Judah, and that only is Messiah to make His goodly horse in the battle (Zech. 10:4). Therefore in this unbelief of Judah He had nothing wherewith to spoil the stout-hearted, and to be terrible to the kings of the earth, nothing wherewith to break the arrows of the bow, the shield, the sword, and the battle (Psa. 76). His kingdom therefore could not be of this world, it could not be from hence; He had no servants who could fight that He should not be delivered to His enemies.

But this loss of a kingdom, which is “of this world,” is but for a while. For Israel who once said, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” shall be brought to say, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” And then shall the goodly horse be prepared for the battle, Judah shall be bent for Messiah, the bow shall be filled with Ephraim, and the daughter of Zion shall arise and thresh His floor.

And the answer of the Lord to Pilate intimated this final recovery of His Kingdom. For while from the thus witnessed unbelief of His nation, Jesus perceived and allowed His present loss of it, yet He allows this in such terms as fully expresses His title to a kingdom, leading Pilate at once to say, “Art Thou a King then?” And to this His “good confession” is witnessed. For Pilate would have had no cause to dread either the

displeasure of his master, or the tumult of the people; he might have fearlessly followed his will and delivered his prisoner, if the blessed Confessor would now alter the word that had gone out of His lips, and withdraw His claim to be a King. But Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a King" From this His claim there could be no retiring. Here was His "good confession before Pontius Pilate." Though His own received Him not, yet He was theirs; though the world knew Him not, yet was it made by Him. Though the husbandmen were casting Him out, yet was He the Heir of the vineyard. He was anointed to the throne in Zion, though His citizens were saying, that they would not have Him to reign over them; and He must by His "good confession" fully verify His claim to it, and stand by that claim before Pontius Pilate, and in him before all the power of the world. It might arm all that power against Him, but it must be made. Herod and all Jerusalem had once been moved at hearing that He was born Who was King of the Jews, and sought to slay the child; but let the whole world be now moved and arm its power against Him, yet He must declare God's decree, "I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." His right must be witnessed, though in the presence of the usurper, and in the very hour of his power.

But now we are led into other and further revelations.

This "good confession" being thus witnessed, the Lord was prepared to unfold other parts of the divine counsels. When He had distinctly verified His title thus in the very presence of Cesar-i.e., of the world which as yet fills the gap, the way was opened for Him to testify His present character and service. "To this end was I born," says the Lord, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." His possession of the kingdom was now for a time hindered by the unbelief of His nation; but He here shows that there had been no failure of the purpose of God by this. For meanwhile He had come into the world for other present work than to take His throne in Zion. He had come to bear "witness unto the truth."

The Lord by this "good confession" was "witness to the truth," for His testimony of course was true. But this character extends far beyond this "good confession," and the Gospel of John is used by the Holy Ghost as the especial instrument of unfolding it. For in John we see that the Lord had been conducting His ministry as "witness unto the truth" from the very beginning; as is said in chapter i. "the only begotten Son Which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He had been manifesting the name of the Father to those who had been given to Him out of the world (John 17:6), and this is the same as bearing witness to the truth (see John 8:26, 27). He had come to give His elect an understanding that they might know Him that is true (1 John 5:20). Every one that was "of the truth," as He here speaks to Pilate, had been hearing Him His sheep had heard and known His voice, while others believed not, because they were not His sheep (John 10:3, 4, 26). He that was of God had heard God's word at His mouth, while others had not heard His words because they were not of God (John 8:47). And hereby had been made manifest the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error (1 John 4:6). He had come into the world that He might say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). He was the Good Shepherd come to search out His flock—to gather to Himself and to the Father all who were His—to bring into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God all the chosen children, and thus to fill up their full prepared measure; to bring forth sons unto God by the word of truth, to seal them with the Spirit of adoption, and to prepare for them mansions in the Father's house. The heavens were now to be opened; and the fullness of Him that filleth all in all, by the truth and through the Spirit, was to be prepared and brought into them.

Such was the Lord's present ministry; for such was He born, and had come into the world, and had He been throughout opening to His disciples. As He says, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world" (John 17:6). Though a King, and King too of the Jews, and to take yet the kingdom of the world, He was not now to exercise that power, for His title had been denied by His own nation. Israel's rejection of their King had now been sealed by that testimony of Pilate: "Thine own nation hath delivered Thee unto me." The trial had now therefore fully proved them to be "reprobate silver." The Lord's tarrying among them, if haply they would repent, was therefore now to be over. He could no longer go through their cities and villages healing and preaching the kingdom, but must take on Him other ministry; and that ministry He now fully and formally reveals saying, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth Me."

(To be continued.)

The Good Confession Before Pilate, Good Confession Before Pilate: Part 1, The (18:33-37)

The life of righteousness on earth, the life that is pleasing to God, must needs be a life of faith; because the great transgression has estranged God from the world that was made by Him (John 1:10), and so polluted it that it cannot be the rest and portion of the righteous. Wherefore it is written, "He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

Faith is therefore the principle of all righteousness, practical as well as personal: personal righteousness or justification is of faith, that it may be of grace (Rom. 4:16); and practical righteousness or godliness must, as we thus see, be of faith also. Faith was thus the secret power that was working in all those who have ever obtained a good report (Heb. 11:2). Excellent things are indeed spoken of them; but these were all wrought through faith, which is of the operation of God. Faith in Noah floated the ark, while as yet, for 120 years, nothing but the dry land appeared. Faith in Abraham inherited the place and the everlasting city, while as yet those things rested only in vision and in promise. Faith in Moses saw Him that was invisible; and in multitudes (whom time would fail to tell of) faith would have nothing but the "better resurrection." In all these there was found the simple vigorous exercise of the soul, believing the word and promise of God. No religion of their own wrought this in them; no effort at raising affections towards God and unseen things could have done it, but the blessed power (which is faith) of taking God's own word from His own mouth as true, of counting Him faithful Who had promised. Ltd so too, above all, in Jesus, the first and chiefest in the noble army of martyrs— "the author and finisher of faith," faith rejoiced in what "was set before Him," and reached after it, though it lay on the other side of the terrors and shame of the cross; such terrors (Thy "face was so marred more than any man," Thou bruised Lamb of God!) as the heart of man had not conceived.

Paul exhorts his son Timothy, "to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life," in remembrance of this faith that was in the blessed Savior Himself. "Fight," says he, "the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a

good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, Who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:12-14). Eternal life was to be laid hold on by Timothy, and nothing was to be allowed, as it were, to shake off his prey. As the brightness of "the joy set before Him" was never dimmed in the perfect faith of Jesus, though the cross tried His tenure of it to the uttermost; so was Timothy to keep his grasp of eternal life, let him forego what else he might. God in promise had set that before him; and that He would bring out in all its promised blessing and glory at the appearing of Jesus; and to that Timothy was to cling in spite of all the world. The world around him were contentedly getting their portion in this life; and many through the love of it had erred from the faith (ver. 10); but Timothy was to flee this in his pursuit of eternal life. Faith knew its object from the word of promise; and Timothy was to embrace it at every cost.

But there is ever to be confession as well as faith. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made onto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). For God is to be confessed in a world that has disowned Him, as well as believed on in a heart that has departed from Him. This is His present glory in His saints, and this their service unto Him—service, which (it is true) may try them here. Their faith, like gold, may be cast into the furnace now, but it shall come forth hereafter stamped with the King's own image; for it shall "be found unto praise and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

When Jesus was a child, in subjection to His parents at Nazareth, He grew in favor with man as well as with God; for He was then serving as under the law, infinitely attractive in all that was blameless and good. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). But when called from under that subjection, to witness for God in a God-denying world, then the world began to hate Him; as He says to His brethren, "The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil" (John 7:7). Then did His sorrows at the hand of the world (because of this His testimony) begin and take their course; every man's hand was against Him, while He sat alone. All His life then became confession, and innumerable evils at once and continually encompassed Him His supports were the supports of faith, and the light of God's countenance, and the hope of "the joy set before Him." Thus was He throughout His ministry: but in an eminent sense was He the Confessor, when He fully entered into the character of "the Lamb of God." Previously to this, He had been either in controversy with the unbelief of the Jews, or manifesting the name of the Father to those who had been given Him out of the world; but His character as "the Lamb of God" was formally taken up at the supper, when, like the worshipper under the law, He presented Himself as the victim or offering, saying, "This is My body;" and in that character He stood and suffered, from the time of His entrance into the garden, down to His giving up the ghost on the accursed tree.

In the progress of His deep and mysterious journey, after He had thus entered upon this character, He was successively called before both the Jewish and the Roman powers: and before both He stands the Confessor, ready (as He afterward accomplished) to seal His testimony with His blood.

And here I would turn aside for a while to inspect this blood, the blood of the precious chosen Lamb of God; for surely there is much in it of which we do not properly make our account. That blood was shed for the remission of sins, and it makes clean the conscience of the believing person. But what is found in that blood, that it should bear with it such a savor of rest and refreshing with God, and be of such virtue with Him for tainted sinners who plead it? It was, it is true, blood of God's own; as Paul says to the Ephesian elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." It was the blood of Him Who was, Jehovah's fellow, without which indeed it had been nothing save that of a mere man. But this was not all that it was; it was the blood of the righteous One also—of Him Who had magnified the law and made it honorable, presenting Himself to God without spot—of One who willingly poured it out rather than fail in one jot of service and obedience to God. It was the blood of Him Who had finished the work that was given Him to do; Who had stood for God against the whole world, at the expense and loss of everything; Who had before emptied Himself of glory, that God in the Son of Man might be glorified, as in man He had been dishonored; and after He had thus emptied Himself, He still went down even to the death of the cross. There was all this in the blood; it was poured out bearing all this in it, and the savor of it with God was refreshing, "a sacrifice and an offering to God for a sweet smelling savor." Of old the joy in it entered so deeply, that "God said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake" (Gen. 8:21). It was the blood of the righteous obedient Servant, it was the blood of Jesus the Confessor.

Confession is that which stands by the truth of God against the lie of man, and stands by it at the hazard of everything; and this confession was witnessed by our Jesus. Throughout His life and ministry, it is true, it had been the way of the Son of God to hide Himself: for having emptied Himself of glory when He took the ministry of our peace upon Him, His manner was, to refuse to know Himself save as the Servant of God. For He had come in His Father's name and not in His own, to seek not His own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Him. But the time was to be, when He must openly stand confessed. Therefore, when adjured by the high priest to answer whether He were the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, He stood to the confession of the truth and His glory, saying, "Thou hast said" (Matt. 26:64). But this was at the cost of everything; for then they at once began to spit on Him, to buffet Him, to cover His face with shameless effrontery, and to lead Him off as their prey, saying, "What need we further witness? for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth" (Luke 22:71, Matt. 26:65).

And He was to make confession still more public than this—more as in the presence of the world's collected powers and enmity—and more immediately too in the very face and shame of the cross. And therefore is it that this last testimony of the great Confessor is so singularly marked out by the Spirit of God as His "good confession" (1 Tim. 6:13). But I desire here to be somewhat particular, and listen very attentively to the character and bearing of this good confession, recorded as it is in John 18:33-37.

"Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews?"

Pilate throughout this solemn scene was clearly desirous to quiet the people, and deliver Jesus from the malice of the Jews. It appears from the very first, that he was sensible of something peculiar in this prisoner of theirs. His silence had such a character in it, that, as we read, "the governor marveled greatly." And what divine attractions (we may here observe) must every little passage of His life, every path that He took among men, have had about it? and what must the condition of the eye and the ear, and the heart of man have been, that they did not discern and allow all this? But it is ourselves, dear brethren; we have looked in the face of the Son of God and have seen no comeliness there!

The governor's impression was strengthened by everything that happened as the scene proceeded: his wife's dream and her message to him, the evident malice of the Jews, and above all, the righteous guiltless Prisoner (though thus in shame and suffering) still persisting that He was the Son of God, all assailed his conscience. But the world in Pilate's heart was too strong for these convictions. They made a noise, it is true, in his heart; but the voice of the world there prevailed, and he went the way of it, though thus convicted. Could he, however, have preserved the world for himself, he would willingly have preserved Jesus. He let the Jews fully understand that he was in no fear of this Pretender, as he might judge Him to be; that Jesus was not such an One as could create with him any alarm about the interests of his master the emperor. But they still insisted that Jesus had been making Himself a King, and that if he let this Man go, he could not be Caesar's friend.

And here we are led to see that there is no security for the soul but in the possession of the faith that overcomes the world. Pilate had no desire after the blood of Jesus as the Jews had; but the friendship of Caesar was not to be hazarded. The rulers of Israel had once feared that, if they let this Man alone, the Romans would come and take away both their place and nation (John 11:48); and Pilate now fears to lose the friendship of the same world in the Roman emperor. And thus did the world bind him and the Jews together in the act of crucifying the Lord of glory: as it is written, "For of a truth, against Thy holy servant Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27, 28).

(To be continued.)

Bible Treasury: Volume 9, John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 10 (13:23)

"The disciple whom Jesus loved." I have been just feeling that I can fully enjoy the truth which these words convey. And I would cherish such an experience, and ask the Lord to fix and enlarge it.

It is far from intimating that one is more interested than another in the grace and salvation of God, or loved with a more faithful or enduring love. But it does intimate that there may be a more personal attachment between the Master and some of His disciples than between Him and others. All, I may say, sat at supper with Him, while only one leaned there on His bosom. All continued with Him in His temptations and are to receive the kingdom together, but only three were in the garden or on the holy hill with Him. For there is more personal oneness of thought and feeling in some than in others now of that which, as among ourselves, draws the willing heart along. If I look at a brother whose way savors much of that which I know Jesus must delight in being meek and self-renouncing and unaffectedly humble and withal elevated and unworldly, I may remember John, and see that disciple whom Jesus loved reflected in my brother. But then, how happy is it to remember that John himself was but one of a company whom the same Jesus had chosen and called, and bound to Himself forever! Did John exclude Thomas or Bartholomew? Thomas and Bartholomew, in the great evangelic sense, were as much to Christ as John. The one was not a whit more accepted man than the others.

This is sure and blessed, as well as plain and simple. I may rejoice in it with all certainty. And if I have any love to Him who has called me to such assured and eternal blessedness, will I not rejoice in this, that He has an object in which He can take more delight than, I must well know, I and my way can afford Him?

Thus do I find reasons for enjoying that sentence, again and again repeated, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and for delighting also in the thought that such a truth finds its illustration among the saints now, as it did in the midst of the apostles in earlier days.

The love with which we have to do is too perfect to be partial. It does not act irregularly or carelessly. "We are all the objects of it. Thomas is not neglected because John is thus loved. But because this love is real, it is moved in this way by a John. But when I see a John leaning on Jesus, while I myself am at a distance, let me have grace to look still, and to delight in the vision, and to say, "It is good for me to be here." If I am not in the same experience, still it is blessed to enjoy the thought that another is there. Peter was gladdened by the vision of a glory in Moses and Elias, though it was all beyond him. So is my spirit happy and thankful to entertain the thought of my more heavenly brother pressing the bosom of our common Lord.

(The late) J. G. B.

Footprints for Pilgrims: Evening Meditations for the Day of Days, Footprints for Pilgrims - 306 (12:1)

(John 12:1) Bethany receives Jesus for the last time; the blessed but momentary retreat of... a heart which has given us, in His relations with this beloved family, the example of an affection perfect, yet human, which found sweetness in being responded to and appreciated.

Footprints for Pilgrims: Evening Meditations for the Day of Days, Footprints for Pilgrims - 28 (11:35)

AH! it is blessed to be at the feet of Jesus in our sorrows, for there divine light shines upon them, and though we may suffer, and even be oppressed with our trials, we shall not, while there, doubt His love.

"JESUS WEPT." All know that the verses of our Bible are merely a human arrangement, and yet who can doubt that the Spirit of God controlled the one who made it in putting these two words into one verse? They indeed should stand alone, inasmuch as they afford such an inlet into the recesses of the Lord's heart. They have been the comfort of mourners in all ages, and they will continue to minister consolation

to His people until God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their faces.

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