

John - Commentaries by Alfred Henry Burton

Christian's Library: Volume 7, Love of Jesus., The (21:1-19)

Extracts from a Lecture by C. H. M., given at Kennington, 22nd Feb. 1868.

(John 21:1-19).

THE secret of all true power is found in the occupation of the heart with the Person of Christ. The Lord has given much truth to brethren, and we should have a just sense and value of the same. What I want to press is the practical consequences of the truth communicated. Is there any measure of adequate response? Has it had its weight in all the circumstances of our lives? Is it carried out?

My own thorough deep conviction of the state of things amongst us is (and I believe that every upright mind and earnest heart will admit it), that there is not the practical result there should be, and if you ask, Why? I answer, Because our hearts have got away from the Person of Christ, and from those personal manifestations mentioned in John 14:21, 23.

Now that is something peculiar, something especial. Allow me to ask, Do you understand and habitually enjoy these manifestations?

Some may object and say, "You are going to preach experience," but I say no, you cannot get on without these manifestations. Abstract truth will not feed the soul nor the heart. Unquestionably I would not put abstract truth against devotional, nor devotional against abstract — neither would I put didactic truth against what is experimental, nor what is experimental against what is didactic, but I would have your souls hold all truth in connection with the Person of Christ Himself. I want you to feel that there is something about acquaintance with the Person of Christ without which you cannot get on. Why do we find some all correctness in views, doctrines, and knowledge of Church position, and yet with no savor of Christ when you meet them? In John 21. we see the effect of the realized presence of Christ, and the absence of it. Why were the disciples gone back to their fishing again? Because they had lost the sense of the presence of Jesus! Here also, as with the disciples at Emmaus, the moment their hearts get back again, they go and say to the others, We have seen the Lord!

I would press two things upon any soul present, that knows what backsliding in heart is — though by grace preserved from outward fall — viz., restoration and consecration. We have shown us in Peter's case two kinds of restoration, that of the conscience and that of the heart. The moment Peter hears from his more spiritual brother, "It is the Lord," he goes beyond him in energetic action. In John we see the calm spirit; the discerning heart, the practiced eye. Alas, how often He speaks and we don't understand, He is near and we don't perceive! In Peter we find not only energy and boldness, but unshaken confidence in the heart of Christ. "He girt his fisher's coat about him," &c. Surely his conscience was purged, or he would have said to John, "You had better go first." Not a trace of that: he would be the first, just as if he had said, "Not one has failed as I have, so I must be the first to get to the feet of my risen Lord." He reckoned on the love and confided in the heart of Christ.

The more deeply I prize the presence of Christ, the more keenly I feel His absence, the more miserable I shall be under it. Who would understand so well the parent's averted face as the child that has walked in the sunshine of the parent's smile. I do not know anything more deplorable than to be satisfied with the mercies of His hand without a sense of His presence.... A soul cannot be fresh or happy away from Jesus. Ostensible position is one thing, our practical position is another. It is a personal question, how far we are daily realizing communion with the Lord Himself.

The confidence of Peter's heart was grateful to the heart of Jesus; no matter how backsliding the disciple, His heart is still the same. Oh the restoring grace of Jesus!

Wherever you are who have slidden away, get back to Him, don't let Satan shake your confidence in Jesus, or succeed in making you question His love, or tempt you to keep longer away; get to His feet, and you will find not a single cloud on His brow.

And when "they were come to land," what found they there? (vs. 9). The Lord had been thinking of them, looking after their wants, making Himself the servant of their necessities, as much as to say, Could you not trust Me for a dinner? There is not a single thought or care that the heart of Jesus is not interested in for us. Not a scrap of food you have, but you may take it from the hand that was nailed to the cross. What a heaven on earth we might know did we realize that Jesus has thus done all for us, spread our table, made our bed, &c. Was there ever such a dinner party? Jesus the host and a restored conscience feeding in the presence of Infinite, Everlasting Love! In that presence "none durst ask," &c. Each heart there as well as John's knew "it was the Lord."

Where do you see moral glory as in Jesus? Wiping the tear off the widow's cheek, stooping to spread and prepare a table. In all the tender touches of His life down here you see a moral glory; come and trust it. Oh, there's a charm about the heart that's formed by such thoughts of Jesus — it must be devotional, while the heart that's formed merely by doctrinal statements will remain an icicle.

"When they had dined," and not till then, He draws Peter apart. He had a question to settle with Peter's heart. He will apply the knife to the roots; it is not enough to have the soil removed from the conscience, the heart must be reached, the root must be touched. Take off the tops of the weeds in your fields, and they will sprout again. Partial restorations will not suffice; from such we have those awkward and defective restorations, as in conversions we have awkward and defective conversions, work so shallow and defective as to leave no permanent result in life. A soil on the conscience is the effect of what is working in the heart. What was working in Peter's heart? Self-confidence. "Though all forsake Thee," &c. (John 13:36).

Self-knowledge is the death-blow to self-confidence. If you know yourself, you will never trust yourself. The more you know Christ the more you will trust in Him. We are apt to sigh for "first love"; why should not the love tried and proved be deeper and sweeter?

"Lovest thou Me?" In this question the Lord uses the deepest and strongest form language is capable of. Peter's answer is in a much lower form: "I have affection for Thee." The Lord uses the same term as at first, the second time. The third time He takes up Peter's word, "Hast thou affection for Me?" Then the roots were reached, Peter's heart was now broken, and he says, "Because Thou knowest all things I can say to Thee, I have affection for Thee." Christ then gives the most touching expression of His confidence, "Feed My lambs, shepherd My sheep." (Feed has two meanings, one to supply food, the other to give pastoral care.) "Follow Me." The Lord Jesus Christ presents in these words the high and holy privilege of following Him down His martyr path. Christ was a victim under the hand of God, a martyr under the hand of man. The first suffering we cannot know. He bore it all that we might never. The second suffering we must know if we follow in separation a rejected Christ. Can you say, I long to have fellowship with Jesus in the martyr path? I would urge upon you the following with undivided love and firm attachment a martyred Jesus, not with easy-going profession, but a living conformable to His death. What was the first injunction to Israel on entering Canaan? Make you sharp knives — roll away the reproach, &c. May none of us traffic in unfelt truth.

Christian's Library: Volume 7, God's King, and the Apostasy of the Gentile Judgment Seat. (19:1-24)

John 19:1-24.

THE previous chapter plainly presents the Jews and their religious leaders intent upon destroying Jesus. They were legal, and pledged to uphold the legal system from which they derived their authority and subsistence.

He was full of grace and truth; it came by Him; and He derived His authority from, and lived by, His Father. Theirs was religious flesh; His was piety in the power of the Spirit. Their boast was in earthly religious privilege — the temple, city, and people of God; He brought souls to the Father, gave eternal life and a place in the Father's house. The display of this grace in Him attracted the fickle multitude, and produced true conscience work and faith in those who were given Him of the Father; but the bitterest antagonism in those who had imposed themselves and their authority upon a nation in the flesh.

Blinded thus, and by self-interest, they sought His blood. They were the instruments of Satanic mischief made ready to his hand.

It was different with Judas and Pilate. Hitherto with Judas, self-interest had enlisted him on the side of Jesus; nor was he troubled by religious scruples or conscience. Never do we find him smarting under the reproofs of Christ or stumbled by His teaching. He saw and profited by power superior to anything that he or anyone else had ever seen before. This was enough to assure him that whatever difficulties were in the path, all must ultimately turn out for the profit of those who followed Jesus. That it meant ruin in this world, as the world counts ruin, only with difficulty forced itself upon his mind, and indeed not fully until the last. Then it was utter despair. He had striven to get at least something in the meanwhile out of the priests, yet counting craftily upon that irresistible power which he well knew was centered in his Master. But now with convicted conscience he sees Him about to be crucified — thought of insupportable misery!

How clearly we see in all this a dark and subtle power enticing the man, by playing on his greed, until he becomes the traitorous but unwitting tool of Satan's plans!

With Pilate, too, it was no question of religion or conscience. What there was of either, as there is, even though seared, something of both in all men, arrayed him on the side of Christ as against His persecutors (18:38, 19:4, 6, 8-12). Of Moses' law or grace he knew nothing; religious privilege from God he had not; he did not oppose what was spiritual, for to him there was no such thing (18:38). It was a mere idea, with which he had no quarrel (vers. 36-38). But step by step he is insensibly led on in spite of himself; and of that justice in which Rome so vainly boasted, to the act in which culminated the apostasy of man's judgment-seat. No longer is imperial Caesar seated there, but Satan, this world's prince.

As the first step in this abysmal apostasy Pilate scourges Jesus, at the same time repeating his previous declaration, "I find in Him no fault whatever." Meanwhile in heartless mockery the Roman soldiery had clothed Him with simulated imperial attire, saluting Him King of the Jews, and striking Him on the face. Thus clad, Jesus went forth from the judgment hall, and Pilate says, "Behold the Man!" He probably thought that the sight of the indignity and cruel punishment which the Blessed One had suffered would appease their rage and excite compassion.

Seeing Him, these Jewish priests and officers, as wolves thirsting for His blood, cry, Crucify!

Crucify! But Pilate is not yet prepared for such an unrighteous act. Let them do so if they chose, but he repeats his sentence for the third time, "I find no fault in Him."

This marks another step in the downward course. Pilate is willing that the guiltless should be crucified, provided the Jews do it and bear the responsibility. But for many reasons this they will not do. Moreover, little do their reasons signify; the word of Jesus had already fixed the mode of death by which He was to die. His must be the Roman cross.

The Jews, having now decided among themselves as to the charge to be brought against Him, say, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." But will the Roman magistrate take cognizance of an infraction of Jewish law? Moreover, the claim to be Son of God confirms, while it arouses still more, Pilate's fears. The finger of God upon his conscience produced those fears. To shed Jewish blood, innocent or guilty, was a slight matter to Pilate; but before this prisoner the judge felt ill at ease. And though his wife's message is not mentioned here, it is certain that were it a question only of Pilate's will and the will of the Jews, he would have released Jesus. But a far more serious controversy is in question. Shall Satan or God in moral government control man's judgment-seat?

Again Pilate goes into the Prætorium and says to Jesus, "Whence art Thou?" Jesus answered not. Of His acts and teaching He would speak, but His divine origin and nature came not within the scope of creature judgment.

Amazed at His silence, Pilate asserts in pride his irresponsible authority. Then Jesus answers, resting authority upon its true basis, and insisting on the responsibility to God of those who exercise it. Pilate had no authority if it were not given to him from above. And those who in the false assumption of it had delivered up their King had the greater sin. Had not the Jews put the law in motion, Gentile authority would never have taken cognizance of the case. Scope being given them to do their will, nothing short of His death in the most ignominious form — that of a Roman criminal — will satisfy their rage. Their hatred was more culpable than Pilate's injustice.

Authority might indeed be with Pilate, but divine discernment and ability to judge were with Him who stood before his tribunal, and apportioned to each his share of guilt.

From this time Pilate sought to release Him; for the facts, his own personal conviction, and conscience alike convinced him of the guiltlessness of Jesus. Why not then give immediate effect to the promptings of justice? Ah, here the fatal opportunity was given. He who knoweth to do right, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. In most things he who hesitates when the right is known is lost.

Quick to perceive and take advantage of this weakness, the Jews cry out, If thou releasest this Man thou art not Caesar's friend; every one making himself a king speaks against Caesar.

This decided him. Pride of place, love of authority, and of the emoluments pertaining to it, held by the slight tenure of the most jealous tyrant's will, all combined to weight the scales of justice against the claims of righteousness and truth. For the first time Pilate's self-interest was opposed to Christ. In Matthew, he, as a crafty, far-sighted ruler, surrenders the innocent One to His murderers to avoid a tumult. In Mark, he does so out of pure indifference, in order to content the people. In Luke, he is overborne by their violence, and gives Him up from fear. But here, from mere self-interest, most despicable of all, he plunges the judgment-seat into apostasy.

It is now early morning, and, having heard these words, he leads Jesus out and formally assumes the seat of judgment at a place called the Pavement, outside of the Prætorium. Clearheaded and with conscience enough to see that these Jews had forced him to an act which revolted his judicial instincts, as well as every moral feeling — an act which shattered every principle of right, and the foundation of government itself, yet forced to it by a determination to seek his own interests at all costs, he is at least determined that they also shall be made to sacrifice all that nationally was sacred to them.

He says to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests, speaking in the name of the whole people, answer, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he delivered Him up to them to be crucified. "And they took Jesus and led Him away."

Everything divine that God had ever committed to the responsibility of men; every promise confirmed and established by the holy sanction of the law; His gracious intervention on His people's behalf held in bondage by an evil power mightier than they; His mercy which in spite of reiterated transgression fulfilled His word, all was surrendered. On the other hand, His ordinance of governmental authority, committed though it now was to the Gentile, still God's minister for good, or an avenger for wrath to him that does evil, all given up for cruel spite or personal interests. Never in all time's history could there be another moment of equal importance for judgment to be administered in righteousness, and spite and selfishness abhorred. But instead, at that tribunal, spite and selfishness presided, and unrighteousness decreed.

Jesus bears His cross to the place of a skull, and there they crucify Him, together with two others, one on either side, and Jesus in the midst. Pilate puts upon the cross a title, signifying who He was, Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews. For this the Jews desire to substitute, He said, I am King of the Jews. But Pilate holds them to their bargain. They had denied their King and accepted Caesar. He the while confesses the claims of Jesus while nailing Him to the cross. Who shall estimate the turpitude of such a decree? At the same time he gratifies his cynical contempt of priests and people by putting Jesus' true title in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin on the tree. What he had written, he had written.

To Jesus this much at least was left. Of all else He was despoiled. But prompt as the soldiers were to wound and pierce His body, they refrained from rending the coat, for this was seamless, woven from the top throughout, and to rend would be to ruin it. So they cast lots for it instead. Thus the Scripture was fulfilled which says, They parted My garments among them, and on My vesture they did cast lots.

The contrast how terrible! Jesus surrendering everything for man, man seizing everything from Jesus!

W. T. W.

Christian's Library: Volume 8, Jesus' Death and Burial (19:25-42)

John 19:25-42.

THE loved Evangelist has displayed in this chapter hitherto the morally divine perfection of the Victim. He will now insist upon the solemn facts and glorious efficacy of His death and burial. The importance is made to lie in these facts, and the blessed person of Jesus. Not as in Matthew and Mark is He mocked as Son of God, suffering from man high and low, passersby, priests, and dying felons, and from God when forsaken on the cross; nor, as in Luke, sneered at as the Christ, though one of the dying malefactors confesses Him upon the tree. John passes unnoticed all the agony of that moment, and the three hours of darkness, but shows that Jesus fulfils the Scriptures and His own word and finishes His work.

The closing moments are alone related, since they especially declare the peculiar glory of His person. Very man, His service being accomplished, He thinks of her who gave Him birth — who stood towards Him in the blessed but human relationship of mother. Departing from this world, He would leave her need supplied with all that a son could furnish and be to her. To her, "Woman, behold thy son," and to

the disciple whom He loved, "Behold thy mother"; told of that perfect and personal humanity which was His, and of the truth of His natural affections which pertained to it.

This completed all He had to do, there remaining only the expression of His own personal need. Hitherto His thought had ever been of the need of others. (To the woman of Samaria He did not say, "I thirst.") Now, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled He says, "I thirst." Vinegar was there, and, filling a sponge, they put it to His mouth. In Matthew and Mark this is connected with the cry, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani." Luke does not record it. John gives it in proof of His suffering humanity, and Fulfillment of Scripture, and coupled with it, the exercise of His divine prerogative. For with the words, "It is finished," He bows His head and delivers up His Spirit. Luke tells us simply, He expired—the mere statement of death, and both Matthew and Mark have similar expressions. But here it is an act of sovereign power, the laying down of His life which none could take from Him, done however in obedience to His Father.

But was it really death in the full sense as men die? The Jews in their religious scrupulousness give occasion to the public and irrefragable testimony of it. So that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath then drawing on, the Jews begged of Pilate that their legs might be broken and they taken away.

Accordingly the soldiers break the legs of the two thieves; but coming to Jesus, they find Him already dead, and instead of breaking His legs one of the soldiers pierces His side with a spear, and immediately there pours forth blood and water.

This was not the cause of death, else it would not have been the offering of Himself according to His free competency to do so. He had already delivered up His Spirit, but the blood and water were the public testimony of death before God and man. John was divinely commissioned to bear witness to it, speaking as it does of the divinely righteous ground, and the way of acceptable approach to God, as well as of the spiritual cleansing of the soul which is ours through the death of Christ.

The blood and water flowing from the side of a dead Christ are descriptive of peculiarly Christian blessing. Whereas Old Testament Scripture had precisely declared that not a bone of Him should be broken; and again, that they shall look on Him whom they pierced. The first refers to the Passover lamb, and has specially in view the simple but divinely important fact of redemption from the judgment of God. This is common to every saved soul irrespective of dispensation, and is the necessary and divine foundation of every true blessing, by reason of which God can deliver His people. It is the basis and introduction of blessing. On the other hand, the looking on Him whom they pierced, marks the close of the present day of faith, and introduces the kingdom, and the millennial blessing in power. The present interval of faith and grace lies therefore between these two points, and consists in a more simply divine and eternal order of things, constituting the Christian revelation.

But the Spirit now presents to us another fact of weightiest moment, giving to Christian truth a peculiar character of its own. This is the fact of burial. Christ not only died, but was buried. In this Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus are especially concerned. The other Gospels do not mention Nicodemus, though all make careful reference to Joseph of Arimathæa. John most deeply penetrates into Joseph's state of soul and declares that through fear of the Jews he was but a secret disciple. Doubtless he was officially known to Nicodemus, who, like himself, appears to have been one of the rulers (7:48-50), or of the council (Luke 24:50, 51). He was nevertheless good and just, and had not consented to their counsel and deed, even as Nicodemus himself. This moral similarity had, it appears, drawn these men together, and, in spite of his evident position in the world, for Joseph was both rich and honorable, he emboldens himself to request of Pilate permission to take the body of Jesus. His desire was granted, and, together with Nicodemus, who had brought a hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes, he binds up the body of Jesus with the spices for burial.

The importance of the fact of burial is emphasized in John's Gospel by its being established on the testimony of two distinguished men of irreproachable character; and, moreover, that the tomb was in a garden, near to the place of crucifixion. Without premeditation, and, it would appear, without other aid, they laid Jesus there, because the tomb was near, and the Jews' day of preparation was at hand. It was a new tomb hitherto unused.

All these points are of distinct importance. The burial of Jesus was not to be confounded with that of any other. The nearness of the tomb to the cross left no room for doubt that Jesus was laid there; for no corpse could be carried far, on account of the Jews' preparation. He was not buried with the robbers, but in a tomb, and that a new one. When, therefore, it was empty on the resurrection morn, it was clear presumptive proof that He was risen; for He had been laid there, as Joseph and Nicodemus could testify, and now no trace of death was found, and no corruption.

In the Synoptic Gospels it is the women who are the witnesses, with Joseph, of burial. In John, it is the two men, Joseph and Nicodemus; the women are passed over. In Matthew, we are told the tomb was Joseph's.

Thus two immense truths as to the person of Jesus were to be substantiated in His burial. First, not only that He died, but that He was brought into the dust of death that is, the grave. His death was as complete and real as that of mere mortal man. Secondly, that He saw no corruption. Of this the new but now empty tomb was proof, in which no one but He had ever been laid. John combines these two points—that the tomb was new and hitherto untenanted, but omits what the Synoptic Gospels all relate, that it was hewn in the rock—his object being to insist in the fullest way upon the reality and character of Jesus' death and burial.

W. T. W.

Christian's Library: Volume 8, Knowledge of the Father, The (17:25-26)

(Read John 17:25 and 26.)

OUR blessed Lord all through John's Gospel is bringing before His disciples the name of the Father, so as to put them in the same place with Himself before God and before the world.

In John 14 we find our Lord speaking to the disciples of the Father's house and the place He was going to prepare there for them, so that they might be there where He would be; and then tells them where He was going and on what ground they too would be there in the knowledge of the Father, through the knowledge of Himself as the way, the truth, and the life — the Revealer of the Father.

This leads to Philip's question — "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us;" and in reply He tells them — that in all that He did and said, in all His works, He was showing them the Father.

"Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

Our blessed Lord passed through this world ever telling out of the Father's love and goodness, and care in all the details and activities of His life of love before His disciples. He says—

"I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world;"

"I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me,"

and He prays for them as those whom the Father had given to Him—

"For they are Thine;... while I was in the world I kept them in Thy name;... I have given them Thy word;... I have declared unto them Thy name."

Walking as He did here in the unclouded joy of His Father's love and presence with Him, He told out in every action, in every word, in all His ways what His Father was to Him, and how He was here but to manifest Him (John 6:57 and 4:34): and the purpose of all this was "that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them"; that they might know the Father and all His love as they had seen it manifested in the Son of His love.

The disciples saw and should have understood (as I believe they did later on when their understanding was opened by the Lord, and the Holy Ghost was come) that all this display was the result of the love wherewith He was loved by His Father (John 17:23), and that He had, as He says (John 17:12), kept them in the name of the Father, as those who were the Father's: He had acted towards them as in that name, which the Father had given Him to make known, so as to bring them into this conscious relationship as children before Him, and that they might know and enjoy His Fatherly love and care, and all that His heart is towards them — that "they might be one as we are one." All the life of our blessed Lord here below was the answer back of the enjoyment of this love of the Father to Him (John 15:9-11).

But all this is disclosed that the disciples may enter into it, that that love and the love with which Thou hast loved me may be in them — the same character of love — producing in them the full confiding response of love to Him, the Father—

"I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it."

Not only was that name made known by our blessed Lord in His pathway through this world, but again, on that morning of resurrection, when He sent Mary of Magdala to announce to His disciples that—

"I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God" (John 20:17),

linking them up in the same bundle of life with Himself, and putting them in such a place before the Father that He could say, "I and the children which God hath given Me" (Heb. 2:13).

Into what a place of relationship and favor has He not brought us, and set us in the Son of His love; for it is only through Him that this is our place, as our Lord says (John 14:20),

"At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."

What two effective causes to work in, and exercise our hearts and draw them forth in loving, living service — the Father's love in all its watchful, ministering care, and Christ's love in all its constraining power over us; as the apostle Paul puts it in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians —

"Who loved me and gave Himself for me,"

and again —

"The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14).

I in them, "The power to tell forth that love of His—to be light bearers here, holding forth the word of life."

Why is it we know so little of the Father's love, which it was our Lord's intention we should know, and that it should be in us? Because we do not take our place as children; as simply entering into what He has said and then by the Spirit through the Word occupying our hearts, with and meditating upon, the pathway and acting of our blessed Lord, and thus learning the Father and His love.

C. H. C.

10. ZION'S KING KNOWN BY THE GLORY; AND THE WORLD AND ITS PRINCE JUDGED BY THE CROSS OF THE SON OF MAN.

(John 12:12-50.)

THE one flock and the new condition of the saint while passing onward to resurrection, have already been before us. vss. 12-19 now unfold a beautiful picture of Israel's blessing, as the owned and responsible people of Jehovah, realized then for a passing moment in exquisite perfection, since the divine King of Israel was there in the person of Jesus, according to the prophecy of Scripture. As will be observed, this follows the teaching and incidents which are used to illustrate the purely spiritual blessings found in Christianity.

The report having reached Jerusalem that Jesus, after His withdrawal, was again coming there, a great crowd went out to welcome Him, crying, "Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel." But not yet could Jerusalem be called "The Lord our Righteousness." Her gates were not those of righteousness, nor was any but Himself the righteous One to enter them. The stone was yet to be rejected. It is true that He fulfills Zechariah's prophecy, and having found a young ass sits upon it as Zion's King. And in His person the power was there to annihilate the adversary, and the nations in His train opposed to Jehovah's King, the Son of David. It was fitting then that His personal dignity and glory should sway, if only transiently, the unprejudiced minds of those who had witnessed His power of resurrection. These, therefore, accompanied Him, testifying that He had called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from among the dead. Those met Him also who had heard the report of it; and the gathered crowds together welcome Him, as in triumph, to the seat of His rule and government.

But He had come in meekness for salvation, not to break the battle bow; and the adversary, by raising the hand of violence against Him, could accomplish what subtlety and deceit had utterly failed to do.

Shouts and acclamations rent the air, and waving palms gave demonstration of an irresistible impulse; but without conscience, if even there were a little faith. So entirely were all thoughtless of the mind of God, that even the disciples knew not these things at the first. It was not until Jesus was glorified that they remembered the Scriptures; and faith and conscience were aroused to the fact that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.

This plainly shows us that, apart from the light which Jesus glorified sheds upon the scene of religious privilege and responsibility, we should have no right understanding of the times, nor any apprehension of the mind of God for the moment, or true appreciation of the path of Jesus, as those responsible to uphold His glory on earth. Without the stability which a Christ in glory gives our souls, if not carried away with a giddy, fickle multitude to cry, "Crucify Him," we might at least be plunged into the depths of doubt and well-nigh despair, as the disciples were when that bright day's fair hopes gave place to the impenetrable gloom of Calvary. Jesus on high in heavenly ministry, and the Spirit dwelling in and with us here, are needed in order to bear the heavenly testimony of grace. Otherwise it would be law, not faith; flesh and not the Spirit.

But another scene now unfolds itself; not a glorified Christ in contrast with His coming under law, but a crucified Son of man, the Deliverer from the scene and power of evil and of darkness.

There were certain Greeks who came up to worship at the feast. These were Gentiles in the flesh, without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. But in spite of this, like the Magi who had seen in the far-off East the star that betokened the birth of the King of Israel, so the glory of the God of Israel had drawn them to Jerusalem. There the fame of Jesus reaches them, and they desire to see Him. Conscious, however, of their inferior position, in which indeed the word of prophecy placed them, they come first to Philip. Conversant with Moses and the prophets, Philip tells Andrew, impressed as the latter was with the glory of Messias. Together they tell Jesus. But for Him it is not the day to take Messias's place, nor to fulfill the prophecies of Israel's glory. The Son of man shall indeed be glorified, and put in force a wider rule; but the grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, if fruit is to be borne.

Before He crushes the foes of Israel, He will meet the whole power of evil and destroy it in a far profounder depth. He alone understood and estimated what was needed to bring, not these Greeks alone, but any soul of man into that blessing which was in the Father's heart for them.

To be occupied even now with eternal things, belonging to another world where Christ is gone, and by-and-by to be with Him there honored by the Father, whose name was glorified in raising Him, it was necessary first that this world should be judged, and the prince of it cast out. But how could this be done? and who was there to do it? Jesus would do it by being lifted up upon the cross.

The cross itself was peculiar to the Son of man, and possible for Him alone. An attractive object for all men and an effectual work, both divine in character, are found there. But the path thither He has distinctly formulated for us to walk in, one spiritually outside of and beyond the power of the evil one. Three great principles mark this pathway. The first is grace. Walking in it life in this world is held at the call of the Master, who says, "Follow Me!" But can we follow Him in this path of surrender, perfect love, and devotedness? Yes; the motive for it, and the needed encouragement, are both sufficient. To be where the Lord Himself is — could any motive more powerful be presented to one who knows and loves His Master? And what greater encouragement could there be than that the Father would honor him who served His Son?

But grace might seem to open a world-wide scope for service were it not that the obedience of Christ, which is the second principle of the Christian path, narrows it in detail to that which is for the Father's glory. For Him, too, who sought this glory in such a world, there was the grave; though surely resurrection out of it. Illimitable the grace; but its highest expression in obedience here was death, which is not the proper scene nor limit of the Father's glory, except as He raises out of it.

As the hour for glorifying the Father's name in respect of this sinful world came before the Saviour's obedient and devoted soul, He was troubled. And how deep the trouble! How solemn, too, that even He was troubled! But except He deliver, the misery was irremediable, the

difficulty insuperable, the adversary invincible. Yet the cost of deliverance how great! But for this very purpose He had come; and while piety and perfect love pressed from His lips the cry, "Father, save Me from this hour;" devotedness and obedience immediately added, "Father, glorify Thy name."

Graciously considerate for the souls of men, drowned in spiritual stupor and fleshliness by the dark power of the prince of this world, the Father, in response to the Son, is heard saying out of heaven, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again,"

This introduces the third essential principle of the Christian path, namely, rejection by and of the world, together with the full detection and final casting out of its prince; as well as a way of acceptance with God and of acceptable approach to Him outside of earth altogether.

Jesus spoke of His death. They thought He was seeking recognition as the Christ. But a dying Christ, for so they rightly understood His words, how foreign to their minds! Yet He did not say "the Christ," but "the Son of man" must be lifted up. Who is this Son of man? Thus they question. Sitting in darkness and the shadow of death because they rebelled against His word, they needed light. He was it; and for a little while was among them. They must believe in the light and become sons of light. It was in vain now to expect a Christ according to flesh, or even the wider rule of the Son of man over Jew and Gentile. Their path must be in the light itself, or darkness would seize upon them.

The teaching of this passage is most manifest. Divine purposes respecting the Son of man, as well as the promise concerning the Christ after the flesh, must alike give place to another scene than earth, and to relationship with God according to His nature. In fact it is the Christian blessing and approach to the Father in the unveiled glory as the sons of light.

Israel's opportunity under law of inheriting the earthly promises was forever lost. They had not believed, as Isaiah had said; and the arm of the Lord which would have accomplished those promises had not been revealed. From henceforth the sentence of judicial hardening went out against Israel as a nation. Well indeed we know that in answer to the Saviour's precious intercession on the cross there was over-abounding grace shown to them nationally in the Gospel. But, in spite of the long-suffering of God, the sentence pronounced by Isaiah, and after seven centuries of suspense reiterated by the Lord Jesus Himself (Matt. 13), here affirmed at the close of His ministry by the testimony of the Spirit, was finally enforced by Paul in his last word to the people (Acts 28:27). Thenceforward the salvation of God was sent to the nations.

Their ruin was not merely due to the darkness of unbelief, but because many, even of the rulers, who did believe were afraid to confess Him lest they should be excommunicated. Glory from man was more to them than glory from God.

Yet to believe on Jesus, lowly as He seemed, was to believe on God. The light, come into the world in His person, was absolutely divine, and was communicated by His words. These were spoken that the world — any soul of man — might be saved; if rejected, His word would judge in the last day. His words were spoken by the Father's command, and were not only light but also eternal life to all who received them, but were judgment to the rejecters.

The world judged, the prince of it cast out, the earth relinquished, on the one hand; on the other, the Son of man a sacrifice of propitiation for all, above the earth, for entering the heavenly courts. No longer an undying Christ abiding forever; but light come into the world that they might become sons of light, and life eternal revealed in the words of Jesus and received by faith. These form the chief elements of the evil overcome and the blessing introduced, as given in this passage.

clickbible.org