Mark - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

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The seed which fell on good ground brought forth fruit in different proportions. We see the activity of grace in the heart, because it grows and bears fruit, and keeps on growing. He who has truly received the word in the heart is fitted to communicate it to others. He may not have the gift of preaching, but he loves the truth, he loves souls, he loves the Savior, and the light which has been lit in his heart is to light all around him. He too sows according to his strength, and is responsible to do so. All will be manifested, faithfulness and unfaithfulness, with regard to this, as in everything else. God sends light into the heart in order to give it to others, and not to hide it. We shall receive more if we are faithful in communicating what we possess; and, if there is love in us, this cannot fail. Truth and love both came in Christ, and unless the heart be full of Christ, the truth will not be manifested. If the heart be full of other things, or of itself, Christ cannot be manifested. If Christ-truth and love- be in the heart, the truth will shine out for the blessing of others, and we ourselves shall be blessed and more will be given to us; and there will be liberty and joy in the soul.

The Gospel (Romans 1): December 2014, Gospel of the Kingdom, The

The preaching of Jesus announcing the kingdom showed that the time was fulfilled, that the kingdom of God was at hand, and that the people must repent and believe the gospel. We should distinguish between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of our salvation. Christ is the center of both, but there is a great difference between the preaching of a kingdom which is drawing near and that of an eternal redemption accomplished upon the cross. It is quite possible that the two truths should be announced together. Indeed, we find that the Apostle Paul preached the kingdom, but he certainly also proclaimed an eternal redemption accomplished for us on the cross. Christ prophesied of His death and announced that the Son of Man should give His life for the ransom of many, but He could not announce an accomplished redemption during His life. Men ought to have received Him and not to have put Him to death: hence His testimony was about the kingdom which was drawing nigh.

The kingdom in its public power has been delayed because Christ has been rejected (see Rev. 11:17), and this delay lasts all the time that Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, until the time when He shall arise from the throne of His Father to judge. God has said, “Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” (Psalm 110). It is nevertheless true that the kingdom was already come in mystery, according to Matthew 13; this goes on during the time that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God. But when God’s appointed moment shall come, the Lord will arise and set up the kingdom, and with His own power He will judge the living, and peace and happiness shall be established upon the earth. And we who have received Him, while the world has rejected Him, shall go to meet Him in the air; we shall be forever with the Lord and shall come with Him in glory when He shall appear before the world and shall reign with Him, and, what is still far better, we shall be like Him and always with Him in the heavenly places in the Father’s house.

J. N. Darby

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 4, What Saints Will Be in the Tribulation?

The question, “Will the saints be in the tribulation?” suggests itself to every one who is occupied with the hopes of the church of God and the prophetic declarations of Scripture as to the close of this earth's painful and laborious history. Personal anxiety suggests it on one hand, and on the other it connects intimately with the gravest and most vital points of prophetic inquiry; or rather of the true character of the church of God and its condition at the close.

I cannot, in the space allowed me here, enter at large into the declarations of the Old Testament as to a remnant, nor of the New as to the church. But a short answer to the question itself will help to throw light on the points I allude to and on the rapture of the saints. I purpose adding a development of the true force of 2 Thess. 1; 2, so often introduced in the discussions which have arisen on these subjects.

And first, as to our being in the tribulation: How do I know there will be a tribulation? I must get some revelation of it. He who would place the church in it will answer me, I am sure, that the Scriptures are clear on the point. There will be at the close a tribulation, a time such as there has never been, till the Lord's coming brings deliverance. What, then, are the Scriptures which tell us that there will be such tribulation? I am not aware of any other direct ones than these: Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19 (Luke does not speak of it nor of the abomination of desolation); to which we may add the more general passages of Rev. 3 to; chap. 7: 14. The first four passages do effectively prove that there will be a time of tribulation such as never was since there was a nation, or, as it is expressed in Mark, " such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created, neither shall be." The passages from Revelation apply, we shall see, to a wider sphere than the preceding ones; but as they speak of a great tribulation, I have, of course, quoted them. There will be then a tribulation. The other part of the question still remains: Shall we, who compose the church, be in this tribulation?

The answer to this question must be sought in the passages which speak of the tribulation itself. The first of them, Jeremiah 30: 7, is as clear as possible in announcing those to whom it applies: " It is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be delivered out of it." This time, then, of trouble, such as never was nor will be (so that there cannot be two), is the time of Jacob's trouble. Nothing can be clearer or more distinct. The

whole chapter may be read, which sets it in the clearest light. It is not merely that Jacob may be found there, but when it is said, " Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it," the trouble spoken of is Jacob's trouble.

The next is Dan. 12 1. This is also positively declared to be of Daniel's people. The whole prophecy is the description of what is to happen to Daniel's people in the last days. Dan. 10: 14. Michael, also (compare chap. 10: 21), will then stand up for that people, and, as Jeremiah had said, they will be delivered (that is, the elect remnant-those written in the book). Daniel's testimony then is also quite clear. The tribulation is the tribulation of Daniel's people. But this is the rather important because it carries us at once to Matthew, the Lord Himself declaring that He speaks of this same time and same event, using the terms of Daniel, and referring to him by name as well as to the statements of the passage. Compare Matt. 24:15; Dan. 12:11.

But all the language of the passage in Matthew confirms this. Those who are in Judea are to flee to the mountains. Those who are on the housetop are not to come down to seek anything. The abomination which causes desolation stands in the holy place. They are to pray that their flight may not be on the sabbath. False Christs and false prophets are to seduce with the hopes cherished by the Jewish people. All is local and Jewish-has no application to hopes which rest on going to meet Christ in the air. What is in question is " flesh " being " saved " (i.e., life spared on earth). Mark relates evidently to the same event and almost exactly in the same terms. Thus these four passages, which speak of the unequaled tribulation, apply it distinctly to Jacob, Jerusalem, and Judea, and the Jews, not to the church. It is entirely another order and sphere of things from the church, and professedly so.

There are two passages which, as I have said, are more general: Rev. 3:10 and 7: 14. Do these, then, apply to the church? The language of Rev. 3:10 is this, " Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them which dwell on the earth." That is, when the church is addressed, it is with a declaration that she will be kept from that hour which shall come to try others. So that thus far the testimonies of Scripture declare that the unequaled tribulation is for Jacob, and that, when the time of temptation is spoken of in addressing the church, it is to declare that the faithful shall be kept out of it.

Rev. 7:14 may seem more difficult; still it bears witness to the same truth. For the heavenly kings and priests (that is, the elders who have represented them from the beginning of the second or strictly prophetic part of the book) are professedly another class of persons, who have not come out of the great tribulation. One of these elders explains to John who those who have come out of the great tribulation are, another class of persons from themselves. One of them asks John, Who are these who are arrayed in white robes? etc. John refers to him, and then he explains. That is, the crowned elders are quite a different class from them; so that, while admitting the passage to be obscure in certain points, it is clear in this-in giving us the elders and those who came out of the tribulation as two distinct classes. The crowned elders are not at all represented as having been in it, but as pointing out others as those that come out of it. Every element of the description of these persons confirms this distinction.

Another passage-Rev. 12-while not using the term tribulation, yet speaking of the epoch at which it is to happen, strongly confirms this same truth. When Satan and his angels are defeated by Michael, he is cast out and come down to the earth, having great wrath, knowing he has but a short time, and persecutes the woman. Now what is the effect of this most important event on those who can celebrate its bearing? That the trial of the heavenly saints is ended, and that of the inhabiters of the earth and the sea just about to begin in its most formidable shape, because Satan is cast down there. The language is this: " Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night: and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea," etc. Now I do not say that this is the moment of the rapture, for I think it is included in the man-child's being caught up. But I say this that, at the moment of the commencement of the great rage of Satan for the three times and a half, the entire deliverance of the heavenly saints from his power, and their definite triumph is celebrated; that is, they are not exposed to that last time of Satan's rage. This chapter, then, confirms, in the fullest way, the exemption of the church from the last and dreadful time of trial. I am satisfied that the whole teaching and structure of the Revelation confirms the same truth; but this would evidently lead me into too large a sphere of inquiry.

We have found that the passages which speak of the tribulation first apply it directly to the Jews on one side, and then exclude the church from it on the other. I do not see how such a point as this could be made clearer by scripture.

I now turn to the interpretation of 2 Thess. 1; 2 There is in the latter chapter and (I think I may say) acknowledged mistranslation, of which the true and undoubted sense gives the key to the whole passage. I refer to verse 2, " as that the day of Christ is at hand ": it should be " is present." The word is used for, and translated in two different places, " present," in contrast with things to come-" things present and things to come." This is always its sense in Scripture. What the Thessalonians were troubled and upset in their minds by, then, was that they had been led by false teachers (pretending to the Spirit, and even alleging a letter of Paul to this effect) to suppose that the day of Christ was actually come. The violence of persecution was very great; and as the day of the Lord is in effect spoken of as a day of terror and trial in the Old Testament, these false teachers had profited by this to persuade them it was there.

The apostle with divine wisdom sets them morally right in chapter 1, as to their feelings and sentiments as to this, before entering in the second into positive instruction as to the fact of the Lord's coming. He shows them the folly (since Christ was to appear for that day, He Himself being present in it) of supposing that it was His own people and faithful ones He was going to make suffer and cast into distress and tribulation. No; it was His enemies and theirs who would be in affliction in that day, and they themselves in rest and peace. The very righteousness of God would assure this. It was a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble them, and to His troubled ones rest, when Christ shall be revealed, for this was what brought in the day. It was only shown by their tribulations that He counted them worthy of His kingdom that was then to come.

In a word, as the day was Christ's and brought in by His personal presence, when it was there they would have rest and their persecutors trouble. It is the contrast of state when the day is there, not the epoch of its commencement, which is spoken of. Indeed, had it been so, it would have been a poor and uninspired comfort, for they would not have rest yet. On the other hand, the adversaries of the constant expectation of Christ would gain nothing; for the apostle's words so interpreted would have led the saints at Thessalonica to a constant expectation of His appearing, instead of their rapture, as the moment of getting rest. But the truth is, the using the Greek word anesis (rest) as significative of the moment of attaining the rest is a mistake. The word, though used for the time of obtaining relaxation, is equally used for

a state of ease, or even pleasure. It is never used in Scripture for the moment of obtaining relaxation from trial, but always in the general sense of a state of ease, one contrasted with theipsis (distress). The whole and sole force of the apostle's reasoning is this, that as the Lord Himself was to bring in the day, it could not, when there, be a day of distress for His people, but evidently for His enemies and their persecutors. In chapter 2 he proceeds to unfold to them the real order of the events, and especially in connection with the place they had in them.

Here, again, we meet a question of criticism, but it affects very little the reasoning of the apostle. Some would change here the authorized English version, and read, " But we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming," etc., instead of " by the coming." The preposition itself is used in both ways; but its constant force with words of beseeching is by' (sometimes ' for,' which has no place here). The force of the apostle's reasoning is this, that as they were to be gathered together to Christ, they could not be in the day which was to come by His appearing; they were to go to meet Him in the air, and hence could not be in the judgments of that day, it trials or its terrors.

The apostle had taught them in his first epistle that they were to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Hence he could refer to it as a known truth. The saints were not to await the coming of the day of the Lord on the earth, but to go up to meet Him in the air, and be forever with Him. Did He appear, they, we know, would appear with Him. But here he speaks of what they ought to have remembered, that they would go up before the day, and hence they could not possibly be there in their actual state on earth, if the day was. The church's connection' with the return of the Lord was, to go up to meet Him in the air, to be gathered unto Him. The day was entirely another thing; it was vengeance from His presence. Neither could the day therefore come before the objects of vengeance were there. An apostasy would come, and the man of sin would be revealed, whom the Lord would consume with the breath of His mouth, and destroy by the appearing of His presence.

That is, we have two things (which from other scriptures also we know to be distinct, exactly in this way, Christ's coming, and the manifestation of it; for when He appears, we shall appear with Him-hence we must be with Him before even He appears at all, yet at His coming), the coming of Christ and the public epiphany of His presence, with one of which the saints are directly connected, by being gathered together to Him • with the other, the day, because at His appearing He will execute judgment against the ungodly. They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. But He will come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe; that is, they will be in the display of this glory in that day. They will appear with Him in glory-be like Him. Now it is quite certain they will not appear with Him when they are caught up to meet Him in the air. Thus it is not merely particular expressions, though these are clear and forcible, but the bearing, and object, and course of reasoning of the whole chapter, which shows the distinction of the rapture of the saints before Christ appears, and the coming of the day when He is admired in them.

What is important to remark is, the entire difference of relationship in which the saints are put with Christ: we belong to Him, go to meet Him, appear with Him, are glorified together. The practical result is, not merely to clear up a question of dates and of time, but to change the whole spirit and character of our waiting and Christ's coming. We wait for Him to come and take us to Himself, the full realization of our heavenly calling. There are no events connected with our relationship with Christ. We have no need of judgment to participate in blessing under Him; we go out of the midst of all events to meet Him above. The Jews and the world are delivered by judgments. Hence they must await the course of events and the full ripening of earthly evil for judgment; for the day will not come before. Hence, we find in the Psalms the appeal for judgment and the times of it, the declaration of the overwhelming character of evil, and the cry to God to show Himself and render a reward to the proud. The church on earth has no need to seek this; she belongs to Christ, and will be caught up to heaven out of the evil.

I add a few words on another passage suggested to me as one by which difficulties have been created in some minds, really desirous of the truth. I mean the connection of chapters 4 and 5 of first Thessalonians. I confess it does not affect my own in any way; but as it does the minds of others, it is well to notice it. The difficulty, if there be any, arises from a serious confusion in the minds of those who make it-the very confusion into which the Thessalonians were led, namely, taking tribulation for the day of Christ. For the day of Christ, Christ must appear. Let us only keep this clear in our minds, and all these difficulties vanish.

The Thessalonians looked so earnestly for Christ's coming, with no further knowledge of the manner or order of it, that they thought believers who had died, and perhaps died even for Christ, would not be there to meet Him. This mistake the apostle corrects. He tells them that they must not grieve as those without hope; that they would not be left out of the cortege of glory; that Christ would bring them with Him. He then explains to them the manner, and shows that it is by their resurrection, which would take place before even the then living ones are changed; and when this is also wrought by divine power, all would go up to meet Him in the air, and so they would be forever with the Lord. This parenthetically explains the manner by express revelation. They will go up to meet Him-subsequently, as we have seen from Colossians, appear with Him when He appears. The parenthetical part merely gives the association of the saints with Christ Himself, which is our proper portion.

But he had said, as a general truth, in answer to their fears, that God would bring them with Christ. This leads him naturally to the general subject. He had no need to speak of times and seasons. The Thessalonians knew perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, and when they (the world) say Peace and safety, sudden destruction would come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; he adds, " But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief: ye are all children of the day." It is alleged that the apostle could not have said that the day would not overtake them as a thief, if they were not to feel liable to be in some sort overtaken by it. Now, if the teaching of the apostle be examined, even in the place, there is no possible ground for this: for the day of the Lord Christ must appear. But he had just taught them that they were to be caught up to meet Him in the air and be brought with Him. That is, he had taught them what made it impossible to suggest that the day could overtake them in any way or manner whatever. They were of the day, so to speak, as he indeed says, " ye are children of the day," " let us who are of the day."

This passage says nothing of not being in the tribulation-we have treated that point already; but the objection confounds the tribulation and the day which really closes it. The tribulation is Satan's power (though God's judgment in woe); the day is Christ's, who makes it and binds him. But the passage speaks not at all of the tribulation, though it supposes nothing of the kind; but it does speak of the day of the Lord, and with instruction as to the portion of the saints, which shows that it can have in no way whatever to do with them. They are of it and to come in its power. All it says is-The day will overtake them as a thief: but it will not overtake you, for ye are of the day. It says nothing of times and seasons, but negatives the application of the well-known truth to them.

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Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 1, Second Coming of Christ, The

THIS evening I am going to speak of the coming of Christ. Many questions link themselves with this great one, as for instance, the reign of Antichrist. But I shall limit myself this evening to the event itself-namely, the coming of the Lord.

I began by reading Acts 1 because the promise of the Lord's return is there set forth as the alone hope of the church, as the first object which would of necessity fix the attention of the disciples, when they were vainly following with their eyes the ascending Savior, who was going to be hidden in God. In this chapter, just as the Lord was about to leave them, three remarkable features appear. The first is, that the disciples desired to know when and how God would restore the kingdom of Israel. Now Jesus did not say that this was never to happen; He only said, that the time of this restoration is not revealed. It belonged to times and seasons which the Father has put in His own power. The second is, that the Holy Ghost was about to come; and the third, that during the time the disciples were looking towards heaven, two angels said to them, " Why stand ye here gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

They were, then, to expect the return of Christ.

If we study the history of the church, we shall find it to have declined in spirituality exactly in proportion as this doctrine of the expectation of the Savior's return had been lost sight of. In forgetting this truth it has become weak and worldly. Not, however, wishing to quit the sphere of the word, let us see therein how the feeling of the return of Christ ruled the intelligence, sustained the hope, inspired the conduct, of the apostles. We have only to this end to look through a few passages of the New Testament.

Acts 3:19-21. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come [or " so that the times of refreshing may come 1 from the presence of the Lord...." The Holy Spirit is come; He has remained with the church; but the times of refreshing will come " from the presence of the Lord when he shall send Jesus." It is impossible to apply this passage to the Holy Ghost, because He was already, at that time, come down, and had said by the mouth of the apostle, " Whom the heaven must receive till the times of restitution of all things." And, in truth, the Holy Spirit has not restored all things. He who is to come, according to this passage, is not to come to judge the dead, nor that the world may be burnt up and destroyed; but it is specially for the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets."

I cite these passages to make you comprehend what I understand by the coming of the Savior. It is not the judgment of the dead; it is not the great white throne; but it is the return of Jesus Christ in Person, when He shall be sent from heaven. If you compare these verses with what is written in Rev. 20 you will see that the coming of Jesus Christ, and the judgment of the dead, are two distinct events; that when the judgment of the dead takes place, there is not a word about Christ returning from heaven upon the earth; for it is said, " From whose face the earth and the heavens fled away," v. II.

The Lord will return to the earth.

Let us now see how Himself first, then the Holy Ghost by the apostles, have constantly directed our attention to His personal return.

Matt. 24:27-33. " Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." Certainly the expedition of Titus against Jerusalem was not the coming of the Savior in the clouds of heaven. Neither is this a description of the judgment of the dead before the tribunal of the great white throne. At that time the earth is no more, whilst in the passage just cited the nations of the earth are brought before us, and it is a question of an event in which the earth is concerned. " Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." It is not a millennium brought about by the exercise of the power of the Holy Ghost. The world has never seen the Holy Ghost. We are told that the tribes of the earth shall lament when they see the Lord Jesus (v. 33). " So likewise ye, when ye see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."

Verses 42-51. The faithfulness of the church is made to hinge on its watchfulness as regards this truth of the return of Christ. From the moment that it was said, " My lord delayeth his coming," " then the servant began to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." " Therefore be ye also ready," said Jesus, " for the Son of man [not death] cometh."

Matt. 25:1-13. The expectation of the return of Christ is the exact measure (the thermometer, so to speak) of the life of the church. As the servant became unfaithful the moment he had said, " My lord delayeth his coming," so it was with the ten virgins, for it is said, they all slept. It was not death, nor the Holy Spirit, that the ten virgins were told to expect; for neither death nor the Holy Spirit is the Bridegroom. All the virgins were found in the same state; the wise ones (the true saints) as well as the foolish ones, who wanted the oil of the Holy Spirit, slept and forgot the immediate return of Christ, as, on the other hand, what wakes them up is the midnight cry that He is coming.

In Mark 13 we get nearly the same thing. Verse 26 forbids us to apply the passage to the invasion of the Romans;1 and when it is said (v. 22), " It is nigh, even at the doors," there is no thought about the judgment of the dead, nor of the great white throne. At that day, the day of the judgment before the great white throne, there will be no question either of house or household.

Four passages only are to be found in the New Testament which speak of the joy of the departed soul. The first occasion is when the thief said to the Lord (Luke 23:42, 43), " Remember me when thou comest into [in] thy kingdom." It was about the coming of Jesus in glory that his thoughts were occupied-a truth which was familiar to the Jews. The Lord replied to him, " To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The second case is that of Stephen, who said (Acts 7:59), " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit "; the third, when Paul said, " To be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord " (2 Cor. 5:8); the fourth, " For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. 1:22, 23. In truth, it is far better to expect the glory, present with Christ, than to remain here below: not that we go to glory when we depart, but we are quit of sin, out of the reach of it, and we enjoy the Lord apart from it. Yes, it is a state far better, but it is

also one of expectation, like that in which Christ is Himself placed, sitting at the right hand of the Father, expecting that which is to come.

Luke 12:32. " Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." Here we find again (circumstantially different) the parable of the unfaithful servant; only the Lord adds, " That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself [what a picture of Christendom!] shall be beaten with many stripes; but he who knew not [the pagans],... shall be beaten with few stripes." All shall be judged; but Christendom is in a state worse than that of the Jews or pagans, inasmuch as it has had more advantages.

Luke 17:30. " Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

Luke 21:27. " Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." The fig-tree of which the Savior speaks on this occasion, is especially the symbol of the Jewish nation. " Watch therefore," He adds, " that ye may stand before the Son of man." These two chapters, namely, Luke 17 and 21, as well as Matt. 24 and Mark 13, relate to the coming of the Lord connected with the Jews- its earthly bearing. To these may be added Luke 19, where the servants who are called, and the enemies who rejected the nobleman, clearly mark the servants of Christ, and the Jewish nation. See particularly verses 12, 13, 27.

John 14:2. " In my Father's house are many mansions.... And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself." The Lord Himself will come for His church, in order that the church may be there, where He is.

Acts 1: II. " This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner."

Acts 3. This is the preaching of the apostle to the Jews: Repent, and Jesus will return. You have killed the Prince of life; you have denied the Holy One and the Just; God has raised Him from the dead. Repent, be converted, and He will return. But they would not repent. During three years He had vainly sought fruit from His fig-tree. The husbandmen, on the contrary, killed the Son of Him who had placed them in His vineyard. The Son of God, Jesus, asked pardon for them on the cross, whence His voice is all-powerful, in saying, " Forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the apostle, answers to the intercession of Jesus, " I wot that through ignorance ye did it.... Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." But we know they continued to resist the Holy Ghost; Acts 7:51.

Acts 3: zo, 21. " And he shall send Jesus Christ... whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

This is the great end of all the counsels of God. As we have before seen'the secret of His will, that God would gather together all things in Christ, we find here what He has spoken of by the mouth of all His holy prophets: that is, the earthly part. How are all these things to be accomplished? Is it by the operation of the Holy Spirit? No, for it is said that " he shall send Jesus." It is, doubtless, true that the Holy Ghost will be shed abroad, and He will be so specially upon the Jews; but in the passage quoted the event is to take place by the presence of Jesus. There cannot be a revelation more explicit, than that it is by the sending of Jesus, that the things spoken of by the prophets will receive their accomplishment. How can the force and simplicity of this declaration be evaded?

We see the fall, the ruin, of man; we see even all creation subjected to corruption. The bride desires that the Bridegroom may appear. It is not the Holy Spirit who will re-establish the creation, and who is the inheritor of all things; it is Jesus. When Jesus appears in His glory, the world will behold Him, whilst it cannot see the Holy Ghost.

" At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." The work of the Holy Spirit is not to re-establish all things here below, but to announce Jesus who will return. Again, it is the Holy Spirit who was in Peter, when he said, " Whom the heavens must receive till the time of the restitution." Receive whom? Not the Holy Ghost (He was descended from heaven already), but Jesus; and all we have to do is to believe.

Let us now turn to the epistles, in order to be shown that the coming of the Lord is the constant and living expectation of the church. We see, on referring to Rom. 8:19-22, all creation in suspense until the moment of His appearing. Compare John 14: i, 3; Col. 3:1-4. Again (1 Cor. 1:7), " Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ "; and Eph. 1:10, on which we have already spoken. Since at the last judgment the earth and the heavens will have passed away, it is before this time that God will gather together in one all things in Christ.

Phil. 3:20, 21. " For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

Col. 3:4. " When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

The two epistles to the Thessalonians turn entirely on this subject. Everything in the first epistle has reference to the coming of Christ; all that Paul says of his work, or of his joy, belongs to it.

First of all, conversion itself is made to bear upon it (chap.

: o). The faithful of Thessalonica, who had served as models to those of Macedonia and Achaia, and whose faith was so spread abroad that the apostle had no need to say anything, " had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." It is remarkable that this church, one of the most flourishing of those to which the apostles have written, should be precisely that one to which the Lord has chosen to reveal, with most detail, the circumstances of His coming. " The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

Such was the faith of the Thessalonians, that it was spoken of in all the world. What was it? That they expected the Lord from heaven. And it is for us to have this same faith which the Thessalonians had. We ought, like them, to be expecting the Lord before the thousand years. They were certainly not saying there must be a period of a thousand years ere the Savior comes (chap. 2: 19). " For what is our hope? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"

Chapter 3: 13. " To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." It is evidently the ruling idea influencing the mind of the apostle.

Chapter 4: 13-18. It is remarkable that the consolation which he gives to those who surrounded the death-bed of a Christian, is their friend's return with Jesus, and their mutual meeting. It is customary to say, " Be content: he is gone to glory." This was not the way with the apostle. The comfort which he proposes to those who are mourning the death of a believer is, " Be content: God will bring them back." What a change must not the habitual feelings of Christians have undergone, since the consolation given by an apostle is counted in this day as foolishness! The believers in Thessalonica were penetrated to such a degree with the hope of the return of Christ, that they did not think of dying before that event; and when one of them departed, his friends were afflicted with the fear that he would not be present at that happy moment. Paul reassures them by asserting that " those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." We can understand by this example to what a degree the church has put away the hope which occupied the souls of the first converts; how far distant we are from the apostolic views, which we have replaced by the idea of an intermediate state of happiness (the soul separated from the body),-a condition true, indeed, and by much superior to ours on the earth, but vague, and which at best is a state of waiting. Jesus Himself waits, and the dead saints wait.

I by no means desire to weaken the truth of this intermediate state of happiness. Thus the apostle speaks of it in 2 Cor. 5, " For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not that for we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life...." After declaring that his hope was in the power of the life of Christ, and that mortality should be swallowed up by it, he adds, " Therefore we are always confident; knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord," etc. That is, if this mortal body is not absorbed in life (is not changed without seeing death), the confidence which I have is not interrupted at death; I have already received the life of Christ in my soul-that cannot fail. It may be that I shall depart, but the life in my soul will not be affected. I have already the life of Christ: if I depart, I shall be with Him.

One more remark on 1 Thess. 4:15, 17: " We which are alive [those who shall be alive on the earth at the coming of the Lord] shall not prevent them which are asleep." " For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive (those who remain) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

If the apostle had expected a millennium of the Holy Spirit before the coming of Jesus, how could he ever have said, " We who remain until the coming of Christ "? There was, then, in his soul, a continual expectation of the coming of Christ, of which he knew not the moment, but which he had a right to expect. Was he deceived in that? No, not at all: he was always expecting; his business was to do so; and waiting had this of good in it, that it kept him completely detached from the world. If we were expecting from day to day the coming of the Lord, where would all those plans be as to family, house, etc., to flatter the pride of life and to get rich? It is the nature of the hope which we have that forms our character; and when the Lord comes, Paul will enjoy the fruits of his waiting. The hope which animated him produced its good fruits; it was in the spirit of this hope that he exclaimed, " And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. 5:23.

i Thessalonians 5: 2-4. Mark well that this day ought not to overtake the followers of Christ as a thief.

2 Thess. 1:9, 10; 2:3-12. Instead of a world blessed with a millennium without the presence of Jesus, behold the man of sin growing worse, until he is destroyed by the glorious appearing of Christ-evidence to us that a mere spiritual millennium alone is untrue. For the mystery of iniquity, which was already working in the time of Paul, was to go on until the man of sin was manifested, who will be destroyed by the glorious appearing of Christ Himself, with the Spirit of His mouth. Now, in such a state of things where is the place for such a millennium?2

1 Tim. 6:14-16. " Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen."

2 Tim. 4:13 “I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom."

Titus 2:11-13. The grace of God has appeared, teaching us first how to live, and, secondly, the expectation of glory. The appearing of grace is already come, it teaches us to expect the appearing of glory.

Heb. 9:28. " So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." As the great High Priest, when He shall have finished His work of intercession, He will go out of the sanctuary; Lev. 9:22-24.

James 5:9. " Behold the judge standeth before the door."

2 Peter 1:16-21. " For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came to him such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; and this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The transfiguration was, then, a specimen-a kind of pattern -of the coming of the Lord in glory.

1 John 3:2, 3. " But we know that when he [the Son of God] shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." We shall only be like Him when He appears, not before. " And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." He whose heart is full of this hope conducts himself accordingly-he purifies himself. Knowing that when Jesus shall appear, I shall be like Him, I ought to be as much as possible, even now, such as Jesus. How powerful and efficacious is this truth of the return of Christ, and what practical effect flows out of its expectation! This hope is the measure of holiness to us, as it is the motive.4

Those also who are in heaven (Rev. 5: to) say in their songs, " We shall reign on the earth." This is the language of the saints who are already on high, surrounding the throne. Their language is, " We shall reign," and not " we reign." They are themselves in a state of expectation, like the Lord Jesus Himself, awaiting that which is to happen; namely, that His enemies be made the footstool for His feet.5

Study also (Matt. 13:24-43) the parable of the tares and the wheat. The tares-namely, the evil which Satan has done where the good grain has been sown-are to increase until the harvest, which is the end of this dispensation or age. The evil which he has caused by heresies, false doctrines, false religions, all this evil will continue, increase, and ripen: these tares, we say, will increase in the Lord's field, until the harvest. Here, then, is a positive revelation, which gives a formal contradiction to the idea of the millennium by the Holy Spirit, apart from the return of the Lord.

We have now seen that the coming of Christ allies itself to all the thoughts, to all the motives of consolation and joy, and to the holiness of the church, yea, even to the dying bed; and that Christ will bring back with Him those who have previously quitted the body. We have also seen, on the one hand, that it is the coming of the Savior which will be the means of the restitution of all things; and on the other, that evil is to increase in the Lord's field until the harvest.

May the Lord apply these truths to our hearts, dear friends, on one side, to detach us from the things of the world, and, on the other, to attach us to His coming-to Himself in Person; and we shall purify ourselves even as He is pure. There is nothing more practical, nothing more powerful to disentangle us from a world which is to be judged, and at the same time to knit us to Him who will come to judge it. Certainly, there is nothing that can better serve to show us wherein ought to be our purification; nothing which can so console us, invigorate us, and identify us with Him who has suffered for us, in order that we who suffer might reign with Him, co-heirs in glory. Assuredly, if we were expecting the Lord from day to day, there would be seen in us a self-renunciation which is rarely seen among the Christians of the present age. May none of us be found saying, " My Lord delayeth his coming! "

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Critical 1, Mark 11:24

Mark 11:24 gives the principle on which we are to pray in all cases. Had the disciples asked God then, and we Christ in His lordship and power, or the Father now, all prayer should be with faith. Praying in the Holy Ghost is now connected, in our present state, with Christ's words abiding in us, though there be the distinct element of the energy of the Holy Ghost in us, not merely the words of Christ forming our desires and mind. But, then, as a general principle, the Holy Ghost will, if our hearts be right, keep these words in our mind.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Practical 1, Power of Christ in Resurrection and Glory, The

In Philippians 3 we have a striking illustration of the effect produced by the Holy Spirit in a soul which was indwelt by Him. As to the outward walk, what a brilliancy does He give! What stability before God! What true liberty! For the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to the soul; and the soul perceives Him so clearly, that all that is not Christ is rejected as being opposed to Him.

It is important to remark the contrast which exists between such a one and the man who is not full of the Holy Spirit, though he may be, or may seem to be, powerfully drawn toward Christ Jesus, or may even be as truly a convert as were the disciples. We shall see this contrast connected in succession with righteousness, the cross, and the glory, if we compare Philippians 3:4-11 and Mark 10:17-40.

In the history given us in Mark 10:17-27 we see a man whose position is in contrast with that of the apostle (in Phil. 3), which shows in a striking manner the effect produced by the Holy Spirit. The apostle had left all for Christ. Advantages, in which a Jew could boast, he had had beyond what the young man referred to in Mark 10 possessed. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the most celebrated Rabbi; he was a citizen of Tarsus, a city renowned (if we adopt modern phraseology) as a university; he had been well trained in all the acquirements of the day. Moreover, he was privileged in having led a blameless life, as he tells us in Philippians 3:6. All this was very precious to him as a man, so long as he had not seen Christ. All that a man can pride himself in, Paul possessed. If any thought that the flesh might be gloried in, Paul could show that he had more therein than they. But Christ in glory revealed Himself to Paul, and then he could say, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss, that I might win Christ.” What was the state of Paul's soul? I must gain Christ. This is all I have to do, my whole, sole business; everything else found in my pathway is but loss. Such is the effect produced by the Spirit of God in the soul which possesses Him. The apostle is troubled by nothing that he meets on his way: he sees as clear as noonday that all that is not Christ is loss. He sees Christ in the midst of every set of circumstances. Are they circumstances of suffering? So much the better; there will be the more of Christ. Christ is there: he sees Him by the help of God.

In comparing this with Mark to the contrast is seen, namely of a man who has not the Spirit: for this chapter presents us with one in circumstances similar to Paul, but not full of the Holy Spirit. He is portrayed, however, as a man of a character altogether lovely; but Christ was not his object, and natural loveliness availed naught. Yet his character was such that it attracted the attention of the Lord. Jesus “loved him” (Mark 10:21). He also was as to the law blameless. A Jew, he supposed that he was to have eternal life by the law. His thought as to Jesus was, That is the man that can tell me what I must do in order to inherit eternal life. The pure, excellent, and perfect character of the Lord had convinced him that the knowledge of the most excellent commandment might be learned from Him; and He hastens to Him. He was ardent in his desire to know what he had to do, and he drew near to Jesus with all possible respect, with “Good Master” (Jesus received not this praise from one who regarded Him only as a man), he even kneels before the Lord. There was something very lovely in the character of him who could say (and the Lord admits it as a truth) “All these things have I kept from my youth up” (Matt. 19:20). But the Lord puts his heart to the proof, in order to make manifest what are the motives which sway it, and He does so by means of the cross: “Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast ... and come take up the cross and follow me” (Matt. 10:21).

However lovely and estimable the young man may have been, he does not take up the cross. When the state of his heart is in question, he has no will for what is Christ's. He looked for righteousness in the law; and Christ, present with him, succeeds not in engaging him in another course. He said not, as Paul, “I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:8-9).

Such was the effect produced by the Holy Spirit in Paul by the revelation to him of a Christ in glory. Paul saw Christ and said, That is my righteousness, I make no count of my own. He desires not to have a human but a divine righteousness. We cannot have both; for if God gives me His righteousness, I do not present to Him that which is of myself.

Now, suppose that I had kept all the law and am without fault; such a righteousness would not be of God, but that of a man. The law of God requires that man shall love God and his neighbor; and this is what man does not do; but even supposing that I had kept His law in its fullest extent, I should only have a human righteousness, whereas I have a far better righteousness in Christ, even that of God Himself. Does the law demand that I should give my life in order to glorify God, and that, too, in behalf of worthless sinners? Of a truth I should not know how to obey such a commandment; but Christ has done so; He could say, “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4); and He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The manner, too, in which Christ gave Himself up on the cross altogether exceeds all that we could have done, even if we suppose that we had the power to fulfill the law. Christ has glorified God as man, and is now glorified with God. It was thus that Paul saw Him, and he virtually said, That is the righteousness which suits me well.

In how amazing a manner has God been manifested in Christ Jesus! By faith I see Him on the cross, and I say to myself, I cannot do without that glorious work; for from the moment that righteousness is of Christ it is no longer of me. Paul, when he saw Christ, had this thought, Behold in heaven the One who has communicated to me a divine righteousness; and his expression necessarily is “that I may.... be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:8-9). So long as we seek a human righteousness, it is evident we do not know the righteousness which is of God. Paul, having seen the glory of God, stops not before he has said, I shall be there where Christ has the right to be. He is entered into heaven with a divine righteousness. There is my place too: all else is but dung and dross. Yes, all else is for me loss.

If Christ is thus before our eyes, all that is not Christ is an embarrassment. We must win Christ. Faith, having once apprehended the righteousness of God, can no longer put up with the righteousness of man; to faith there is a needs-be to walk in a more excellent way. The riches which the young man valued had no longer any attraction for the heart of Paul; he had seen Christ and God's righteousness in glory, the end and prize of the heavenly calling.

In Mark 10:25 Jesus said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Great was the astonishment of all; and they said, “Who then can be saved? “Jesus concealed not the truth. It was impossible with man, but all things were possible with God! As to man, however excellent may be his pretensions, it is impossible: he loves money; he is ambitious. To cut the matter short, if man's ability to save himself is in question, Jesus Christ declares it is impossible. But let us suppose that we have left all, as Peter said, “Lo! we have left all, and have followed thee” (Mark 10:28); and in truth they had, by the grace of God, really followed Jesus. The hearts of the disciples were really attached to Jesus; affection was really awakened in them towards Him. They had done that, grace helping, which the young man could not make up his mind to do; even as the Lord said, “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time....with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30). You have been obliged to break, for My sake, ties here below: well, you shall find the same, stronger and more perfect, among the children of God; and, at the end, eternal life. There are souls who have apprehended these things, and who have set out, and that sincerely, as pilgrims with Jesus; but on that road we have to follow Jesus, and Jesus has passed by way of the cross: we shall meet then that which will fully put us to the proof.

“And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him” (Mark 10:32). We may say to ourselves, perhaps, what a blessed thing to have Jesus immediately before us! But the disciples were amazed; we desire to be in the way with Christ and to follow Him, but we are ignorant of what the cost may be; the disciples walked in it, and they found what the difficulty was: if Jesus went to Jerusalem, it was to be put to death there. The Jews would crucify Him, yet go thither He would. His disciples were filled with fear as they followed, because they had not the Holy Spirit; still they forsook not as yet their Master, yet they were amazed and in trouble.

Jesus is the good Shepherd; He leads forth His sheep, He walks before them and the sheep follow Him. The disciples were afraid as they followed Jesus, Jesus led them to the cross. The cross is on the road which leads to glory. Well! that was just what Paul desired. The disciples were amazed and afraid; Paul's state (Phil. 3) was far different, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death” (Phil. 3:10). Instead of being frightened, Paul thought, I shall be partaker of the sufferings of Christ. I shall then have much more of Him; I shall die to sin, to the world; I shall be much more conformed to the likeness of Christ, and all that destroys the flesh destroys that which hides Christ. It was no imaginary danger; Paul's trial was at hand—the alternatives of the question were life or death. Death was before him, but he saw that it was the means of having more of Christ; so that he said, I willingly take all that, for it is Christ. He had no desire to have sufferings, but to have the fellowship of His sufferings, to be made conformable unto His death.

For us the cross is light in comparison with that which Paul had to suffer. Nevertheless, it is the cross which takes from us all that which hinders our realizing Christ in glory. What a contrast between the disciples, amazed and afraid, when going up to Jerusalem to the cross was in question, and the apostle Paul, who gloried in everything that could communicate to him anything more of Christ! He knew that, in passing through death, he should die to death. When Christ died, He died not as to communion with the glory of the Father. On the contrary He therein only realized that He had done with the guilt which, for our sakes, pressed heavily upon Him, done with the world which was a desert land—a land of drought where no water was. Death was to Him to depart and enjoy in His Father's presence, eternal blessedness; for us—death is not aught else.

Therefore, as Christ said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 24:46), so Stephen, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59). If death gives us more conformity to Christ, we need not stop to consider what suffering the flesh may find therein; we find our profit in it, because it is death to all that is not Christ, and we glory in it because it makes us more like to Christ. Is the cross before me? Good! I shall have more of Christ; the energy of the Spirit makes me say, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection” (Phil. 3:11). I see Christ in glory; well, I desire to be as He is and to be with Him. I desire to possess Him just as I see Him; and if to gain that, or a fuller measure of it, I must pass through death; to me to die is gain. Where there is the energy of the Spirit, there is light, and a single eye which makes us judge that Christ is worth all, and that all else is worth nothing: and this purifies the saint's heart.

In Mark 10:35 we have James and John asking of Jesus to place them one on the right and the other on the left. They desired a good place in the kingdom. James and John had faith; spite of the dangers which they saw on the road to Jerusalem, they believed that Jesus would have the glory and the kingdom, and they said, At all events give us a good place. But about whom were they thinking? About James and John. Then Jesus speaks to them of drinking of the cup and again sets the cross before them, subjecting them to the will of the Father, even as He Himself was obedient thereunto.

Here we have a step in advance. The question is of glory; but the Holy Spirit has no fellowship with this self. The heart is not delivered from it until the Spirit has guided our thoughts to Jesus. So was it with Paul, in whom we find altogether another thing than myself—(I will labor hard to have a good place). Paul is occupied with Christ more than with Paul—“That I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:8). It was the Spirit who thus set Christ before him. The power of the Spirit had so directed his thoughts to Jesus, that Paul is, as it were, lost in Jesus. The effectual presence of the Spirit crucifies egotism and gives us freedom of thought about ourselves while on the way; it occupies us with but one object—Jesus: to be conformed to the pattern and to look to Him is all that we have to do, and this purifies the heart.

Paul labored more than they all; and therefore, in a certain sense according to man's thoughts, he has a title to the most excellent place; yet he did all, just because he did not seek such a place, but he sought Christ alone. If he win Christ, what a righteousness! If there be sufferings by the way, well, it is but conformity to Christ; if death, it is gain; for we look for the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our vile bodies, and render them like unto His own glorious body.

Paul thinks not of himself; the Spirit fills him with Christ Himself, and all that conceals from him Christ and His worth is rejected. The Spirit gives clearness of view and repose to the heart through the knowledge of the righteousness of God. Then we desire to have Christ, to possess Him, and we find what is the way thereunto. To Jerusalem and the cross! No matter; it is the cross of Christ, and Christ on the cross and Christ with the cross, but it is naught less than the divine righteousness which we have in Him.

In Mark we have the young man who would not abandon his riches and take up the cross, in order to have heaven; then the disciples following Jesus in fear, yet following. In Philippians 3 we see Paul following the Lord without fear and with joy, whatsoever sufferings might be his, because he loved Christ, as Christ, for His own sake. The important matter is for each of us to have Christ in Himself, which gives a pure heart and a single eye; and to have Christ so entirely our all that all our business may be to possess Him, and in view of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, to count all things but dung and dross. Again, approved by Him and filled with Himself, we shall be in peace according to the righteousness which God Himself has given to us.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Evangelic 1, Christ as the Searcher of Heart

Mark 10:1-46

IT is a wonderful thing that the Lord came into this world and took all our sorrows and trials, but was entirely above them all. He was thus able to take up everything that was of God, and at the same time to show what the state of man really was, just as the word of God divides soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. As the perfect light and mind of God, it comes and dissects our hearts, recognizing everything that is of God, and showing what we are.

Here the Lord judges all that would attempt to take the cross in a legal sense, that which would deny God in natural goodness, and also the thought that there is some good in man. He has no idea of anything good in man for God, and at the same time all that is of God is put in its own proper place. He owns everything that God establishes in the world, and yet probes the heart to the bottom. There were some who condemned everything, as if God had made nothing good. God never denies nature, because He made it; but Christ goes deeper, and puts the probe to the center of man's intents and thoughts, yet He knows how to divide between them, and thus shows His perfectness. He was the perfectly obedient Son, who must be about His Father's business. He had power to own everything that was of God, and, if there was occasion, to be subject to it; but He had power too to detect everything of man, and that we have to learn, to have ourselves totally and fully judged. There is progress in seeing it, but we cannot go to God at all unless self is judged. There is a danger too of not getting with God above the evil. Here the Lord, in the exercise of His own blessed grace, can take notice of His own works-all He has done and all He has made; and it is just this One who can also discern what man is. He can say, " Consider the lilies "; not that they were of any value. But I find the blessed Lord, the Man of sorrows, who felt the sin all around, who looked for comforters and found none, and (except where His grace wrought) getting nothing but hatred for His love, yet so completely with God practically (He was God over all) that He was above evil. That principle is fully manifested in Him, and is to be looked for in us. It is not condemning the sins of nature and recognizing it, nor yet saying that man is all bad, or I falsify the holy nature of God. What meets the power of evil is, that He gave His life a ransom. But there is evil all around us, and it is apt to hinder our being gracious, and to get power over us, and that hinders our having power over it, and over ourselves, and judging ourselves, as well as presenting grace, and basking in the sunshine of God's favor.

Our natural tendency is to get pleasures for self. Innocent they may be, but they take the heart from God; they are spoiled by sin. People ask the harm of these things. The question is, What use are you making of them, and where is your heart? The moment there is a turning from the cross (death to everything), our Lord says, "Get thee behind me," for that is all He has. He is going to Jerusalem, and they are amazed, and as they follow they are afraid. There I get the way the cross makes me afraid of following Christ; but He says, If you do not take it up, you cannot be my disciple. The Lord judges man totally, and utterly; we cannot go too deep. People say, If man is not good, he can be made so. But the thing Christ brings us to is, "In me dwells no good thing." There is no good in talking of good fruit when the tree is bad; there are self-will and lusts. Then we see that before we take up the cross for ourselves there is the cross for us. He suffered, and gave His life a ransom. There my sins were put away, and the old nature judged. I have died, and my life is hid with Christ in God. I am alive to God, not to Adam. That separates me from the world. Christ is my righteousness and my life up there. He has given me His Spirit, and I look down from there in grace, being an object of His favor, at what is of His hand in the creation. When I have got out of it, I can look at it. He had a divine view of the world. He can judge man's heart as man's heart, and at the same time admire the beauty of the lilies. Though He was with God, and was God, He could not despise the work of His hand. Everything was corrupted, even the brute creation, through man; but whenever anything had the stamp of God, He could see it. We have to learn this, and it is difficult; but I do look that Christians should walk with God. Either a man is letting his mind go after what the flesh likes, or he is applying the cross to it. If you admire a flower you see, all right; but if you care for it, all

wrong. I can see the hand of God in its beauty, but if I am thinking of the thing it is not the beauty, but my own will and inclination. The Lord runs the sharp edge of His word in, dividing between soul and spirit.

First, He takes up marriage, and says, God allowed divorce for the hardness of their hearts; but it was not so at first. There is natural affection; but if it gets hold of us it may become idolatry. A child or a husband may take our heart from God, but being without affection is one of the signs of the last times. In the last days men are not only not spiritual, but they are not natural. The Lord puts His seal on every relationship. It is an awful thing, even if a child is not converted, to see it failing in affection to its parent; and the nearer the relationship, the more dreadful it is. God owns the relationships, and it is a sign of the last days to be wanting in the affections proper to them.

Then we get the Lord greatly displeased at the disciples sending away the children, not that there was no sin in the children, but they were the expression of what God had created-the confidingness of a child without the distrust that grows up with one. The world lives in distrust (miserable at root), but that is not the case with a child. It has no distrust, but a disposition to believe everything (it often gets cheated); and the Lord says that is what He likes. Unless you receive the kingdom as a child you will not enter it.

Then I find a thoroughly lovely character, and the Lord "beholding him, loved him." It was not the love of God to the world, nor the special love of relationship and grace for His own; but the Lord loved what was lovely-a ready, willing mind to learn everything. The young man had no idea of the ruin of man. He does not say, "What shall I do to be saved?" or Christ would have given him no such answer. He takes him on the ground of a Jew (v. 19), and the young man answers, "All these have I observed from my youth." The Lord does not say, You have not; but beholding him, He loved him. He saw what was lovely in his character (and we ought to see natural loveliness); but his conscience must be touched, and his heart was unknown to himself. "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and take... up the cross," v. 21. He went away sorrowful. The instant the state is detected the loveliness vanishes. His character was lovely in its ingenuousness; but when it is searched and detected his heart comes out as a thing in which there was nothing for God. He deceived himself as to man's state; but there was natural loveliness in him (and we often meet unselfish, amiable characters). How does the Lord meet it? He says, "There is none good save one, that is God." There is no such thing as a good man in the world. You are totally on wrong ground. There is none good but God is a principle. Why do you call Me good if you come to Me as a man? The Lord takes him up on the ground of law that he was on, and says, Don't say man is good, but keep the law.

Another thing comes out. The disciples say, "Who then can be saved?" And the Lord tells them, "With men it is impossible." There is no such thing as being saved on man's ground; but God can save by His Son. That is another thing (v. 27). By man it is impossible; but the means of being saved has reached man. He can get eternal life; but when his heart is detected it is totally wrong. This young man turned away with sorrow and grief; for his heart was with his money. The gospel does not deny natural loveliness; but that will not do with God. It will not do for Him to have no vile ones. He looks for the vilest sinners (the thief on the cross, for instance), and takes them to paradise. He does not take the pretty flowers and leave the weeds. What man calls goodness is often abominable selfishness; and they say, If that man does not go to heaven, who will? They do not know the heart a bit. The supreme goodness of God takes up the one that will not have God and Christ, and will have his lusts and pleasures, and saves him. " All things are possible with God." The gospel does not build on what is there, but judges it. The flowers of a wild apple may be as pretty as others, but there is no fruit on it. What Christ says is, Where is your heart? Have you not a will, and the thoughts of your heart and your conduct in everything moved by it? And the answer of it is only hatred to God.

That is very humbling, but it puts the gospel on the right ground. There was unspeakable love to sinners, with all their sins. He was ever moved at oppression and sorrow-never at insult or outrage to Himself, but always moved with compassion for man-" Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." He brings all this goodness to where we are, but He must detect the conscience. He will not build the goodness of God on ours, and deceive us. The Lord lays the young man's heart bare. He does not drive him away; He never drove any one away; but he went away because his heart was never reached. Self must be detected-" All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." When I learn His goodness in coming in grace into this world to win our hearts, I say, " Search me, O Lord, and try my heart." I know He has not come to impute sin, and I come into His presence with an open heart. The moment I fully trust this blessed love of Christ my place is that of the man to whom the Lord imputes no sin. He has given His life a ransom, and put it all away. He lays bare our hearts, but gives us confidence; so that we desire to have everything out before God, and the whole ground we stand on before Him is " truth in the inward parts." He stood where I was, and now I stand where He is, and that is the only place I have before God. The Christian stands between accomplished redemption and the glory, at liberty with God and from the world and sin. We may fail and grieve the Spirit, but there we are set.

The disciples are thinking, What is the meaning of this, that this lovable character is driven away, and cannot come to God? Well, the very grace that has come to seek and save, drives away the natural heart because it cannot bear it. It detects the heart, and must claim it for God both as Creator and Redeemer. They were still looking to tack the new thing on to the old, looking for the glory in a carnal way. The Lord says, You must take up the cross and follow me. If you follow Me, I can give you the cross; that is all I have to give you now. He takes the lowly place as to man and the world; death was all He had for those who followed Him (v. 38-40). "Can you drink of the cup that I drink of? " They say, "Yes," deceiving themselves. He says, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of " (not atonement, but suffering) -you will have to suffer if you take up the cross and follow Me really. You shall be like Me, and close to Me too; but what you must reckon on is the cross, if you are going to glory. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." Not that there is not joy, "a hundred fold now in this time"; but He says, I must have your hearts: I have to die, and if you are going to follow me, the road I am going is to the cross, that is the path I am going to the glory. Are you ready to take up your cross, or have you a question if the cross is right, or if there is any other road? The Lord knew none, and I know none.

There is another point. If we were perfect, all would be simple; but we have a great deal to learn and to detect and correct. At this time the Lord set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, and the disciples want to know the meaning of it. "The Jews sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" "As they followed they were afraid." Not only will and lust were detected, but they were afraid of following Christ. Do not you know what that is? The instant you are following Christ there is the consciousness that the world is against you. Nicodemus went to the Lord by night because he was afraid to go by day. There is the instinctive consciousness that the world is against us, and we are afraid to confess Christ in our habits, our houses, etc. It is very base, but there it is. Paul says what things were gain to him he counted loss for Christ; he did not go away sorrowful. He says, I am glad to get rid of it (it is dross and dung) "to win Christ." There was the energy and power of the Spirit. Did Paul follow trembling? Not at all. Five times forty stripes save one-beaten, stoned, all sorts of things! It was all on the road, and he had real liberty, "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus." These disciples did not dare leave the Lord; they kept in the way, for

here was eternal life in Him and nowhere else; but they had no liberty. When He spoke of the cross Peter says, "That be far from thee "; and the Lord says, " Get thee behind me, Satan "-the very man who had confessed Him as the Christ, and to whom He had said, " Blessed art thou." But if he will not take up the cross, he is "Satan." "Thou art an offense unto me." The cross deals with all that is of man, and where there is the willing spirit and blessed free liberty with God, the power of Christ rests upon us, and it is no sacrifice to give up human righteousness, or all I possess if need be, that I may win Christ; they are only weights as I run the race.

Natural affection we are to have by the power of God; but the Lord is in heaven, and the cross is the path, because though we are in a world where there are a thousand needed things, and all richly to enjoy, when it is a question of what our hearts are, there is none good. Christ has been rejected, and I am dead to the world, sin, and the law, and alive to God. It should be so more practically every day with willing hearts. Our steps are feeble, but He shows us the way, and we delight in His love. Of course the Spirit reproves us, instead of bringing us joy, if we are grieving Him.

How far have our hearts believed this voice of the blessed Son of God in such love, when He puts forth His own sheep, going before them, meeting the dangers and leading them in the path? How far are our hearts in truth and simplicity disposed to follow Him, to think His love not mistaken in the path He has marked out? It is real deliverance from the flesh; but we must trust His love. When my heart thoroughly trusts Christ, it is His cross and His reproach; and it has the sweetness of Christ, and all is sweet (we may be cowards in it), and we judge everything that hinders His leading us in the path.

The Lord give us to trust Him, that we may have courage to follow Him, and learn what this poor world is!

Christian Truth: Volume 26, Consider the Lilies

The monkishness that would condemn everything is not the denial of sin but the denial of nature. God never denies it because He made it. In His own blessed grace, in all the ruin sin has wrought, the Lord can take notice of His own works: "Consider the lilies" (Matt. 6:28). He saw all that was of God, while so practically with God, and entirely above the evil, that He saw all that was of man and judged it.

In spirit up there I can look down and see what is of God's hand in the creation itself. When I get out of it I can look at it; Christ being out of it completely could look at a lily and call attention to its beauty, judging all that was morally corrupt. Where anything had the stamp of God He could admire it; and it is only by judging evil that one can do this.

I look for a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no evil; but because of being brought into a place in Christ superior to the evil, I can look at all that is of God in this world.

If natural affections get too strong and hold the objects of them, they become idols; but to be without them is one of the signs of the last days.

My safety is to get so completely with God as to be able to let my affections flow out more and more to Christians. God has set His seal to all He created, and evil came in. God, having judged it by the cross, lifts us above it.

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