Matthew - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 3

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“He healed all that were sick that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses” —Matthew 8:16, 17.

THE very fact that disease was so prevalent in Israel was proof of the people’s departure from God (Exod. 15:26). Each different sickness has a spiritual significance and the healing of each case illustrates Christ’s power over sin in all its forms, whether direct Satanic control (Mark 1:24-26), the burning fever of sin as typified by the illness of Peter’s wife’s mother, the dreadful uncleanness of it as pictured by leprosy, or its helplessness as illustrated by the case of the palsied man (Matt. 9:2-8). No matter in what form our sin may manifest itself, the great Physician can give complete deliverance.

Jesus is today the healing Christ. But He is far more concerned with giving spiritual health to sin-sick souls than healing people of fevers or cleansing leprous sores. These were of old the signs of Nis Messiahship. Now He is exalted to God’s right hand as a Prince and a Saviour. All, no matter what their spiritual ailments, may find deliverance through faith in Him.

Daily Sacrifice, June 10

“And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep”— Matthew 8:23, 24.

TO the natural eye, conditions had become very critical. But the Lord Jesus Christ slept in peace as the storm raged. Was the raising of the storm that evening on the Sea of Galilee simply a natural phenomenon, or was it of definite Satanic origin? It would seem that it was an effort on the part of the Adversary to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ before He could fulfill the mission on which He came to earth. But just as when the people of Nazareth tried to shove Him over the cliff and kill Him, but were unable to effect their purpose (Luke 4:28, 29), so, in this instance, Satan was again foiled. He had no power to take the life of the Son of God. That life could only be laid down voluntarily by Christ Himself in accordance with the Father’s will (John 10:17, 18).

—Nicholas Lloyd Ingraham.

Divine Priorities and Other Messages, 9. Divine Healing - Is it in the Atonement?

No instructed Christian can help acknowledging the power of the Lord to heal the body as well as to save the soul. He who credits the miracles of the New Testament, as every sincere Christian must, necessarily recognizes the healing power of God. It is not, therefore, my desire to discuss the possibility of physical healing in answer to prayer, nor the reality of many apparent miracles of healing in our own day in connection with the ministry of certain preachers, both male and female, who give a large place to this particular phase of ministry in their public work: God can heal. God has healed. God does heal. He heals in answer to prayer. He heals where there is no prayer at all by the recuperative power of nature. He heals, as in Hezekiah’s case, by the use of means. He has often healed in answer to the prayer of the individual who was sick, or of others who prayed for him. There are too many reputable testimonies at the present time to such healings to question them for a moment, Therefore, I do not intend to consider this phase of the subject at all.

But there is another serious question for many tried and distressed souls, namely, Is healing in the atonement and therefore available for any Christian who claims it by faith during the present dispensation of the grace of God?

Those who answer this question in the affirmative point at once to what they consider to be an incontrovertible proof text found in Matthew 8. There we are told: “When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (vs. 16, 17).

Now, I admit that a cursory examination of this passage seems to prove conclusively that our Lord bore our infirmities and sicknesses on the cross somewhat in the same sense as He is said to have borne our sins in His own body on the tree—that is, He suffered instead of us. It was impossible that our sins as such could ever have been transferred from us to Him in such a sense as to make Him actually the sinner. But He bore them in that He endured the judgment which we had deserved because of those very sins. So some believe that on the cross He suffered the pains and the anguish. and endured the symptoms of all our diseases, thus becoming the substitute for sickness as well as for sin. The horrible conclusion has been drawn iron this theory that our Lord when on the cross became “a living, breathing mass of corruption.” I use the exact language which I once heard used by a leading advocate of divine healing. The speaker went on to say that every disease to which humanity is subject had fastened itself on the body of Christ when He hung upon the cross; that He had endured all the ravages of these diseases in order that He might bear them away from us. So that now in resurrection, the new life of His glorified body is available for us by faith to combat diseased pathological conditions in our bodies. I may not have stated the doctrine in the same way that all its advocates present it, but I am giving it as nearly as I can recollect, in language which I heard used.

A more careful examination, however, of the verses quoted from Matthew 8 will make evident at once the striking fact that the inspired writer is not referring to the atonement on the cross, but is explaining something that happened during the earthly ministry of our Lord. As He moved about among men He manifested His compassion and power by delivering them from their diseases. He did not do this without cost to Himself, In His deep, tender sympathies, He entered into the sorrows and sufferings of those whom He healed. When the woman who touched the hem of His garment was healed, He “perceived that virtue had gone out of him.” There was a response on His part to her deep need. It cost Him something to heal. He really bore the sorrows of others. He took their infirmities and their diseases. He felt with them and for them. Any true Christian minister who knows what it is to enter into the distress and perplexities of those among whom he moves, particularly if he labors among the poor, shares in large measure our Lord’s exercises as recorded here. Paul filled up on his part the sufferings of Christ for his body’s sake, which is the Church, as he bore on his heart the great burden of the people of God. This was to him more than all his other sufferings; for after enumerating the trials he endured, he adds, “and besides all this that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” During the three and a half years of our Lord’s ministry on earth, He never saw suffering that He did not alleviate it, unless, indeed, His grace was resisted. And it was this intense compassion for mankind and sympathy for the distressed, not merely the persecutions He endured, that made Him the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. The more we drink in His spirit, the more we shall know the meaning of the poet’s words:

To refer the bearing of sicknesses to the Cross instead of linking it with the life and ministry of our Lord on His way to the Cross is to misunderstand grossly His entire mission. If He has made atonement for sicknesses, then it is unthinkable that any believer could ever endure pain or illness. Because He has made atonement for sins, no believer shall ever come into judgment. The penalty is forever removed. In the same way, if He had stood in the place of the sick as He stood in the place of the sinner, our sicknesses would be as far removed from us as our sins.

A well authenticated fact is worth, any amount of unproved theories. If we can find recorded in Scripture any instance whatever where Christians were allowed to be sick, and were not miraculously healed, then the whole theory falls to the ground. To four outstanding instances I would direct attention.

First, there is that of the apostle Paul himself. He had been caught up to the third heaven. Upon his return to earth there was sent to him as thorn in the flesh, “a messenger of Satan to buffet him” lest he should be exalted above measure. There was no danger for a saint in the third heaven. There was danger when he came back to earth lest he should be lifted up in spiritual pride by the abundance of the revelation given unto him. To preserve Paul from this, God took disciplinary measures. It is not necessary to attempt to define the exact nature of the thorn, but it is important to observe that it was in the flesh. It was something physical. It was something that cost Him intense humiliation. It was something that cost Him severe suffering. It is termed an affliction. It in some way weakened him. for he puts it in contrast with strength. He besought the Lord that it should be taken from him. He prayed earnestly that he might be healed. Instead of answering his prayer in that particular way; the Lord, as it were, said to him, “Paul, I will not remove the thorn. I will not deliver you from the infirmity, but I will do something better for you. I will enable you to triumph over it. My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Immediately the apostle ceased to pray for deliverance and fell in with the will of God, exclaiming, “Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Our second witness is Epaphroditus. of whom we read in Philippians 2, verses 25 to 30. There we learn that he was a devoted servant of Christ, one worthy to be esteemed by Paul as a brother and companion in labor and a fellow soldier. He was unselfish, faithful, and conscientious. But he was sick; he was very sick. As the days and weeks wore on, his sickness increased until he was nigh unto death. He was sick for so long a time that word of his illness went clear back from Rome to Philippi, and the saints there were greatly disturbed concerning him. Paul prayed for him; so, doubtless, did many others. Yet no miracle was wrought in his case. No healer appeared to lay his hands upon him and raise him up. Neither was he rebuked for his lack of faith. His illness was permitted to run its course, and at last God had mercy on him and he recovered. In this last expression we may learn the truth as to physical healing during the present dispensation. It is mercy. It is not something that is ours by right. It is not something to be demanded. It is not something that we can claim on the ground that. it was bought and paid for on Calvary. It is simply divine mercy meeting our deep need according to the will of God.

The third case in point is that of Timothy. No young preacher was ever more highly esteemed than Timothy was esteemed by Paul. He was a true pastor and one whose tender heart was ever exercised by the state of the Lord’s people. If anyone ever needed a robust constitution in order to continue without let or hindrance in the work of the Lord, Timothy did, so far as human judgment goes. But Timothy was a dyspeptic. Like many other itinerant, he probably suffered from the ever-kindness of some good Marthas and the penuriousness of others. Varying climates and polluted water had grievously affected his health. What a mercy if he could have attended a healing meeting and gone down to the front to be prayed for! But neither Paul nor Timothy had ever heard of a healing meeting in all of their lives. Such gatherings had not yet come into existence. Instead of recommending anything of the kind, Paul gave a common-sense prescription. He wrote, “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and for thine often infirmity” (1 Tim. 5:23). This is as truly inspired Scripture as John 3:16, and the Holy Ghost has recorded it for our learning. Paul, who had healed many by the laying on of hands as a testimony to the supernatural character of his ministry, instructed Timothy to use precautionary measures to keep from breaking down his constitution and to recover from the effects of previous conditions.

Our last instance is that of Trophimus. We read of him in 2 Timothy 4:20: “Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.” Of this man we know little, except that in Acts 20 we learn that he was in Paul’s company when he went down to Troas on his second missionary journey. As 2 Timothy was written many years afterwards, during the apostle’s last imprisonment, it is quite likely that Trophimus had been an intimate companion throughout the years. But he was sick. He was so sick that he had to remain quietly at Miletum and could not accompany Paul to Rome. There is no intimation that his sickness was a judgment upon him. Neither is there any intimation that he was to blame for remaining sick. We are not told that he might have been well it only he had appropriated the resurrection life of Christ by faith! What we do know is that he was a Christian and a servant of the Lord. But he was sick. Tens of thousands have been in the same circumstances since, in spite of the fact that Christ died on the Cross.

It is very evident that neither Paul nor Epaphroditus nor Timothy nor Trophimus knew anything of the modern doctrine that Christ bore our sicknesses on the Cross and therefore believers should never be sick. To be in the company of these men is to be in good company. If, in the wisdom of God, a thorn in the flesh is sent to us; if, in the work of the Lord, we are permitted to be “sick nigh unto death”; if the earnest missionary and faithful shepherd of souls finds the need of care in regard to eating and drinking that he may be at his best for God; if we find

ourselves left at some Miletum sick, while others go on with the work, or go out to prison and death for Christ's sake, the subject believer will simply say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth to Him good." There will be no complaining, nor will there be doubt and darkness because an unscriptural doctrine is impossible of realization, in practical experience. But we shall say with our brother Paul, "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

On the other hand, we know that eventually as a result of the work of the Cross, all believers will be fully delivered from every physical result of sin. But this will be at the coming of the Lord Jesus, when "he shall transform the body of our humiliation, that it may be made like unto the body of his glory." This was what Paul looked forward to, and has been the goal of saints all through the dispensation, namely, the redemption of the body. It is our hope. But until its realization "we groan being burdened," but we are enabled to triumph by faith in spite of sickness and suffering, knowing that all will be over when our Saviour returns.

Daily Sacrifice, June 9

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shalt find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall he opened"— Matthew 7:7, 8.

GOD does answer prayer. This is one evidence of the supernaturalism of what is commonly called "revealed religion," as distinguished from mere human philosophy. The word "religion" is too broad a term for Christianity itself, but it is a convenient expression to cover the full setting forth of man's relationship to God as set forth in both Old and New Testaments. In all past dispensations, as well as in the present one, God has been revealed as the hearer and answerer of prayer (Psa. 65:2; Isa. 56:7; Matt. 21:13). It is He Himself who invites us to come to Him with our petitions, and promises to give according to our need (Phil. 4:19).

It is not necessarily true that we always receive exactly what we ask, God reserves to Himself the right to answer as His wisdom dictates, But He never ignores the cries of His children.

—A. Salmon.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 2

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" —Matthew 6:31-34.

THE Bible does not treat lightly of human need, but it shows the transcendent importance of attending to spiritual things. Christians are encouraged to thrift and prudence in handling their temporal affairs. The ideal believer is not the monkish recluse who seeks to be relieved of all responsibility for either his own or other people's comfort and well-being. But the Word of God always insists on the supreme importance of the welfare of the inner man. To put eternal things first means to get the very best out of this life as well as peace of heart in regard to the next one.

God makes Himself responsible to care for and sustain all those who, having been born of His Spirit, recognize Him as Father and seek to do His will as obedient children. This is to put His kingdom first—to live in subjection to His revealed truth, As we thus "trust and obey" we may be sure that He will faithfully perform that which He has promised, supplying our need, sustaining our hearts, and enabling us to live above carking care and anxiety (1 Peter 5:6, 7).

—E. L. Y.

Daily Sacrifice, June 8

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things"— Matthew 6:31, 32.

WHEN God is known as Father, anxiety disappears. The love of His heart has led Him to engage to see His children through all the changing scenes of life, meeting every requirement for their peace, happiness, and contentment as they in turn seek to walk in fellowship with Him. This is no encouragement for slothfulness on our part. We are to walk before Him as obedient children who can count on His unfailing grace. His Fatherhood embraces all who are born of the Spirit through faith in His blessed Son. It is a mistake for unsaved, unregenerated men to claim relationship with Him, though He longs to reveal Himself as the Father to all men everywhere, but they can know Him only through Christ (John 14:6).

What would we think of an earthly father who had the care of little children and left them to worry as to how they should obtain the necessities of life? The children know that a loving father makes himself responsible to provide for their needs. So it is with our Heavenly Father.

Daily Sacrifice, June 7

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”— Matthew 6:10.

IT is blessed to know that the present confusion will not go on forever. As certainly as God has spoken, so shall the prayer, “Thy kingdom come,” be answered at last, and all earth’s dominions shall become the kingdom of our God and His Christ. Then His saints will be rewarded for all their toils and sufferings, and righteous retribution shall be meted out to those who have defied the High and Holy One and made mankind miserable by their wrongdoing.

We who have trusted Christ as our Saviour are called upon to own Him even now as earth’s rightful Sovereign, and to yield Him glad and loyal obedience during the time that He is still the rejected One. Those who suffer with Him now shall reign with Him when He is revealed from heaven in power and majesty. What joy it will be to see the One who was crowned with thorns, crowned with the imperial diadem of the universe in that day! And who can estimate the blessing that His personal rule will bring to this poor world, so long distracted by man’s sin and rebellion against God.

—Frederick Lucian Hosmer.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 1

“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King” —Matthew 5:33-35.

YOUTHS often seem to regard profanity as an accomplishment of which to be proud. On the contrary, it is always a sign of weakness, and betrays a corrupt and wicked heart. No one admires a swearer. But all right-thinking people recognize the nobility of character that enables one to keep his lips clean and whose speech is wholesome and refined. Our Lord distinctly forbids the use of such expletives as “Heavens,” “Jerusalem,” and other terms. These do not add to the strength of one’s language, but rather weaken it, and are utterly unbecoming in the lips of a believer on Christ.

—J. H. Wilson.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, May 31

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be it: danger of the judgment: but 1 Say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” — Matthew 5:21, 22.

GOD has said, “All souls are Mine.” He alone has the right to say when life on earth shall end for any of its inhabitants. He has delegated certain powers to governments in order that evildoers may be dealt with righteously and as a warning to others (Gen. 9:5, 6; Rom. 13:4). But no one is authorized to take the law into his own hands and to slay his neighbor because of real or fancied offenses. Back of the murderer’s hand is the malicious mind and the wicked heart. So our Lord Jesus shows us that he who despises his neighbor, he who hates his brother, is a potential murderer and therefore under condemnation of the moral law. This is emphasized in Exodus 20:13 and 1 John 3:15. When the grace of God controls the inward being, hatred and all phases of disappear, and Jove, that doeth no ill to his neighbor, is manifested. Therefore in this, as in all else, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, May 30

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake” — Matthew 5:9-11.

THE sermon on the mount must not be taken as the proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God whereby needy sinners are saved. It is rather the announcement of the foundation principles of the Kingdom of God, principles utterly diverse from those on which earthly dominions are established. It gives us the law of love prevailing in all departments of life. Manifestly this can never be fully accepted and acted upon by an unregenerate world. But when people are born again they can see and enter into the kingdom of God even now, while the King Himself is rejected. To these the will of God is paramount, and they find in what seems to unsaved men an utterly impracticable standard of living, the ideal manner of life for those who are content to be identified with Christ in His rejection.

Just as it is a mistake to try to force these principles on the world of unsaved men and women, so it is as great a blunder to insist that they have no binding authority over the consciences of Christians today. Surely not; for in us is fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law as we “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).

—A. J. Flint.

Daily Sacrifice, June 6

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill”—Matthew 5:17.

OUR Lord tells us He came not to destroy, but to fulfill, the law. By His perfect obedience to all its sacred precepts He magnified the law and made it honorable (Isa. 42:21). By His sacrificial, vicarious death on the cross, where He bore the condemnation of the broken law, being made a curse for us, He became the end of the law for righteousness, to all who believe (Rom. 10:4). That law was a ministry of death and of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:7, 9), because of man’s inability to keep it. He who was never under its condemnation took our place and died in our stead. Now we who believe are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14). This does not free us from the responsibility of seeking to glorify God in our lives, but it puts our obedience on much higher than merely legal grounds. Born from above, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). This becomes the motivating principle of the new life. As we are now occupied with the risen Saviour, we obey God’s Word out of devotion to Him, and so the righteousness of the law is “fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).

—J. G. Deck.

Daily Sacrifice, June 5

“Seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them”—Matthew 5:1, 2.

THE Sermon on the Mount is not the proclamation of the plan of redemption. It is a setting forth of the great moral and spiritual truths that should control the hearts of those already born of God. Unregenerate men could never attain to the high and holy standards that Jesus made known as becoming for all who would seek to follow Him. To the flesh, these principles are only condemnatory, for no one has lived up to them apart from divine grace, and therefore, like the Law given at Sinai, they only show up the corruption of the natural heart and shut men up to judgment. But when one knows Christ, he is enabled by the Spirit to live this supernatural life.

—Frank Mason North.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, May 29

“Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” — Matthew 4:18, 19.

IT is a great thing to be called of God to sacrificial service on behalf of a lost world; a tremendous event in the history of a soul when the voice of Christ is heard saying, “Follow Me, and I will make you—.” All are not fitted for the same tasks; all cannot work in the same way. But each one who yields himself to the Lord Jesus for definite service will find that He enables, trains, and directs, so that the life thus surrendered will be used to His glory and to the winning of the lost and the blessing of the saved. “Fishers of men” is an apt figure. It requires much wisdom and great patience to become an effective agent in the business of “taking men alive,” but he who is willing to learn at the Master’s feet and is quick to obey His commands will indeed be “made” whatever He would have one be.

Grace Troy.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, May 28

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil”— Matthew 4:1.

AS WE consider the solemn and important subject of our Lord’s temptation, we need to remember that He is God and Man in one Person. While as truly Man as if He had never been God, He is yet as truly God as if He had never become Man, and therefore we must not think of Him as merely man on probation, as Adam was in the garden of Eden.

The testing of Jesus in the wilderness was not to see whether He would sin, but to prove that He was absolutely the sinless One and therefore the fit Substitute for those who were both sinners by nature and in practice.

When the question is asked (innocently enough, perhaps), “Could Jesus have sinned?” we need to consider ere answering in the affirmative what would have happened if He had sinned. He was not two persons, but one. He was the Son of the Father with two natures, the human and the divine. These natures could never be separated after He became incarnate. One nature could not act in opposition to the other; therefore the thought of sin in connection with Him is utterly abhorrent. He could say, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me” (John 14:30). There was no traitor lurking within. From the moment of His birth he was “that Holy Thing” (Luke 1:35). The temptation proved Him to be all that God the Father said He was: His beloved Son, in whom He had found all His delight (Matthew 3:17).

—J. G. Deck.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, May 27

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into

the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” — Matthew 3:11, 12.

NOTHING could emphasize our Lord’s deity more than John’s declaration regarding Him and this twofold baptism. Imagine a creature baptizing in the Holy Spirit. Only One who is Himself divine could do this. And on Pentecost Peter unhesitatingly declares it was He who sent the Spirit (Acts 2:33). He it is who will consign the impenitent to the fire of everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:41). This is not to be confounded with the cleansing efficacy of the Holy Spirit, nor with the tongues “like as of fire” which appeared at Pentecost. “He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” is placed in direct contrast with gathering the “wheat into the garner” (Matt. 3:12). By the Spirit-baptism believers are now united in one Body and empowered for service.

—Chas. H. Spurgeon.

Daily Sacrifice, June 4

“And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”— Matthew 3:16, 17.

HE who would be used of God in this scene is called to dedicate himself to the divine will, and must needs be tested in order that he may prove a fitting instrument for carrying out the divine purpose. In this, our Lord is our great exemplar. In His baptism He proclaimed His devotion to the Father and His readiness to fulfill all that righteousness of which man, as a whole, had fallen so far short, and in His victory over Satan, as indicated by His adamant refusal to consider even for a moment His unholy suggestions, He showed Himself to be the chosen One of God who had come to carry out all His will and to bring to fruition the plan of redemption. Audibly, the Father declared His delight in His Son. He who had in His baptism offered Himself to God as a sacrifice for sin was thus attested to be Himself the sinless One, for the sin offering must be most holy (Lev. 6:25).

—J. Heerman.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, May 26

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him” — Matthew 2:1, 2.

IT is all-important that we realize that nothing will take the place of personal faith in and subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ. Acquaintance with Scripture that does not control our lives will only add to our condemnation, rather than prove a means of salvation. Herod and the scribes knew what the prophets had predicted concerning the coming of the Messiah, but they had no room for Him in their hearts. On the other hand, His birth meant so much to the wise men that they took a long journey to seek for Him and to pour out their treasures at His feet. His star not only showed the way to Christ, but it was the cause of their deep rejoicing, for they recognized it as the messenger of God leading them to Him whom they received in faith as earth’s rightful King and whom they worshipped with adoring love. To “keep Christmas” while refusing heart-alliance to the One who was born to reveal the Father and to make propitiation for sins is but a sham and a mockery.

Daily Sacrifice, June 3

“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasure, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh”— Matthew 2:11.

THE coming of God the Son into the world as a little Babe tells of His infinite love and condescension. No one is afraid of a baby as such. Yet Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled at His coming. This tells out the bitter enmity of man’s heart toward God. The Incarnation was the expression of His infinite love and concern for sinners. He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17). But His love was met by coldness and suspicion. He was rejected by those whose blessing He sought. It is all-important that we challenge our own hearts as to whether we are still numbered among those who spurn His grace, or among those who have bowed in repentance at His feet and who bring Him the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of our heart’s truest adoration.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 21

“Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” — Matthew 28:19, 20.

THE great commission to evangelize the world is not given as a whole in any one of the Gospels, but we need to take all related passages in the three Synoptics and in Acts 1 to get it in its entirety. There are different aspects of the commission which are emphasized in each place. Then, in addition, we have the Lord’s command to the eleven as given in John 20. These all agree in this: that it is our responsibility to carry the message of grace to all men everywhere, while we wait for our Lord to return, according to His promise. Matthew puts the emphasis on the kingdom—calling all men to become disciples of the Lord Jesus and proclaim their allegiance by baptism into the name of the Holy Trinity. Mark stresses the importance of faith on the part of those who carry the message, which was to be authenticated by “signs following.” Luke,

both in the Gospel and the Acts, links the subjective with the objective—repentance on the part of the sinner, forgiveness on the part of God. John dwells on the authority of the risen Christ who commissions His servants to proclaim remission of sins to all who believe, and retention of sins to those who spurn the message.

But all alike declare the urgency and the importance of carrying the witness-testimony, the proclamation of the gospel, into all the nations of the world in the shortest possible time.

—A. B. Simpson.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 20

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” —Matthew 28:5, 6.

THE empty tomb of Jesus is the silent yet effectual witness to the fact of His resurrection. Had it been possible to find His body, His disciples would have received it and given it careful burial again. And if His enemies could have produced it, they would have displayed it in fiendish glee as a positive proof that His prediction that He would rise again the third day had been utterly falsified. But neither friend nor foe could locate it, for God had raised His Son from the dead in token of His perfect satisfaction in the work of the cross. The tomb was empty on that first Lord’s Day morning, not because the disciples had come by night and stolen the body while the soldiers slept (an unheard-of proceeding), nor yet because the chief priests and their emissaries had dared to break the Roman seal upon the stone that covered the entrance to that rock-hewn grave, but because Jesus had fulfilled His words when He declared that if they destroyed the temple of His body, He would raise it again in three days. The resurrection is attributed to the Father (Heb. 13:20), to the Son (John 2:19-21; 10:17,18), and to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11). The entire Trinity had part in that glorious event, the supreme miracle of the ages, when He who died for our sins rose again for our justification. Joseph of Arimathea little thought of the honor that was to be his, when preparing the new tomb which was to be the dwelling-place for a few hours of the dead body of Him who is now alive forevermore.

—W. P. Mackay.

Daily Sacrifice, June 21

“The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” —Matthew 28:5, 6.

THAT empty tomb told the story in an incontrovertible manner that Jesus was victor over death, having effected eternal redemption for all who trust in Him. His resurrection testifies to the Father’s perfect satisfaction in the work of the cross, and tells of the sin question forever settled, and the way into the Holiest now opened up.

—Paul Gerrard Jackson.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 19

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” — Matthew 27:45, 46.

CHRIST crucified, says the Apostle Paul, is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:23, 24). This is the very foundation of the Christian faith. “Christ died”: that is history. “For our sins”: that is doctrinal truth (1 Cor. 15:3)— the great fact upon which our salvation rests. It is all-important to see that it was not simply the physical sufferings of Jesus that atoned for sin. It was what He endured in His inmost being in those hours of darkness when He was made sin for us. What He suffered at the hand of man was an expression of Satanic malignancy and showed up the sinfulness of mankind as nothing else could. What He endured at the hand of God made expiation for iniquity and told out the divine love and justice in the fullest possible manner. In the work of the cross the sin-question has been dealt with so completely and so satisfactorily that the floodgates of mercy have been opened wide and all who now believe the gospel may be saved eternally.

W. Gandy.

Daily Sacrifice, June 20

“When they were come unto a place called Golgotha ... .. they crucified Him”— Matthew 27:33, 35.

GOLGOTHA! Calvary! The Place of a Skull! — what sacred memories cluster around these words! Before our Lord was crucified they meant nothing to anyone except as designating a place outside the walls of Jerusalem for the execution of criminals—offenders against the laws of mighty Rome. But for more than nineteen centuries since the Son of Man was lifted up, the very name Calvary, or its equivalent in other tongues, has stirred the hearts of millions as the symbol of a love that was stronger than death, which the many waters of judgment could not quench.

—Lewis H. Court.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 18

“Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt” — Matthew 26:38, 39.

THE utter resignation of Jesus to the Father’s will shines out in all these closing experiences, but particularly in that of Gethsemane. While the horror of becoming the great sin offering, being made sin for us, overwhelmed His human soul and spirit, yet He was perfectly subject to the divine will, and had no thought of turning aside. There are depths here that our minds can never fathom, but all is perfection on His part. If He could have contemplated all that was involved in the sacrifice of the cross with equanimity, He would not have been the perfect Man that He was. But knowing it all and realizing there was no other way by which He could become the captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), He faced the ordeal unflinchingly in order that God might be glorified, and sinful men saved.

It was not in Gethsemane, but on Calvary, that the sin question was settled and expiation made for iniquity. But the agony in the garden was a fitting prelude to the darkness of the cross. In order to make an adequate propitiation for our sins, it was necessary that the Substitute be a man, but more than man; otherwise His sacrifice could not have been of sufficient value to be a ransom for all. He must be a man on whom death and judgment had no claim; therefore one who had been tested and proved to be absolutely sinless—one who had never violated God’s holy law in thought or word or deed. But this very sinlessness of Jesus explains the suffering He endured in the contemplation of being made sin on our behalf.

— J. J. Hopkins.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 17

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” —Matthew 26:26-28.

THE Lord’s Supper in the Christian Church takes the place of the Passover among the Jews. The two are intimately linked together, for it was after the celebration of the paschal feast that Jesus offered His disciples the bread and wine and tenderly requested them to partake of them as setting forth His body about to be offered on the cross and His blood so soon to be shed for the remission of sins. Nearly two millenniums have elapsed since that solemn night, during which untold millions of grateful believers have partaken of these memorials in remembrance of Him who loved them even unto death.

The communion (1 Cor. 16:16) is not in any sense a sacrifice. It commemorates the one perfect sacrifice offered by our Lord once for all when He gave Himself for us on Calvary. Neither should it he celebrated with any thought of its having saving value or increasing merit. It is the reminder that when we were utterly lost and helpless, Christ died for us to redeem us to God. It is true that the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15) should ever accompany it as we contemplate the great cost at which we were saved, and rejoice that He who endured such grief and shame for us is now alive forevermore, never again to have to submit to the pain of death. We call Him to mind as the Author and Finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sits at the right hand of the throne of God.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 15

“After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them” — Matthew 25:19.

IT was when the master returned that he took account of his servants. And it will be at the return of our Lord Jesus that He will summon His servants to stand before His judgment-seat, not to be condemned for their sins, for that judgment is past (John 5:24), but to render an account of their service. Both for Israel and the Church rewards are to be given out at His coming. See Isaiah 62:11 and Revelation 22:12.

The wicked and slothful servant does not represent a child of God, because he is cast into the outer darkness. He has nothing for which he can be rewarded. It is otherwise with those who are regenerated. Of them it is written that in that day, “shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 4:5). This refers, of course, not to every man as such, but to every one of those who appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, where only believers will stand.

If we use whatever gifts we have, no matter how small and insignificant they may seem, in dependence on God, we shall find our capacity for service increasing constantly. We are told to covet earnestly the best gifts (1 Cor. 12:31), and to use them in love.

Daily Sacrifice, June 19

“Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet”—Matthew 24:6.

ALL men’s efforts to bring about a warless world are doomed to result in failure, so long as the Prince of Peace is rejected. He alone can speak peace to the nations. In His own times He will take over the reins of government, and then the nations shall learn war no more.

While His authority is denied and His Word spurned, the world will ever be, as He Himself foretold, a scene where nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and men's hearts will fail them for fear as they behold the things that are coming on the earth.

But even when ideologies are clashing, kingdoms being destroyed and vast armies endeavoring to annihilate one another, the heart of the Christian may be kept in peace as he realizes that God's restraining hand is over all, and the most wicked of men can do nothing apart from His permissive will.

—R. Heber.

Daily Sacrifice, June 18

"What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world [or, age]?"— Matthew 24:3.

IN order to get the true viewpoint it should be remembered that the great mystery of the one Body had not yet been revealed—so our Lord addressed His disciples as the believing remnant in Israel. A similar group will be found in the world (many in Palestine itself) in the time of the end (Dan. 12:4), during the dark days of the Great Tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21,22), after the present parenthetical age has come to a close. We should not read this prophecy, therefore, as though addressed to the Church as such, but rather to the faithful in Israel waiting for the coming again of Messiah to bring in the promised Kingdom, when heaven's authority will be acknowledged over all the earth. There are general principles that are applicable to all believers so long as Christ is absent. But the distinctive truth of the Church as the Body of Christ is not found here, nor is there any definite teaching as to the rapture of the saints when our Lord descends to the air at the close of this present dispensation (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

—Margaret E. Barber.

Daily Sacrifice, June 17

"Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant"— Matthew 23:8-11.

THE Lordship of Christ is what is here insisted on throughout. Because He is Son of God as well as Son of David He is to be acknowledged as Leader, our Teacher and Master, and to Him we are to yield wholehearted honor and obedience. We are to esteem His gifted servants highly for their work's sake (1 Thess. 5:13), recognizing them as the expression of His love for the Church, because He has given them to us that they might open up His Word for our blessing and edification (Eph. 4:8-16). But we are not to give to them the honor that belongs to God alone. In themselves they are nothing (1 Cor. 1:26-29; 8:7). Christ is our real Master. He, by His Spirit, is our true Teacher. When His servants seek recognition from men and glory in titles and degrees, they exhibit the very opposite spirit to that which should characterize followers of the Lord Jesus.

—R. Holden.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 14

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come" — Matthew 22:2, 3.

IN preparing the gospel feast, God has made abundant provision that all men may be saved and enjoy the bounty of His redemptive grace. But to man has been given the power of choice, and it is his prerogative to accept or reject the invitation so freely extended to "whosoever will." No excuse that man can make is really valid. He owes it to himself to heed the call and to take his place at the King's table, where he may enjoy the rich repast so freely spread. He owes it, too, to God Himself to esteem at its proper value the privilege extended to him. He who seeks an excuse for rejecting the divine offer of mercy is doing despite to the Spirit of grace and trampling the blood of the covenant beneath his feet as though it were of little worth (Heb. 10:28,29). Since God the Father has given His Son that all men might live through Him (1 John 4:9), and since the Holy Spirit has come from Heaven to bear witness (John 16:8) to the truth of the gospel, it behooves every man to accept with alacrity and gratitude the salvation so graciously offered. This is the lesson of the Great Supper.

Daily Sacrifice, June 16

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son?"— Matthew 22; 41-45.

"WHAT think ye of Christ?" This is ever the one all-important question which every man who hears the gospel is responsible to answer in the fear of God. These Pharisees were, presumably, looking for the coming of Christ, the Messiah. To them Jesus puts the direct inquiry, "Whose Son is He?" Knowing it was predicted that He would come through David's line (Jer. 23:5), they replied without hesitation, "The Son of David." This was true, but it was not all the truth. Though Son of David as to His Humanity, He was David's Lord because of His Deity. He is called both

“the root and the offspring of David” (Rev. 22:16).

“The Lord said unto my Lord.” The quotation is from Psalms 110:1. There David says, “The Lord [that is, Jehovah] said unto my Lord [my Master], Sit Thou at My right hand.” In this passage “Great David’s greater Son” is seen exalted to God’s right hand, as Man, and is recognized by David himself as the One to whom he owes heart-allegiance.

—J. Newton.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 13

“The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof”—Matthew 21:43.

ISRAEL after the flesh was to be put aside. The kingdom for which they had waited so long was to be lost to them forever. A new and elect nation, a regenerated Israel, shall possess the kingdom eventually. Meantime the grace of God is going out to the Gentiles.

It is a terribly dangerous thing to trifle with the mercy of God. Little did the Jewish leaders realize that they were sealing their own doom in rejecting Jesus, the One sent of God to bring them into fullness of blessing if they had received Him. They lost their opportunity because they were blinded by self-interest and so they failed to recognize their Messiah when He came in exact accord with the Scriptures of the prophets which they professed to reverence. Mere knowledge of the letter of the Word saves no one. It is those who believe in the Christ of whom the Book of God speaks who are made wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). To reject Him is fatal.

—F. R. Havergal.

Daily Sacrifice, June 15

“The multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest”— Matthew 21:9.

NONE but the Holy Spirit could have foreseen the crucifixion of our Lord following so soon after what is often called “the triumphal entry.” Actually, it was not the nation that officially acclaimed Him as the promised King on that historic Palm Sunday. The leaders fiercely resented the homage paid Him and voiced their opposition in no uncertain terms. But to Jesus this welcome by the “little ones” was as a cup of cold water to His spirit after the bitter hatred He had experienced. He had given thanks before to the Father that “these things”— the mysteries of the kingdom—were hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes (Matt. 11:25). In the reception accorded Him as He rode into the city of Jerusalem, this was confirmed.

For one brief moment Jesus was acknowledged as the rightful Heir to the throne of David (Luke 1:32). But the time had not yet come for Him to assume that throne. Not until He returns in glory will He build again the tabernacle of David that is thrown down (Acts 15:16; Amos 9:11, 12).

—James Montgomery.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 16

“But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” — Matthew 20:25-28.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ has given to mankind a new ideal. He has shown us that the truly great man is the one who seeks not his own good, but the blessing of others. Even here on earth the unselfish life is the most satisfactory one. To Baruch of old the message came, “Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not” (Jer. 45:5). This runs contrary to the pride and self-assertion of the natural man. “Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself” (Psa. 49:18). But after all is said and done, the truth abides that “for men to search their own glory is not glory” (Prov. 25:27). Our Lord, who, because of His very nature, had every right to assert Himself and seek recognition and honor from the men whom He created, chose to take the place of servant of all. He humbled Himself to become Man, but that was not enough. As Man, He took the servant’s place and at last gave Himself up to death for us in the sacrifice of the cross, that He might redeem us to God. He has glorified and exemplified the dignity of service and self-abnegation in such a way as to give an altogether new standard of greatness.

—Hutton.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, May 25

“While he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins” — Matthew 1:20, 21.

WHAT could be more wonderful than that God came down to earth as a baby! Could anything tell out more perfectly His deep yearning over mankind and His earnest desire to have men love and trust Him? Almost everybody, even the most depraved, loves a baby.

No one need fear a baby, and the Babe of Bethlehem was the perfect manifestation of the heart of God, who would have all men know that He became incarnate, not to condemn, but to save.

By becoming a little child Himself, our Lord has changed the thoughts of untold millions as to the value and preciousness of the little ones. Christianity makes more of the children than any pagan religious system ever did. It rebukes the horrible crime of infanticide, which was accepted as a matter of course even among the cultured Greeks and the highly civilized Romans.

Daily Sacrifice, June 14

“Behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” —Matthew 19:16, 17.

IN addressing Jesus Christ as “Good Master,” the young man evidently meant to do Him honor, but Jesus points out the fact that only God is good. All men are sinners (Rom. 3:12). Therefore, if Jesus was only a man, He was not good, in this absolute sense. If truly good, then He was God. After this solemn declaration, the Lord Jesus took the inquirer up on his own ground. The Law promised life to those who kept it (Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:12). So the Lord answered, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,” This declaration was designed to show the man his inability to obtain life on that ground, for if conscience were active, he would realize he had violated the Law already.

—Anon.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 12

“Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses”— Matthew 18:32-35.

IF we fail to distinguish the various aspects of forgiveness as set forth in the Word of God, we are likely to be in great confusion of mind because of God’s disciplinary dealings with us after our conversion to Christ. When He saves us He forgives us fully and eternally, and will never, as Judge, remember our sins again (Heb. 10:17). But as His children, we are to confess our sins whenever we fail, and He gives restorative forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Certain governmental results, however, may follow these failures, which are not to be construed as indicating that God has not pardoned, but He would teach us by discipline the heinousness of sin in His sight (2 Sam. 13:14). Forgiven ourselves, we are to forgive our brethren who sin against us (Col. 3:13). Members of the Church who offend against God’s righteous principles are to be disciplined, but forgiven when they give evidence of repentance (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:13; 2 Cor. 2:7).

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 11

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven —Matthew 18:3, 4.

NONE can be too young for the kingdom of Heaven. The children should be taught to come to Jesus as soon as they are able consciously to respond to His love and grace. As for those who are taken away from this scene ere they reach years of accountability, we can rely upon the precious words of chapters 18:10, 14. The Good Shepherd has died for these lambs and will not permit one of them to be lost. Christian parents should bring their babes to Him from the very beginning of their lives and should count on Him to bless them by drawing their hearts to Himself, assured that the faith of a child is as real as that of a more mature person. In fact, the one is the model for the other.

A tremendous responsibility, moreover, rests upon those who are older to guide the feet of the young, both by precept and example.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 10

“And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them”—Matthew 18:2.

THE child in the midst. When God became incarnate He chose to appear on earth as a baby. The sweetest, purest creature that we know in this scene is an artless, little child. And this is the chosen symbol of the representative of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus declared, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). Who then can ever enter? Who can go back to the comparative innocence and purity of a little child? But note what really happened. The Lord Jesus called a little child. In trustful confidence he came to the Saviour, who took him in His arms and set him in the midst. Now note the analogy. He calls. We heed His voice, and so become converted and find a place in His kingdom. The law of that kingdom is love. Its subjects are to manifest the meekness and gentleness of Christ, hence not to seek great things for themselves (Jer. 45:5), nor to sit in judgment on their fellow-servants (Matt. 7:1, 2). Each one is to act as before the Lord, endeavoring in his measure to do the will of God and to glorify Him, while seeking to co-operate in the fullest way with all true service in which others may be engaged,(Phil. 1:27).

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 9

“Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to Me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour” —Matthew 17:17, 18.

HE who is the delight of the Father’s heart finds His greatest joy in manifesting the riches of His grace to needy sinners. While His condition on the mount was one of indescribable glory, His heart was the same as when He walked among men in lowliness and compassion. And so it is still. He abides for eternity “the same Jesus.” To Him we may bring our dear ones for whose welfare we are concerned, assured that His interest in them is deeper and tenderer than ours ever can be. Fullness of grace resides in Him, for the benefit of all who come to Him in their need and distress. When at last He returns to reign and “every eye shall see. Him” (Rev. 1:7), He will be the very same as when He ministered so lovingly to those who sought His favor in the days of His flesh. It is the privilege of every parent to bring the children to Him, and claim, in faith, the saving power of the blood of Him who is the true Paschal Lamb.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 8

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” —Matthew 16:16-28.

THE truth embodied in Peter’s great confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” is the rock of our salvation. Upon this the Church is builded. Apart from a divine Saviour there would be no Church of God in the world. It is noticeable that Jesus Himself elicited this confession by direct questioning. He knew well both the attitude of men in general regarding His true character and also that which His disciples knew Him to be. But He would have them put themselves on record, and so Peter was led to speak for them all. It meant much to the Lord Jesus to discern the working of grace in their souls, and their growth in spiritual intelligence. On the other hand, it grieved Him deeply when they failed to enter into the truth concerning the work of redemption as readily as they had grasped something of the glory of His Person. Hence His severe rebuke when Peter would have turned Him aside, had it been possible, from the death of the cross. The blunder of Peter as to this might well give us to pause, as we realize how untrustworthy are the views of even the best of men unless they are the recipients of divine revelation. How good that God has given us His Word, thus revealing wondrous mysteries kept secret from the world’s foundation!

— J. Newton.

Divine Priorities and Other Messages, 8. Is Peter the Rock Upon Which the Church Is Built?

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets, He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.— MATTHEW 16:13-20, A. R. V.

THIS passage of Scripture has been the source of a great deal of contention, and of difference of opinion among theologians for many years. In fact, ever since the third century of the Christian era there has been continual debate as to the exact meaning of a number of expressions used here. For most of us commonly known as Protestants these questions have been settled long ago. We do not have any perplexity about them, we have learned to go to the Word of God itself for the explanation of its own terms. We believe with Chillingworth that “the Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants” and so are not very much concerned about traditions or about the decisions of church councils or the declarations of popes, fallible or infallible. We turn from all these to the Book itself.

I have been reminded that this is not true of a great many people, people who are just as honest, I take it, just as eager to know what God’s will is, and just as desirous of doing His will as those of us who are called Protestants, but they have been taught to decide questions from an altogether different standpoint. In the first place, they have been taught not to search the Bible themselves for direct instruction in regard to any doctrine. That may seem like a rather broad statement but I believe that I can show you that it is true. They have been taught that inasmuch as Saint Peter has told us that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20), it is a very reprehensible thing for any individual Christian to sit down over the Bible itself depending on the Holy Spirit to open up the truth, without asking the help of the priesthood, of the councils of the church, of the fathers, and of others who are supposed to speak with authority.

The story is told of an Irishman who all of his life had been, as so many of his nation are, a member of the Roman Catholic Church. But someone had given him a New Testament and through reading it he had been brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had learned that a man may have eternal life in this world and know it; that he may have all his sins forgiven and be certain of it, that he need not go to any human intermediary but may go direct to the blessed Lord Himself to confess his sins and obtain forgiveness. The result of his study gave Patrick great joy and happiness. He did not know anyone like minded with whom he could have Christian fellowship, so when others went to the parish church, he remained at home poring over the sacred pages of his New Testament, a Book which he had never seen before but which now meant so much to him. Finally the parish priest missed his erstwhile faithful parishioner, so he arranged to visit him. He came on a day when this happy convert was reading his New Testament, and as the priest entered the room, Patrick rose to meet him with the Book

in his hand. “What book is that?” the priest inquired.

And Patrick answered, “Well, sure and your Reverence, it’s the New Testament.”

“But, Patrick, don’t you know that that is not a book for an ignorant man like you to be reading without instruction and help? You will be forming your own private judgment about things and making all kinds of mistakes and going off into some heresy.”

But Patrick said, “Well, sure, I have just been reading here, and it’s the blessed Apostle Peter says it, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word: that ye may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2), and sure, your Reverence, I have just been born again and I am a babe in Christ and it is the milk I’m thirsting after and I am reading the Word to get it.”

“That is very good, Patrick, but you need help and instruction, and the Almighty has appointed the clergy to be the milkmen; He has given them the knowledge: of the truth, and when you want instruction, you should come to the church and we will give it to you as you are able to bear it. You get to studying for yourself and you are sure to go wrong.”

But Patrick replied, “Out there in the shed I have a cow and when I was sick some time ago, I had to hire a man to milk her and I soon found he was stealing half of the milk and filling the bucket with water; but when I got well, I discharged him and took to milking me own cow and now I am getting the rich cream. When I was depending upon you, it was milk and water stuff you were giving me; now, thank God, I am milking me own cow and it’s the cream of the Word I am getting.”

Another story is told of a little lad sitting on the curb in Johannesburg, in South Africa, reading a New Testament, when the priest passed by and, recognizing him as a child of a family belonging to his flock, said, “My boy, what is that book you are reading?”

“It is the New Testament, father,” he said.

“But that is not for an ignorant little boy like you to be reading.”

The lad replied, “Sure, but I have a search warrant to read it.”

“A search warrant! Why, what do you mean?”

“It says here, ‘Search the Scriptures,’ and so I am after doing what I am told.”

How can anyone say that Christians are not capable of reading the Word of God and getting the mind of the Lord when the Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven for the express purpose of opening the truth to those who honestly seek that truth and are prepared to walk according to it?

Our blessed Lord said of the Holy Spirit, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14: 26). Imagine a man cast out on a desert island with nothing but a copy of the Bible; no teacher, no clergyman, no. priest, no church, no other books of any kind to instruct him. Do you mean to say that that man is left without the possibility of acquiring sufficient truth for the saving of his soul because he is beyond the reach of the visible church? Surely not, Wherever a man honestly seeks to know the mind of God, the Holy Spirit is there to reveal the truth to him.

They tell us that we must not use private judgment but must accept the judgment of the councils and the church. But how are we going to decide to accept that? Must I not use my private judgment and decide that I will forego the reasonings of my own intellect and let the councils tell me what to believe? After all, is that not private judgment? I remember reading Cardinal Newman’s Apologia Pro Vita Sua years ago. He tells how up to the day that he decided to submit himself to the Church of Rome and accept the dicta of that Church as his guide, he had very grave doubts of many of the so-called Catholic doctrines, such as the position given to the pope, the place given to the blessed virgin Mary, the doctrine of purgatory, the intercession of saints, and so on, but he said, “When I decided to submit my judgment to the church, all these things were settled for me.” But do you not see, he had to make the decision himself? Was not that private judgment? I have investigated these things. I have read much Roman Catholic theology, I have examined a great many volumes put out by Roman Catholic publishers, and after having compared them with the Word of God, my private judgment tells me that I dare not trust the salvation of my soul to the decision of popes or councils if they go contrary to the Book. I am resting upon what this Book reveals as to God’s way of salvation, and if it tells me that Peter is the rock on which the Church is built and that there is no salvation except for those who are in the church founded by Peter, I want to know it, but I must find out from the Book.

Now, let us examine the account given in Matthew 16. Our blessed Lord was nearing the end of His testimony here on earth. He had been practically rejected by Israel and was looking out upon the great world of Gentiles. That is what is implied in the thirteenth verse, “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi.” Caesarea Philippi was the first great Gentile city just north of the land of Palestine, about twenty miles beyond the border of Palestine, and Jesus had gone up into the northernmost part of Galilee and was looking out toward that great Gentile world thinking of the untold millions who were still in their sins to whom His salvation was yet to come, the men for whom He was soon to die, and He realized that so much depended upon men having a correct understanding of the truth of His person. You will notice in the New Testament that invariably faith is linked with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only in one instance does it seem to be linked especially with His work. Links of faith with His person are: “He that believeth on him is not condemned”; “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”; “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”; “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” It is the person that saves, and trusting Him we go on to learn more of His wonderful work, but we begin with faith in Christ Himself. And so He turned to His disciples and interrogated them in this way: “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” And they told Him what the common report had been. “Some say that thou art John the Baptist.” This, you recall, was Herod’s first reaction when told of His miracles and testimony. Others said He was Elias, for it is written, “I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5). Some said He was Jeremiah, for some of the rabbis held that Jeremiah was the unnamed sufferer of Isaiah 53. And others said he was at least a prophet. Then the Lord asked the question directly, “But whom say ye that I am?” Oh, how we honor Simon Peter for his great confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Does the Church of Rome honor Simon Peter? They cannot honor him more than I do. I thank God for his wondrous testimony and for the ministry of this great Servant of the Lord; but I would not think that Simon Peter was a sufficient rock upon which the Church could be built. I find as I read on in the

Word that there was too much frailty, too much failure, too much sin in Simon Peter for me to rest my soul on him, but I do honor him as the first one who made this, great confession, one in which gladly join, “Blessed Lord, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

It is always a divine revelation when one is brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. It is not merely a natural thing. We do not arrive at this conclusion by any intellectual process alone. There must be a work in the soul by the Holy Spirit of God before people can recognize the true blessedness of our Lord Jesus. “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Because of this a Roman Catholic theologian has declared, “It is evident from these words that our Lord wishes us to understand that Simon Peter had secrets with the Father in which Christ Himself did not share. Therefore, we can conceive of circumstances where it might be safer to go to Peter or to his successors than to Christ Himself,” That is the conclusion that one came to when he swung away from the plain testimony of the Word of God and subjected his mind to the decisions of the councils and to church traditions. Safer to go to Peter than to Christ! Every Christian has the same revelation it is God the Father’s revelation to every trusting soul and we get it through the mediatorial work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then the Lord adds, “And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter [a piece of rock, a rock-like man if we dare paraphrase] and upon this rock I will build my church.” What rock? Upon Peter? No, nor upon Peter. Then what rock? Let one of the greatest doctors of the Church tell us, if they insist that we must not use our own private judgment in determining the meaning of Holy Scripture. St. Augustine, of whom there is no greater doctor in all the Church, in his comment on this verse, says, “So, then, Christ, not Peter, is the rock on which the Church is built.” Clearly, what our Lord is saying is, “This glorious revelation the Father has given to you, Simon Peter; this great truth that you have confessed—upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell—the gates of hades—shall not prevail against it.”

You say, “But that is your private judgment.” Let me turn, then, to an authentic letter written by the Apostle Peter himself and learn from him what he understood the Lord to mean that day. Undoubtedly, if he understood the Lord to say that the Church was to be built upon him, he would tell us so. Popes today are not at all bashful about telling us that there is no salvation outside the church that is built on Peter and that they are Peter’s successors. If Simon Peter believed that, he certainly would not leave his disciples in any doubt regarding it; he would tell them the truth about a matter like this, 1 Peter 2:1-7:

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God b Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.”

Peter tells us that God is building a house and this house rests upon a living stone and that be living stone is Christ! He is the foundation upon whom this glorious, house rests. This house is the Church of the living God. Peter further tells the members of that Church that they are living stones, built upon this foundation. Does not that exactly correspond with our Lord’s words to Peter on the coasts of Caesarea Philippi: “Peter, you are a rocklike man and you are built upon this rock, the confession that I am the Son of the living God”?

Let us see whether other apostles understood it that way. But first let us ask whether our Lord Himself had said anything easier that might suggest the exact meaning of this text. Turn back to the seventh chapter of Matthew’s gospel, verses 24 to 25, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and dotes them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.” What rock was that? It was the rock Christ Jesus, for the man who built upon that rock was the man who kept His sayings. Turn to the writings of the apostle Paul, the first Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter three, and let us see whether we have any light as to the rock upon which the Church is built. In verses 9 to 11 we read:

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon, But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Is there any question as to what that means? Do you need a church council to expound this to you? Do you need an infallible pope to tell you the meaning of the words, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”? But let us look elsewhere—the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, verses 19 to 22: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” We do not read here, “Simon Peter himself being the chief corner stone.” It should read that way if the other teaching is correct. But it reads, “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” And so, whether you listen to Simon Peter, to the blessed Lord Himself, or to His servant, the Apostle Paul, you will find that the Church’s one foundation is not a man, however noble or excellent he may be, but Christ Himself.

But, then, what of the other things that the Lord said to Peter? “I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” It is assumed that Peter is the rock upon which the Church is built and that the church built upon Peter will never come to grief. In other words, the church built upon Peter is an outward organization. But it is perfectly clear that the Church is a great spiritual company, not necessarily visible to men but one that includes all real believers, and against that Church the gates of hell shall never prevail.

But did not the Lord say unto Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven”? There- fore, has He not committed to Peter the right to close the doors of heaven against any who do not submit to him and to open to those who do? That is what is commonly thought in Romanist circle. But observe, the Lord did not say to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of heaven.” Christ never gave the keys of heaven to Peter or to anyone else. He did say, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” But is not the kingdom of heaven heaven itself? Most certainly not! The kingdom of heaven is the sphere on earth where the Lordship of Christ is acknowledged, even though some in that sphere are unreal. It is what we call Christendom. Look at one of the outstanding parables of that kingdom for proof that it includes faithless

professors as well as true believers:

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven he likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying. Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 25; 1-13).

Is that heaven? Surely not. The kingdom of heaven is the sphere on earth of Christian profession. When Christ said, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” it was because of Peter’s great confession, and he was to have the signal honor of opening the door of the kingdom of heaven, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. On the day of Pentecost it was he who opened the door of faith to the Jews, and in Cornelius’ house it was Peter who opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. Now that the door is open, it stands ajar and whosoever will may enter in.

Did not the Lord give special authority to Peter when he said, “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”? He did give authority to Peter, but the same authority is given to the entire Church. In the eighteenth chapter of Matthew’s gospel, verses 15 to 18, he is speaking of any who offend, and he says:

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother, But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Is this authority given particularly to Peter? Not at all, it is given to the Church of God as a whole. What is the meaning of this passage? If a professing member of the Church of God falls into sin, he is to be carefully dealt with, and if he will not repent of his sin, the Church is authorized to bind his sin upon him and put him away from her fellowship. If he comes back a broken-hearted man, confessing his sin and failure, the Church is authorized to forgive him and receive him back into her fellowship. In that sense the Church has been binding and loosing all down through the centuries.

But someone says, “Surely, Peter had some special place over and above others.” Turn again to his own epistle, 1 Peter 5:1, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder.” Think of that for a moment. A literal translation would be, “The presbyters among you I exhort, who am a co-presbyter,” or one on the same level as the rest. If Simon Peter was ever pope, he never knew it, for he speaks of himself as a “co-presbyter” with all the rest of the elders in the Church of God! He assumed no place of authority over them.

What a solemn thing it is when you turn back to the sixteenth chapter of Matthew to find that within a short time after making his confession, Peter proved an absolutely untrustworthy guide:

“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”

Is this Peter an infallible pope, rebuking Christ and saying: “Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee”? But Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God but those that be of men.” Is the church built on a man that Christ called Satan? What a strange church that would be! We were having an open-air meeting years ago out West. A friend of mine was preaching most earnestly, and a great big Irishman, half drunk, stepped out and tried to break up our meeting. He kept shouting out as he followed the preacher, with his fists doubled, “What did the Lord say to Peter? Why don’t you tell us what the Lord said to Peter? That is what we want to know.” The man who was preaching perhaps did not have wit enough to answer him quickly and so tried to go on with his preaching, but a very dignified looking friend, a typical New Englander, standing next to me, listened until he could not stand it any longer. He stepped up to this fellow and said, “The Lord said to Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan,” and the man almost dropped in his tracks. He wanted him to say, “I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” and he forgot that the Lord said to Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan.”

Long after the day of Pentecost, when one would have thought that Peter would have been utterly beyond failure, that he could have been trusted in everything, we find that he turned aside from the truth for a time. In Galatians 2:11 we read, “But when Peter was to come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” What do you think would happen if one of the bishops should withstand the pope to his face in the presence of all the rest of them? But the apostle Paul did not recognize any superiority in Peter; he did not see in him the head of the Church or the rock on which the Church was built; but saw him misbehaving and said, “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” The Greek word is “hypocrisy.” The apostle Peter is here branded as acting the part of a hypocrite. The Church built on one who, for a time, became guilty of hypocrisy and whose influence was so bad that it misled others so that even Barnabas was carried away by the hypocrisy! And Paul goes on to say:

“When I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, if thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Here, then, we see Peter failing, sinning, needing repentance; surely unfit to be the rock on which the Church is built.

The whole tradition about Peter being in Rome and being the first pope is absolutely unsubstantiated. According to a tradition that had its rise in the latter part of the second century after Christ, we are told that Peter went to Rome in 42 A. D. and founded the church there and then remained as bishop of Rome until 67 A. D., when he was martyred, led out of the city to be crucified. They were going to crucify him hi the ordinary way, but he said, “No, I denied my Lord once, I am not worthy to be crucified as He was. Crucify me with my head downward.” Tradition says he was crucified I oat way. We have no way of knowing whether he was in Rome to be crucified or not. There does seem to be a measure of testimony that would intimate that possibly this is true, but when they tell us that he was in Rome from 42 A. D. to 67 A. D., we have positive evidence to the contrary, because those very years are covered largely by the book of Acts.

We know that Peter was not in Rome in 50 A. D., because in that year the apostle Paul with Barnabas went up to Jerusalem, and the council of Jerusalem decided that the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses to be saved. Peter was there, and the apostle Paul says that after discussing things it was decided at that council that Peter should work among the Jews and Paul among the Gentiles. Just imagine Peter, as bishop of Rome, a great Gentile city, after it was definitely settled at Jerusalem that his work was to be among the Jews.

Peter could not have been in Rome in 58 A. D., for in that year Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans and sent greetings to a great many people, but there was not a solitary reference to Peter’s presence in Rome. Neither could he have founded the church there, because Paul was to go there, and he stated himself that he did not build upon another man’s foundation. The work there was commenced without any apostle.

Peter was not in Rome in 61 A. D. to 63 A. D., for in those years Paul was there in prison, and he wrote those four wonderful prison letters, and there is not the slightest recognition of Peter’s presence in any of them. Paul sent greetings to other Christians, and you can imagine how ready he would have been to say, “And Peter, the apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, sends greetings.” But Peter was not there, so he could not send greetings. We have some letters from Peter which were written between 60 A. D. and 67 A. D., and the second of these was written from Babylon, where he was laboring among the dispersed of Israel. We have not the slightest evidence that he was ever in Rome unless he went there just before his death. He was never a bishop of Rome. We can be very certain of this.

Did not our Lord give to Peter and also to the other apostles special authority, such as only the priests of Rome have today, when He said to them, as recorded in John 20, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:22 and 23)? Did not the Lord give unto His apostles as the first bishops of the Church special authority to forgive and to retain sins? The best way to answer that question is to see whether we can find an explanation of remission of sins from somebody who was there. When we turn to the tenth chapter of Acts, we get just such a testimony. Peter, preaching in the home of Cornelius, said, “And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree; him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly” (verses 39 and 40). And now verse 43: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” How does Peter proclaim remission of sins? Through faith in Christ. If Jesus had given to Peter and to the rest of the apostles the authority to forgive sins, when men came and made their confession, Peter would have said to Cornelius, “To him give all the prophets witness, that through. certain authorized ministers of his you may receive remission of sins. If you will come and make a good confession and do proper penance, your sins will be forgiven.” But this was not the case; in the clearest possible language he showed that all men who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ have remission of sins. “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” So Peter proclaimed remission of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I come to you as a genuine successor of Peter; I come to you in the direct apostolic order. All down through the ages saints of God have been following in the line of the apostles; and as a Christian minister I say to you, by divine authority, if you want remission of sins, come to Jesus, not to a priest; acknowledge your guilt to Jesus; tell Film you are the sinner for whom He died, and I dare declare to you on the authority of the Son of God, when you do that, you have remission of sins, for Jesus says, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted.” If you refuse to come, if you do not turn to Christ, your sins remain upon you for all eternity, for Jesus says, “Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” If you are a weary, sin-sick soul, anxious to enter into peace with God, come to Christ and find salvation in Him.

Daily Sacrifice, June 13

“Straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” — Matthew 14:27.

THE four words, “Be of good cheer,” represent only one Greek word. It has been suggested that it might be rendered by the English term, “Cheerio”! Several times our Lord used this expression to encourage the fainting hearts of His disciples. The same word is used in Acts 23:11; 27:22, 25. When Christ Himself is concerned about us there is no cause for worry or anxiety on our part. No matter how heavy the storm or how distressing the trials we have to face He is there to cheer and to deliver.

Mysteries of God, Chapter 3.

“The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven”

“UNTO you,” said the Lord, addressing His disciples,” it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 13:11).

Heaven’s rule over earth was no new teaching. For centuries the prophets had borne witness to it, and pointed on to a coming day when all men should see it. That it was no merely spiritual sway of heaven’s Lord to which they referred, but a true world-kingdom destroying and superseding all other dominions, and characterized by the universal dissemination of spiritual teaching and divine authority, is plain from the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

Through the elect remnant of Israel, this kingdom is to be administered; the Gentiles coming into blessing in subjection to them. To attempt to give the passages which teach what is here briefly indicated would be to quote the major part of the Psalms and the Prophets.

Daniel, perhaps more plainly than any other, unfolds the glories of that coming reign of righteousness. In vision, Babylon's proud king was given to behold the stone that fell from heaven, shattering the image of Gentile dominion, and becoming a great mountain that filled the whole earth. That this is a far different thing from Christianity is manifest, for Gentile dominion is not yet destroyed, nor is there any likelihood that it shall be by the spread of the gospel and the extension of the limits of Christendom.

And yet, clearly, there is a spiritual kingdom of heaven pervading the world at the present time, but with the King Himself absent in the heavens. Of this the greater part of Matthew's Gospel treats. In fact, unless this be seen, it is quite impossible to truly comprehend that first of the Gospels.

Glancing briefly at this interesting book, we find in chapter 1 The genealogy of the promised King—Son of David, Son of Abraham. In chapter 2 The Gentiles pay Him honor in the persons of the Magi from the east—earnest of the day when all nations shall own His benignant yet righteous sway. John the Baptist comes before us in chapter 3 with the startling cry, "The kingdom (or, reign) of the heavens has drawn nigh." Undoubtedly it is to Daniel's visions he refers. The reign of heaven over the earth had at that time drawn so nigh that the King could be offered to Israel. If they received Him, He was there in person to establish His kingdom. In the latter part of the chapter He is baptized in the Jordan, thus identifying Himself with the remnant who own their unfitness for the kingdom proclaimed.

The fourth chapter opens with Satan's offer of the kingdom apart from the cross, only to be spurned by the rightful Ruler, who, leaving the wilderness, goes about preaching and healing, saying, "Repent: for the reign of the heavens has drawn nigh"; thus authenticating the message of John.

In chapter 5 to 7 He sets forth the principles that shall govern when that kingdom is fully set up; yet, in closing, shows that not all who say "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the blessings of that reign, but those alone who receive His words, and do them.

From this point on He meets with ever-increasing rejection, as chapter 8 to 11 make manifest. In the end of the last, He upbraids the cities that had seen His mighty works; and then, turning from the thought of the kingdom which they had rejected, He extends the call of the gospel to weary souls everywhere. If Israel own Him not as King, yet He is the sinner's Saviour still, and the giver of rest to the heavy-laden.

So in chapter 12 The leaders of the nation commit the unpardonable sin for which they shall never be forgiven, in this age or that to come. The kingdom offer is therefore withdrawn for the present, because the King is definitely and finally rejected by the unregenerate mass.

It is following upon this that He begins to make known the mysteries of Heaven's reign. Up to this point we have been going over what the prophets had predicted. They had likewise told of the ultimate reception of the King when Israel shall be born again and made willing in the day of His power. The interval between the cutting off of Messiah and His return in glory to take the kingdom was vaguely described as a time of sorrow for Israel, but what form the reign of Heaven would take during that undefined period had not been revealed. It is this which the Lord now makes known to His disciples, who, refusing the judgment of the nation, had owned His claims upon them. Heaven's reign should go on even though the kingdom, as such, had been refused. The King was going up to the heavens, but from there He would rule, and the dispensation of the kingdom would be committed to the hands of men. This is the key to the seven parables of chapter 13.

The first one is not, properly speaking, a similitude of the kingdom at all. It gives, rather, the means by which that kingdom, in its mystic aspect, was formed. Rejected as Messiah, the Lord went about as a Sower, sowing the word.

Among those who profess to receive that word there are various classes (vers. 3-8 and 18-23). Wayside hearers listen, but go no farther. Stony-ground hearers professedly receive the word, but there is no root, as tribulation and persecution for the truth's sake soon make manifest. Those who receive the word among thorns allow the legitimate things of life, as also covetousness and worldly anxieties, to choke it, so that they become unfruitful. The good-ground hearers typify those who truly receive the word and understand it, thus bringing forth fruit.

It is the word of the kingdom. All who profess to receive it constitute the kingdom of the heavens in its present mystical form. In other words, the term "the kingdom of heaven," as used in Matthew, and in Matthew only, is practically synonymous with Christendom, which simply means Christ's kingdom. It is that sphere on earth where Christ's authority is professedly owned, and where His word is honored, even though it be but in an outward way. This chapter is being written in the year 1908; but it is not the computation of the Hebrew, the Mohammedan, or the pagan. The first of these dates from the creation of the world, according to Jewish traditions; the second, from the hegira of Mohammed; while each of the various heathen nations has special events from which to count, as in Japan, for instance, the era of Meija. But in Christendom men acknowledge the advent of One who, though rejected, is the true and rightful Sovereign of the universe. So they write "in the year of our Lord." By so doing they confess His authority, however much their lives may deny it.

Now, within this broad sphere of light and responsibility is found a narrower one, consisting only of those who have truly received the word of the kingdom into their hearts. These are the converted ones of Matthew 18:3, who have "become as little children," and thus "enter the kingdom of heaven." The rest, while within the influence or administration of the kingdom, have never really entered it, inasmuch as it is a spiritual thing, and requires new birth ere one can "see" it (John 3:3). In the present age, this converted company has, by the baptism of the Spirit, been formed into the Church, the Body of Christ, as we shall see more clearly when we come to consider the mystery of the One Body, in a subsequent chapter. Here it is only necessary to apprehend the difference between being in the kingdom in an outward aspect and being in very deed children of the kingdom.

This the next parable emphasizes—that of the wheat and the tares. In verse 24 to 30 our Lord gives the similitude. He does not leave us to ferret out the meaning of it, however; but in verse 37 to 43 He condescends to explain it Himself, in answer to the request of His disciples, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field."

The Sower of the good seed, He explains, is the Son of man. It was Himself come in grace into a world in which there was nothing for God, to sow the incorruptible seed, the word of life, that thus there might be a harvest to His glory.

“The field is the world.” This is of great importance. By making the field the Church, many expositors have gone astray. The world, not the Church, is the scene where the seed is sown. Here too the tares, or the darnel, are sown by Satan and his emissaries. It is “an enemy hath done this.” Satan has been busy sowing (in the same sphere where the good seed has been scattered) the evil seed of false and unholy teaching which deceives the receivers of it. Those who accept the false doctrines, “the damnable heresies,” referred to by the apostle Peter, are the children of the devil. Having a name to live, they are dead; professing to be Christians, they are the enemies of the Cross; yet they are not to be extirpated, as Rome once sought to do, lest the good be rooted out with the evil; but both are to grow together until the harvest, at the end of the age. For, be it noted, it is not the end of the world, but of the dispensation, that is here referred to, as any critical version of the Scriptures will show.

When the age closes, the tares will be gathered into bundles and cast into a furnace of fire. The righteous shall then shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. All this will be brought out in other portions as we go on.

Having thus explained for us the first two parables, our Lord proceeds to put forth others, which, with the key already given, are clear when we compare one portion of Scripture with another.

That of the mustard seed is given in verse 31 and 32. The kingdom of the heavens is likened unto a grain of mustard seed, which, having been sown in a field, developed into a great tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air find lodgment. This gives us the outward aspect of the kingdom. It has become a great thing in the earth. A tree is often used as the symbol of worldly power and glory. In the Old Testament, Nebuchadnezzar is likened to a great tree (Dan. 4:20-22). The kingdom, or empire, of Assyria is presented under a similar figure (Ezek. 31:3-7), even to the fowls of heaven resting in the branches. Judah also is so portrayed in Ezekiel 17.

Outwardly the kingdom was to assume an aspect of grandeur upon earth. This has been fulfilled in the history of Christendom. Unquestionably “the Church” is a power to be reckoned with in the world to-day, and has been since the days of Constantine. But who are the birds of the air who find lodgment in the branches? In the first parable they were declared to be the powers of Satan. Without doubt they mean the same here. Babylon is to be the hold of every unclean and hateful bird. These are evil workers and false teachers who yet find a refuge in the professing Church.

Another parable connects intimately with this, in the verse that follows—that of the leaven. Perhaps few portions of the word of God have been more misunderstood than this. It is generally made to mean the triumph of the gospel, which, like leaven, is supposed to be permeating the world, and will continue to do so until all mankind are regenerated. If such be its meaning, it is directly contrary to the universal testimony of Scripture elsewhere. Nowhere is it hinted at that the world will be converted eventually through the preaching of the gospel as we now know it. The very opposite is the declaration of the Lord Jesus, that at His return He will find the days of Noah and of Lot reproduced. Neither is leaven, in Scripture, ever a symbol of anything good; nor meal a type of unregenerate mankind.

Leaven, throughout, is evil and false. It was to be rigidly excluded from the offerings which set forth the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the thank-offering and the Pentecostal loaves it was permitted because needed to picture the fallen nature of those through grace redeemed. In the New Testament the Lord warns against the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy; the leaven of the Sadducees, which is false teaching; and the leaven of Herod, which is a combining of the world’s politics with religion. Paul writes of” the leaven of malice and wickedness,” and contrasts with it “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Therefore, if leaven in the parable before us sets forth something good and pleasing to God, it is in direct opposition to the only use made of it elsewhere by the Lord Himself, and by all Scripture.

On the other hand, “three measures of meal,” in place of picturing unregenerate mankind, full of sin and iniquity, always speaks, in Scripture typology, of that which is good to the use of edifying. It was “three measures of fine meal,” which Sarah prepared, at Abraham’s bidding, to set before the mystic “three men” who came to him in the plains of Mamre (Gen. 18:6). The meat or meal-offering, setting forth the undefiled and undefilable humanity of the Lord Jesus, was made of meal from which all leaven had been rigidly excluded (Lev. 2).

Allowing Scripture to explain Scripture, it is manifest that the parable of the leaven teaches the very opposite to what it is commonly understood to mean. The meal is the food of the people of God, that good deposit which was committed to them by the Lord and His apostles. But a mysterious woman has risen up who secretly insinuates evil into that which should have remained unleavened, or undefiled. Is it too much to say that this woman is identified for us, in the epistle to Thyatira, as “that woman Jezebel” (Rev. 2:20-22); and in the vision given to John, as “Babylon the Great” (Rev. 17:5)? Unquestionably it is the false Church, the great Anti-Church of the Christian centuries, which has usurped the place of teacher instead of learner, and has literally tampered with every precious truth of Scripture. Of this we shall find fuller information when we come to consider “the mystery of lawlessness,” in a future chapter.

The four parables we have been looking at were spoken in the open, by the seaside. They show the beginning and the growth of Christendom in its outward aspect and its true character.

Sending the multitude away, and going into the house, the Lord gave fuller instruction to His own disciples, setting forth three more similitudes concerning the kingdom. These likewise have often been quite misunderstood. We turn now to briefly notice their teaching.

First, He tells of a treasure hid in a field. Remembering that “the field is the world,” we ask, What treasure was here hidden? All through the Old Testament, Israel is so pictured. They formed Jehovah’s “peculiar treasure.” To them Christ came from glory, but the time had not yet arrived for His acceptance; so He “hideth” it, and then went to the cross to pay the purchase-price for the whole world—the field, not merely the treasure. Hidden still that treasure remains, but soon it shall be brought forth from its hiding-place, and He shall acknowledge it as His own. “They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My peculiar treasure” (Mal. 3:17, literal rendering). It is the earthly aspect of the kingdom, which will, it is hoped, be made clear as we proceed.

The parable that follows has striking differences, though in some respects similar.

The merchantman seeking goodly pearls pictures the value of the true kingdom in His own eyes. For He, not the sinner, is the merchantman. Were salvation a pearl of great price, none could ever buy it, for all unsaved ones are bankrupt and unprofitable. Neither is there any that seeketh after God. But He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, leaving the glory that He had with the Father before ever the earth was, and coming into this scene to seek a goodly pearl to adorn His diadem forever. One pearl He found, and that of great price! It is the heavenly aspect of the kingdom—the Church for which He gave Himself. At Calvary’s cross He paid the full price of its purchase; and now none shall

dispute His title to that Church which He path purchased with His own blood. He “loved the Church, and gave Himself for it” Not all the failure and apostasy of Christendom can alter the value, or touch the purity, of this pearl so greatly prized. Amid all the corruptions of the centuries, it remains perfect and lovely in His eyes. Soon it will be removed from its surroundings of evil and filthiness, and be placed in its proper setting, to be the chief ornament of His crown throughout eternal ages.

The story of the drag-net closes the series. Cast into the sea, it brings together of every kind, good and bad. When it is full, the good are collected into vessels; the bad are cast away. The Lord Himself elucidates it: “So shall it be at the end of the age (not the world): the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (vers. 49, 50). At the end of the age, then, in place of a converted world, we find good and bad being separated by angelic agency. The good are the true children of the kingdom, and are saved eternally. The bad are false professors, taken in the gospel net, but who have not really received the word of the kingdom in their hearts. Their end is judgment.

Solemnly the Lord asks, “Have ye understood all these things? “They reply in the affirmative, though it is evident from their after-history that they but feebly entered into what He had set before them. He adds, “Therefore every scribe discipled unto the kingdom of the heavens is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (vers. 51, 52).

“The mystery of the seven golden candlesticks,” in Revelation 2 and 3, coincides in large measure with these seven parables. There we find the seven candlesticks symbolize seven churches. Prophetically, they set forth seven distinct stages of the professing body, from the apostolic times to the Lord’s return. We may compare the parable of the sower, with Ephesus; the wheat and tares, with Smyrna; the mustard tree, with Pergamos; the leaven, with Thyatira; the treasure, with Sardis; the pearl, with Philadelphia; and the drag-net, with Laodicea. While the aspect is often different, it will be noted by the careful student that the moral order is practically the same, though, of course, viewed rather from the standpoint of the assembly than the kingdom. Israel is therefore not brought in, as having no part, nationally, in God’s present work.

A few other scriptures require notice to complete our necessarily hurried survey of the Master’s teaching as to the reign of the heavens.

In chapter 16:18 we get the first intimation of the Church; a subject which will occupy us in its proper place. To Peter, the Lord adds, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Peter, then, is to open the door into the kingdom. It is not into heaven, as vain men have foolishly imagined; nor even into the Church; but the sphere of Christian discipleship and profession, where the authority of the Lord is acknowledged, alone is meant. On the day of Pentecost we find Peter using the keys, and admitting the Jews. In the house of Cornelius, he opens the door to the Gentiles. Since that day, what multitudes have pressed in!

But of them all, none really enter that kingdom, in its true spiritual sense, save such as “be converted, and become as little children” (chs. 18:2,3). Within the borders of the country in which we live are found persons of all nationalities. None are citizens but those born such, or who have renounced allegiance to every other government. They alone “enter” the American nation.

The kingdom is the sphere of rule. So in the latter part of this eighteenth chapter we have governmental forgiveness illustrated, and afterwards revoked. The question of eternal forgiveness before God, fitting a soul for heaven, is not here raised. A king is reckoning with his debtors. One is found owing what would, according to Jewish calculation, be over fifteen million dollars. He pleads for mercy, upon hearing the command that he and all his are to be sold. His lord, moved with compassion, forgives the debt. Afterwards the forgiven man finds another servant, debtor to himself in the paltry sum of about fifteen dollars. Though he pleads for pity, none is shown; but he is cast into the debtors’ prison. It is no question of judgment after death; simply the principle upon which forgiveness is granted to those who sin after becoming subjects of the kingdom. “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” The servant who fails will forfeit his Lord’s pardon in His discipline or government on earth, if He extends not the same grace to his fellow-servant. Subjects of grace are all who have a part in the kingdom; but the Father, “without respect of persons, judgeth according to the work of each” in this life, disciplining and chastening as His wisdom sees to be necessary. Therefore it behooves me to forgive from the heart my brother’s trespass, that I may be forgiven myself (vs. 35).

In the next chapter our Lord presents the ideal subject of heaven’s reign. “Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me; for of such is the kingdom of the heavens” (19:14). The believing parent is encouraged to bring his little ones to the Lord ere they wander out into the paths of this world’s sin and folly, that they may grow up in the kindly shelter of the reign of heaven, “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Receiving the word in all simplicity, they are the models of what every other member of the kingdom should be.

The day when this kingdom is fully displayed will be earth’s glorious regeneration, for which the whole creation waits, groaning and travailing in pain, because of the fall and its bitter consequences. To this our Lord refers in verse 28 “Verily, I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” It is His twelve disciples to whom He speaks—Matthias, I take it, occupying the forfeited place of the traitor; Paul’s apostleship being altogether of a different order, as we shall see when we consider his special mission in connection with the great mystery of Christ and the Church.

But if such shall be the future exaltation of those who followed the Christ in His rejection on earth, they become the patterns for all who would share His glory by and by. So another parable of the kingdom immediately follows (chs. 20:1-16). A householder sends laborers into his vineyard; and though they work for various periods of time, yet all alike receive the same wage when the day is over. It is a faithful response to the Master’s call that receives reward in the time when service is ended, and it is manifested that “many are called, but few are chosen.” All are chosen who heed the call, let it come when it may: so none have righteous ground for complaint.

The mother of James and John now comes to Jesus seeking positions of power and authority for her sons. She learns that rejection and death, the dreadful baptism of judgment, must for the Lord precede the day of glory; and an undefined period wherein His servants shall be similarly treated by the world is hinted at, though no clue is given as to its duration.

But He rules out all thought of a temporal kingdom at the present time by warning His disciples that they are not to pattern after earthly lords and Gentile dignitaries, but are to find their joy in lowly ministry. Alas, for how many might the words have just as well never been uttered 1 Christendom has to-day its lords spiritual as it has its lords temporal, and is not bowed with shame, but lifted up with pride over its departure from the Master’s command!

In chapters 21 The King rides triumphantly into Jerusalem, in accordance with Zechariah 9:9; while the babes and suckling's praise, as predicted in Psalms 8:2; but the Lord is careful to set forth at once the fact that He is to be put to death and cast out of the vineyard. The kingdom is not yet to be set up.

This, however, shall not hinder the going forth of the gospel invitation; so He gives another similitude of the reign, showing how, ere the King comes, a great host shall be gathered out from the Jews and Gentiles to the gospel feast; but warns that some will seek to avail themselves of that feast who have never dropped the rags of their own righteousness for the wedding-garment of His providing.

Then He pronounces, in chapter 23, woes upon those who had rejected His testimony, concluding with His grievous lamentation over Jerusalem, and declaring that "Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (vs. 39).

In His great prophecy on Olivet (ch. 24), He sets forth the sorrows and tribulations through which Israel must pass ere they see the Son of Man, returning in power and glory to establish the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures. It is because of this rejection of the King when He came in lowly grace that they must pass through the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 31) ere He return in majesty and judgment.

Meantime the kingdom of the heavens is likened unto ten virgins going out to meet the Bridegroom. It is the professing body of the present dispensation looking forward to the day of His return. But there are as many foolish as wise; true and false are all mixed up tether. The midnight-cry it is that puts each in his true place. All have been sleeping till aroused by the message, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Awakened, some are startled to find their lamp of profession dying out; others are ready to go in with Him to the marriage. For those bereft of oil it is too late to buy. When they come seeking admittance, their prayer is denied (chs. 25:1-13).

The next parable is not of the kingdom, though the italicized words so state; but they do not belong to the original text. It pictures the service and reward of those who labor in the king's absence (vers. 14-30).

The judgment to be executed on the Gentile nations, when the Son of Man conies to take the kingdom and to assert His rights, is set forth in the balance of the chapter. The rest of the book details Messiah's final rejection, His mock trial, His death, and His glorious resurrection. Owning the crucified yet risen Jesus as the only Sovereign-Lord, His apostles are bien to disciple the nations in view of His coming again.

Such, in brief, is the outline of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. If uninstructed therein, the present age becomes a puzzle for which there is no solution.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 7

"The field is the world"— Matthew 13:38.

IT is important to remember that, in accord with the plan of God, Jesus Christ came primarily to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He was their Messiah, their Kinsman-Redeemer (Lev. 25:48). While His heart went out to all mankind, His special message was to them first. Upon their rejection of allegiance to His authority (John 19:15), He commanded His disciples to carry His gospel to all men everywhere (Matt. 28:19, 20).

But while His earthly testimony was to Israel, His heart was concerned about all. It was because "God so loved the world" that He sent His only begotten Son into this scene (John 3:16); therefore we need not be surprised to see His grace overleaping national bounds and going out even to sinners of the Gentiles, who were "strangers from the covenants of promise," who were without God and, so far as any knowledge of His Word was concerned, were without hope in the world (Eph. 2:12). Grace recognizes no national or racial barriers, but sees in all men of all nations sinners for whom Christ died and who may be transformed into saints by the mighty life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 6

"Another parable spoke He unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" — Matthew 13:33.

OF old there was to be no leaven in the sacrifices or in the meal offering (Lev. 2:11; 6:17), and all leaven was to be put out of the Israelite's home at the time of the Passover (Ex. 12:15; 13:7). This is explained for us in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 as representing malice and wickedness. The disciples were warned against the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy and self-righteousness, and the leaven of the Sadducees, which is false doctrine (Matt. 16:6,11, 12), also of the leaven of Herod, which is worldliness and political corruption (Mark 8:15). The Corinthians were warned against the leaven of immorality, which, if unchecked, would leaven the whole Church (1 Cor. 5:6), and the Galatians were warned in the same way against the leaven of legality (Gal. 5:9). Nowhere is the gospel likened to leaven, and certainly it is not to be "hidden," but openly declared.

The woman here represents the false Church who corrupts the truth of God. It is our responsibility to set forth that truth in the Spirit's power.

—Annie Johnson Flint.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 5

"He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even

that he hath” — Matthew 13:11, 12.

THE Gospel of Matthew is pre-eminently the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. The “kingdom of heaven” is not Heaven itself, as many erroneously suppose, but the term refers to Heaven’s rule established on this earth (Dan. 4:17, 34). There is a very definite sense in which this has always been true, for God has never relinquished His authority as the Moral Governor of the Universe, but all Scripture looks forward to a time when this kingdom will be manifested visibly everywhere upon earth (Dan. 7:27). When our Lord came in the fullness of time and presented Himself as the promised King, He was rejected, and He has gone back into Heaven “to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return” (Luke 19:12). In the meantime, the principles of His kingdom, as set forth in this Gospel of Matthew, are pervading the world, and as a result millions of men acknowledge Him as earth’s rightful King and the Lord of their lives. Thus His kingdom is set up in “mystery.” The King is absent, but His authority is owned by many. Some who outwardly acknowledge Him are unreal professors, and so in the present day there are good and bad found in the sphere of the kingdom of Heaven. This will be rectified when He returns (Matt. 13:41, 42).

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 4

“He spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow” — Matthew 13:3.

THIS parable of the Sower and the Seed should be both a warning and an encouragement to all who endeavor to labor in the gospel: a warning against the folly of taking at face value every profession of faith in Christ, but an encouragement when many who profess prove unreal, as we remember that even when the divine-human Preacher was the Sower of the gospel seed there were many who heard in vain and who never brought forth fruit unto perfection. It is our business to sow under all circumstances (Eccl. 11:6), knowing that the seed is incorruptible (1 Peter 1:23) and that though many give but momentary thought to the message, it will accomplish the purpose of God (Isa. 55:11) and that all who hear in faith will be saved (John 5:24).

The Word tests as well as saves. Where the heart is occupied with other things—such as the cares of this world or the deceitfulness of riches—there will be little appreciation of that message which speaks of another scene altogether and of riches that can never pass away. Where possible, the preacher is to break up the fallow ground and sow not among thorns (Jer. 4:3). On the other hand, he is to be instant in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2) even though this involves some seed falling upon hard, unprepared hearts, only to be devoured by the birds of the air, fit pictures of Satan and his demon host, who are ever on the alert to hinder the gospel.

—M. Claudius.

Daily Sacrifice, June 12

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant men, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it”— Matthew 13:45,46.

CONTRARY to the ideas of many, the sinner is not the merchantman. He has nothing wherewith to purchase, nor is God offering salvation to those who can afford to buy. The Lord Jesus is the Buyer, as in the previous parable. The “pearl of great price” is the Church—that mystery which was yet to be revealed through Paul (Eph. 3:3-7). Calvary was the market-place where the Lord sold all that He had—gave Himself, in fact—in order that He might purchase this pearl and make it His own forever. To interpret this parable so as to make Christ the pearl and the sinner the merchantman is to pervert the message of the gospel, which tells of salvation offered without money and without price (Isa. 55:1) to those who have no merit to plead, nor any assets wherewith to purchase (Rom. 4:4,5).

—C. P. C.

Daily Sacrifice, June 11

“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”— Matthew 11:28.30.

THE rest that the Lord Jesus gives freely to all who come to Him is rest of conscience in regard to the sin question. The distressed soul, burdened with a sense of guilt, comes to Him and finds peace when he trusts Him as the great Sin-bearer. The second rest is rest of heart. Adverse circumstances may rise up to alarm and fill the heart with fear and anxiety, but he who takes Christ’s yoke and learns of Him is able to be calm in the midst of the storm. He finds perfect rest as he trusts all to Him who sitteth over the waterfloods and is Lord of all the elements.

—J. G. Deck.

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