

PLAIN TALK
ON

THE LIFE,
TEACHINGS,
DEATH, AND
RESURRECTION OF
THE LORD JESUS
CHRIST

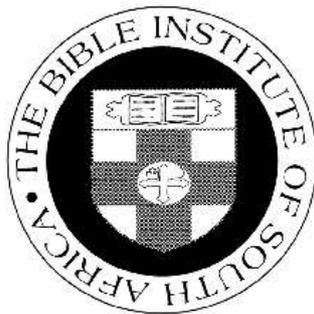
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J e s u s C h r i s t

IF I want to understand the Christian Gospel I need to know about Jesus Christ. There is much in matters of faith that is out of this world. God, heaven, eternity are all things that we cannot see with our eyes or handle with our hands. But Jesus of Nazareth lived in this world. It is true He was more than man, but for our sakes He became a man and lived among men. What He did, He did for men to see; what He said, He said for men to hear; and what happened to Him was what men did to Him. We need to know these things if we want to understand the truth of the Gospel. He came into this world to show us the way to God, the truth about God, and the life that is in God. This was done so that "whosoever will may come." God wants all men to know what He is able and willing to do for anybody that will come to Him. In order that you and I might know enough so that we could come to God for help if we wanted to do so, Jesus Christ was born of a woman, lived and died in this world.

THE SON OF GOD

The basic element in the word *Christian* is *Christ*, which comes from the Greek word *Christos* meaning "to christen" or "to anoint." Anointing was a ceremony in which oil was poured on a person, indicating that that person was set aside for some specific purpose. Therefore, the title *Christ* was given to a person who had been anointed for a certain work which He was to do.

We use the word *Christ* as a title. It means much the same as the word *king* or *emperor*. The Hebrew word for Christ was *Messiah*. The word *Messiah* in the Old Testament means the same as the word *Christ* in the New Testament.

Where the word *Messiah* is used in the Hebrew language and *Christ* is used in the Greek, *Caesar* is used in Latin, *Kaiser* in German, *Czar* in Russian, and *Shah* in Persian. These titles are all closely related to each other. They each refer to someone who has been selected for and installed in a certain office.

The Old Testament pointed forward to a time when God would send One Special Person to bring salvation to His people. Israel expected God would send His Anointed One to rule and to govern His people, and to set up His Kingdom on the earth. They called this expected Ruler the *Messiah*. The New Testament claims Jesus of Nazareth is the *Christ*, whom the Old Testament predicted would come. This means that Jesus is the One who is appointed of God to do His great work on earth.

When Christ Jesus is spoken of as "Son of God," reference is being made to His origin. He was "the Son of God" in a sense that He was *not* "the son of Adam." The title "the son of man" is given to Christ to show He had a human body. This does *not* imply that He was a sinner like all men. He was the "God-Man" but He was not a child of Adam. He was the Son of God. Because He *is* the Son of God, He is *God*.

The Bible speaks of Christians as being "the children of God." Does this mean when we become Christians we become "sons of God" in the same sense that Christ is "the Son of God"? The answer is a most emphatic "No!" Christ Jesus alone can be referred to as *the* Son of God, because He is the only one who was "begotten of God." There is *only one* Son of God who is both God and man. The Godhead is made up of the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Spirit. The second person in the Godhead is the Son of God, who became Jesus of Nazareth. Christians become "sons of God" when they are *adopted* into the family of God. They are adopted by God when they receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Whenever the word *son* is used, we naturally have in mind the word *father*. This is because they belong together. The Son of God belongs to the Father, and these two are alike. Jesus Himself said, "I and my Father are one."

When Jesus of Nazareth was baptized by John in the river Jordan, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In another place we read that a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." The Lord Jesus Himself talked about how things were between His Heavenly Father and Himself. We read that at one time He said, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands." On one of His last days on earth before His crucifixion, He prayed, "O, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." In such Bible passages we get the idea that the Son of God is God and was always with God. He is eternally the Son of God. When He became flesh, He became flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, but He always was the Son of God. God did not reach out, take just any man, and make that man good enough and strong enough to bring His will to pass upon earth. He sent His own Son into the world to do that. He sent forth into this world His only begotten Son as Jesus of Nazareth, whom we call Christ, the Son of the living God. When we believe in Christ as the Son of God we are actually believing in God.

When Jesus of Nazareth was here on earth, He showed that God was willing to come down in human form to live among men in order that men could come to God. The Lord Jesus is the only begotten Son, but through Him believers have been adopted into the family of God with Him. As God came down into the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, so He wants men to come up to Him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus of Nazareth was the human form in which the Son of God dwelt among men. He was the "Anointed One" of God who in this world was made in the form of man, but never ceased to be the Son of God. He was the "only begotten" Son of God throughout His earthly ministry. He is the second person of the Godhead - God the Father in heaven, God the Son, for a short while here on earth as Jesus of Nazareth, and God the Holy Spirit, who afterwards came that He might be in the hearts of men.

Some people use the expression "The Christ." The word *Christ* may be used that way. "The Christ" is God's "Anointed One" and is the title given to the Lord Jesus. Worded in that way it carries with it the idea that this is the One whom God chose and placed in this world to do His will.

THE INCARNATION

Jesus is a boy's name, just as children are named Tom or Henry or William. In Christian talk whenever the name *Jesus* is used it refers to the human being called Jesus who grew up at a particular time in a little village called Nazareth. In other words, whenever the name *Jesus* is used in the New Testament to refer to our Lord the human form of the Son of God is brought to mind.

The name *Jesus* is a Greek word. The same name in the Hebrew is *Joshua*. The name *Jesus* appears in the New Testament and the name *Joshua* in the Old Testament. The Hebrew name *Joshua* is really a phrase. It means "God is my Saviour" or "Jehovah is my salvation." The word *Jesus* freely translated means "God is my salvation."

What we mean by the *incarnation* is very nearly the same meaning as in *Jesus*, that God

became flesh and took upon Himself the form of man. When the Bible says "the Word was made flesh" it means that God Himself took on a human form. This is what is called the *incarnation*.

When Paul tells what actually took place when the Son of God took a human form he brings out the idea that the Son of God was originally with God the Father. He then goes on to say that Christ Jesus "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." This means "He did not think it a thing to be grasped to remain equal with God." The word *robbery* pictures someone grasping or snatching something. And so Paul is saying that the Son of God who was God with God the Father did not think that it was something to be snatched at, something to be grasped, or something to be clutched to Himself to remain equal with God. He did not try to maintain His position, "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Through this entire passage it is made clear that this Person existed before He was born in Bethlehem. He was with God the Father. Because He had in mind to do the Father's will, He left His heavenly place with the Father and came into this world. The old hymn sums it up:

Out of the ivory palaces,
Into a world of woe,
Only His great eternal love
Made my Saviour go.

No human being ever came into the world the way Jesus came. No human being is ever thought of as having lived before and himself deciding to come into the world. Yet this is what the Son of God is reported as doing. The important idea here is that *Jesus was the Son of God before He ever became Jesus of Nazareth*. He existed from all eternity.

It was Jesus who in Gethsemane prayed to His Father and accepted His Father's will that He should be shut away from the presence of His Father in order to atone for man's sins. It was Jesus who went through human death and experienced separation from His Father. It was Jesus whom they took from Calvary's cross and laid His body in the grave. But all the time Jesus was the Son of God.

It was the very fact that the Lord Jesus Christ lived before He came into this world that made it so that He could not be born in the ordinary way, and He was not. The Bible teaches that He was "born of a virgin." The birth of Jesus of Nazareth is mentioned only twice in the New Testament. It is recorded in the first chapter of Matthew and in the first chapter of Luke, and each time it plainly says that He was born of a virgin. John simply says He was "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We cannot fully understand how Almighty God could become a Babe in Bethlehem, but our difficulty in understanding this action of God does not change it in any way.

The only thing that was missing in the Lord Jesus Christ while He was on earth as Jesus of Nazareth was His glory. On the Mount of Transfiguration His glory was revealed for a few moments. Peter, James, and John were with Him, and they saw that "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Moses and Elijah were there talking with Him while these three Apostles were given a glimpse of the true glory of the Son of God which was veiled from their eyes while He was here on earth. What makes the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ so tremendous? Is it not that He was the Son of God? What makes His yielding to wicked men so amazing? Is it not that He was the Son of God?

When Peter told Jesus that He should not go to the cross, Jesus answered Peter by saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Jesus had plainly told his disciples that He was going to die. When the time actually came for Him to be taken by the soldiers and arrested, however,

Peter drew his sword and was willing to attack the whole Roman company to defend his Lord. Jesus told him to put up his sword, and added, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Certainly this plainly shows He was actually the Son of God. It is difficult to understand the humility of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. We must remember that Jesus of Nazareth was always with God and that He was God. In the human form of Jesus He yielded Himself and became obedient even to death. And this He was willing to do for us that He might show us the love of God and win us to put our trust in Him that we might be saved.

HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY

The life of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth is commonly referred to as the earthly ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. This is a very general way of speaking. So far as is known, Jesus the Babe in Bethlehem was just like any other normal baby. He sat on His mother's knee. After returning to Galilee from Egypt with His parents, Joseph and Mary, He grew up in the town of Nazareth. Nothing is written to suggest anything extraordinary. The Bible does not describe the life of Jesus as a boy, but gives only a glimpse of what happened by telling about one brief incident which occurred when He was twelve years of age.

At that time He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem. Since He had reached the required age to be received as one of the men in the Jewish community, they put him through a sort of ceremony. This was when He was sitting with the doctors and asking them questions. Actually, the religious leaders were there to ask Jesus questions much the same as any of our young people would be examined for church membership after having completed a course of study in a Communicants' Class, in this case, it turned out that even though He was only a boy, He was asking the questions of the leaders and was astonishing them.

This story goes on to tell how Jesus became engrossed in talking with the doctors. When it was time to leave for Nazareth, Joseph and Mary did not look for Him, for they supposed He was with some of the relatives traveling in the caravan. After having traveled "a day's journey" they looked for Jesus and did not find Him in the family group. They had to go all the way back to Jerusalem, and there they found Him sitting in the Temple listening to the doctors and asking them questions. Mary took Him aside and said, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Jesus said to Mary, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" However, we read further that Jesus went down with them to Nazareth and was subject to them in all things.

This incident is the only glimpse the Bible gives of the Lord Jesus from the time He was a little child brought back by Joseph from Egypt at the age of four or five or even less, until He was thirty years of age. The Bible does not mention anything about His youth. That is not important. The Lord Jesus was not living His life in this world the way human beings live their lives. He was the Son of God, and He was brought into this world for a purpose, to give His life a ransom for many. He came into this world to seek and to save the lost. To do that he would have to die in His human form.

At the age of thirty, Jesus began His public ministry. We may be sure that in those thirty years He was human in every way as we are, fashioned like us, made like us, and was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." When the Bible says "yet without sin," it is saying a tremendous thing. Certainly no human being can ever imagine what thoughts guided the mind of Jesus of Nazareth. Since the Lord Jesus Christ was without sin, there is no need for me to try to figure out what He thought.

I personally think that Jesus of Nazareth suffered in the course of His entire life. What

would happen to a boy who would always tell the truth? What would happen to a boy among other boys, who would never do anything wrong? What would happen to a boy who would not fight to defend himself? Would such a one not lead a lonely life? The description of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 very likely not only pictures the last three years of Jesus' life in His public ministry, but probably characterizes attitudes and receptions He encountered all the way through His earthly life.

At about thirty years of age, He began to preach; and when He preached, He preached like John the Baptist. He preached like a prophet of the Old Testament. He preached that God, who made a covenant with Abraham and with David, and who gave the law to Moses, was the living and true God and that all men should be genuinely, sincerely obedient to Him at all times. His preaching in itself attracted attention, but what really startled people and caused them to notice Him were His works, the miracles which He performed. The Gospels clearly show that in the days of His public ministry He exercised power and control over nature and over the lives of men. The element of the supernatural in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be denied.

In the first thirty years, Jesus probably lived very much like other people and did the things that other people would have done, but the Bible does not tell about them. When the Bible begins to tell about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, every single work recorded is a work that could be done only by supernatural power.

One could say, "Well, I suppose He fed the poor." If anyone thinks Jesus fed the poor by taking some of His own food and giving it to them, that will be his own imagination. The Bible does not say that. What it relates is that Jesus took the lunch of a little boy, blessed it and fed five thousand people (Matt. 14:15-21). No human being could do that.

If it is thought that He helped people who were sick, certainly He did. But, if by helping people who were sick it is thought that He did a work such as the Good Samaritan did (Luke 10:30-37), that He stayed with them, took care of them, eased their suffering by pouring in oil and wine, this too would be left to one's imagination. The Bible nowhere states that He ever applied any such treatment to anyone in trouble. When the leper came and said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," Jesus touched him and said, "I will; be thou clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. No mere human being could do that.

Jesus showed an amazing power over nature and the things of this world. Even the people who were with Him were astonished. He commanded the storm at sea, "Peace, be still" and it stopped. Those who were around Him said, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

A woman who had been sick for twelve years with an issue of blood and had spent all of her living on the doctors but was not helped saw Jesus passing and said in her heart, "If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole." She went to Him and touched the hem of His garment. Jesus turned around and said, "Who touched my clothes?" His disciples said, "Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" (Mark 5:30-31).

Ah! but there had been one who had touched Him in a different way, and the woman knowing she had been healed came forward and fell trembling at His feet. She had merely said, "If I could just touch the hem of His garment, I would be well," and He told her to rise up and go her way, that her sins would be forgiven because of her faith.

Consider also His control over demons. Over and over He showed authority over demons and power to deliver human beings from their control. Men are skeptical today about such

things but there is no question that this is what the Bible says.

No doubt the most awe-inspiring acts of Jesus were instances when He raised the dead to life. He warned all people that His acts of complete control over natural and spiritual elements showed He was God and was serving His Father in heaven. The earthly ministry of Jesus Christ shows evidence that God was with Him and He was doing the will of His Father.

HIS DEATH

The life of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth was marked by a strange outlook. He came into the world to die.

Of course death comes to all people, but most persons put it off as long as possible. But the Lord Jesus came for the simple reason that He would die to save souls.

Shortly after Jesus had begun His public ministry, His disciples took Him to show Him the temple that was being built by Herod. Everyone in Jerusalem seemed interested in it; but Jesus made a comment which to His disciples sounded very strange. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." His hearers did not then understand what he meant, but after the crucifixion and His resurrection they understood that He was speaking of the temple of His body. So we see that from the very beginning of His public ministry He knew He would die and that He would rise from the dead. The greatest thing the Lord Jesus Christ did was to lay down His life "a ransom for many." Death was something that Jesus knew was coming. He knew it was in the will of His Father that He should die in order to save those who would believe in Him.

The meaning of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ can be partly felt as we read of the Garden of Gethsemane. His agony there was not because He was afraid of death. Death of the body would not have mattered to Him, but in His death there was to be a separation from His Father. The eternal Son of God who loved the Father, and the Father who loved the Son, were to be separated, while the Lord Jesus took man's place and suffered for him the consequences of his sins. Sin alienates man from God. When the Lord Jesus Christ was made sin on man's behalf, the sin that was placed on Him took Him away from the presence of God the Father.

On the cross, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" No doubt the idea of the Father's apparent forsaking of His Son raises a question: how could this be? We need to remember that in ways that go beyond human understanding, the Lord Jesus was made sin on our behalf. We know that God is unable to behold evil. So at the time the Lord Jesus Christ died for sinners, He was evidently in the presence of God bearing man's sins in Himself. The Father would have nothing to do with Him because of the sins. The Father apparently turned away and let Him die. In that separation the Lord Jesus Christ experienced the terrible agony and suffering which was so hard for Him to bear as He thought about it in Gethsemane.

The Bible tells us that while praying in Gethsemane Jesus asked the Father to spare Him if that were possible. Jesus was praying that if there was any other way to save sinners, any way other than by His separation from the Father, let it be done that way. But regardless of His own wishes, if it was necessary for Him to die in order to save sinners, He asked God's will to be done. There is a great lesson for Christians to learn from this prayer of the Lord Jesus. The Bible tells us "Let your requests be made known unto God." The request of the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane was "Father, if it be possible, take away this cup from me." That was His request, but that was not His prayer. His prayer was, "Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." The Lord Jesus came out of the Garden with peace which

He could share with others. When once He openly yielded to the will of His Father, He was able to face death without any concern.

The question is often asked: If the Lord Jesus knew what the Father promised Him, why was He distressed? The answer involves an understanding of love. Jesus was distressed apparently because He was to be separated from the One He loved, and to think of such separation would be agony.

The death of Jesus was a *vicarious* sacrifice. The word *vicarious* means "He took my place." I should have been judged for sin; Jesus should have gone free, but He moved over in my place, took my sin on Him, and was judged for my sin so that I could go free. I who deserved to die was allowed to go free, and Jesus who deserved to live came and died in my place. This is the significance of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Good News, the Gospel, which we preach over the whole world. It is just as true for everyone and for anyone as it is for me. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

HIS RESURRECTION

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is perhaps the greatest event in all history. Perhaps I am no different from any other person who is earnest, sincere and honest with himself when I wish that I were better than I am. I would like to be free from the things that hinder, bother, and lead me into trouble. Now I am thrilled to realize it is possible for me to be free. Freedom from everything that hinders or that hurts is made possible by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

What actually happened in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was that a body which died was raised from the dead different from what it was in life. A body that had died was raised into a better life than it had before. The resurrection is not so much that man gets a second start. It is that man gets another start on a different basis, better than anything he ever had before. This is to be seen in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

The story of the resurrection is familiar to us all: Jesus was put to death on the cross in the way we call crucifixion. This was not an uncommon event. It was the way all criminals were put to death in those days when Jesus lived. To us it is a cruel, rough way of doing, but the point is that His body was killed and the soldiers checked to make sure He was dead. They pierced His side with a spear to be positively certain He was dead. Then they certified His body as actually dead. After that He was laid in the tomb. This is the whole story of what happened as far as the action of the soldiers went.

Today the bodies of the dead are buried in graves usually underground. We need to remember that when Jesus was buried, He was put in a tomb which is similar to a vault. It was a cave in the side of a hill, large enough for a man to walk into.

The body of Jesus was wrapped in linen cloth, so His friends could wait until after the Sabbath Day to embalm Him with perfume after the custom of that time. The dead body of Jesus lay in the grave for three days, and when they came to embalm Him it was gone. The grave clothes were lying folded on one side. They did not know what had happened. They thought maybe someone had stolen the body away.

When the Lord Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene later that morning, she thought He was the gardener. Jesus called her by name, and suddenly she knew who it was. Mary hurried to the disciples and said she had seen the Lord, but they did not believe her. None of them were ready to believe such a story.

That same night, however, while they were all together in a room with the door shut,

Jesus appeared in their midst. They were terrified. They thought they saw a ghost, an apparition of some sort. Jesus spoke to reassure them, "Peace be unto you.... Behold my hands and my feet that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." When He saw that some of them still wondered and apparently could not believe, He said, "Have ye here any meat?" The Bible says they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and a honeycomb. He took the food and ate it before them. We would call this a scientific demonstration that they could trust their eyesight. They were not being fooled. A man might imagine seeing a ghost, but a ghost would not eat a piece of fish. There must have been a body there to eat that food. After this demonstration Jesus disappeared from their midst.

Thomas had not been with them the night Jesus appeared, and when he was told what happened, he would not believe it. He said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Eight days later they were all together again. Thomas was present this time. The Lord Jesus appeared, went immediately to Thomas, and said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing." Thomas was completely convinced, and fell at His feet saying, "My Lord and my God."

The Bible does not leave room for any idea other than that the body of Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. While it was the same body with nail prints and spear wound, it was now made of different stuff. Before His resurrection, Jesus did not appear and disappear at will. He did not pass through closed doors. However, after His resurrection He could do these things. This is important because in our resurrection we will be like Him.

Consider also the ascension of the Lord Jesus. His body was taken up away from this earth beyond the clouds into heaven. This brings up questions. I used to wonder: Where would Jesus get oxygen to breathe? What I needed to realize was that Jesus did not have the kind of body that needed oxygen. He did not have the kind of body that needed food. He could eat food, but He did not need it. He had a body that Paul describes as a "heavenly" body in 1 Corinthians 15. After His resurrection Jesus had the kind of body believers are going to have when they are raised from the dead, because the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was the first-fruits of the resurrection from the dead which all believers will experience. All shall be changed as He was changed in the nature of His body.

It is important to realize that all shall be changed, for someone might think that when people are raised from the dead they will be as they were when last seen in this world. At that time they may have been suffering from illness, weak, emaciated by disease. Their bodies may have been very frail. Their resurrected bodies will not be frail. No disease and weakness can come to them. If somebody by some misfortune lost a leg in this world, he will not have just one leg in the resurrection. If somebody by some mishap was blinded, he will not be raised from the dead with eyes that cannot see. Those raised from the dead, having had faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, will have bodies like His body which is called a glorified body. The body that belonged to this earth was ashes and dust, but the body that was raised from the dead was a body of spiritual reality and heavenly substance. This spiritual body could appear and disappear at will and ascend into heaven in apparent defiance of the laws of gravitation.

Another life, better than this one, is available to all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such persons will be raised from the dead. The resurrection brings out the truth that there is life after death. Death is not the final end for anybody. The body will be raised from the dead when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

There is also such a thing as death of the spirit. Death can occur in the whole personality,

body, soul and spirit. The spirit can be raised from the dead, and it is so raised when one is born again. The Bible speaks of believers being "quickenened" who once were dead in trespasses and sins.

Resurrection, living again after death, will occur to all men, both the just and the unjust. In the case of the believer, the resurrection will be to newness of life. "We shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). How can a person live again? This was very hard for me to grasp when I first seriously considered the Gospel. It helped me to believe this when I reflected on the first birth. The God that made me out of nothing the first time should be able to make me again in the resurrection if He wanted to do so. The God that raises men from the dead is the God who made men out of nothing. He is Almighty God.

Much more will be said about the Resurrection in Chapter 4.

HIS ASCENSION

The *ascension* of the Lord Jesus Christ is seldom understood for what it really means. This word refers to the occasion when the body of the Lord Jesus Christ was taken from this world up into heaven. That was truly an amazing event.

In our study of the resurrection we noted that it was the resurrected body of the Lord Jesus which ascended into heaven. In this world His body was composed of the elements of the earth; now it is made of heavenly, spiritual elements. When the Lord Jesus Christ died on Calvary's cross, He went through the experience of human death with an earthly body. When He was raised from the dead, He was raised in a body that does not die. He has a spiritual body which is alive now.

The truth of eternal life is difficult for the human mind to understand; for the mind is, for the most part, limited by the senses. Into this mind is thrust the idea that Jesus of Nazareth, who died and was raised from the dead nearly two thousand years ago, is alive today. The Bible is very simple and clear when it states, "He shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." At the end of the forty days, while He was speaking to them and blessing them, "He was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."

The Scriptures tell us of two instances in the Old Testament when a human body was taken directly into heaven. Before the flood, it is related that "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." The New Testament says, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him" (Heb. 11:5). *Translate* is a very good word to use. If a man speaks in Russian and his words are translated into English, those words are not Russian any more. They are changed. It can be assumed that everything that happened to the body of Jesus Christ at the resurrection happened to the body of Enoch. The Bible does not tell us any more about Enoch than that he was taken into the presence of God. His body was taken from this world and translated from the natural body into a spiritual body.

The narrative describing the departure of Elijah from this world pictures a much more dramatic event. Elijah was with Elisha, who was to be his successor, "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." There is much about each of these events we do not know, but there can be no doubt as to what happened.

The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ is presented in a much clearer, precise way because preparation was made for His ascension by the resurrection from the dead. It has been emphasized that the body after the resurrection was of different stuff. This body was taken up from the earth in full view of people and in apparent defiance of the laws of gravity. It is not known that the law of gravitation was broken, because the kind of stuff of

which that body was made is not known. Occasionally some magician claims to be able to make a body float. The technical term for that is *levitation*. That is not involved in the ascension. Jesus' body was actually taken away out of this world. He had appeared and disappeared at will for forty days. He could have been taken into heaven at any of His disappearances, but God did not want it that way. God wanted man to see the transition taking place. He wanted a witness to the act of the body's leaving this world and being taken into the other world. God had this thing done when it could be seen so that men could understand it in their minds.

After His ascension into heaven, the Bible refers to Christ as sitting at the right hand of God. The expression "at the right hand of God" does not refer to a location. It is a term of special privilege with God. It is a position of power. Christ is right next to His Father. There are many things about heaven which man does not understand. From what God has allowed to be revealed, it can be said that the Lord Jesus Christ is with the Father. He is in personal fellowship with the Father as one person would be standing or sitting alongside another person in this world. As far as the location of heaven is concerned, that is something which God has kept secret. Here we do well to remember that "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

The ascension of the Lord Jesus was witnessed and recorded so that man might know that there is a world other than this one and that Jesus Christ is in it. If I could remember 'day in and day out that there is a world other than this one, this world would not bother me so much. If I would just keep in mind that there is a life other than this one, this life would not trouble me so much when things go badly with me. This life is not going to last. The other life will last forever. Heaven is real, and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is going there. We have that expectation. In that other world there are persons with whom fellowship will be had. God is there. The Lord Jesus Christ is there. The Apostle Paul says, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

The promise of God is that all men shall have their bodies raised from the dead. Jesus Christ is now alive at the right hand of God. Man, too, will live again in the presence of God. At the present time at the right hand of God, the Lord Jesus is interceding for us. By His Holy Spirit, He can make me aware of His presence with me now. This means I can become conscious of His presence here in this world. The Lord is really alive and in the presence of God, and His presence is actually with us. In the presence of God, Christ Jesus is waiting to return to this world.

When I keep these things in mind, life in this world can never be the same for me. Just as Jesus Christ was raised from this world and taken into the presence of God, so will all of us who put our faith and trust in Him be raised from this world and taken into the presence of God.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

The Lord Jesus Christ definitely belongs to a certain group of people here on earth. The Bible speaks of Him as being *the Head of the church*. Christ's position as Head of the church must not be thought of as a position to which one is selected. Christ is the Head of the church in the same sense that a human body has a head. This means there is a functional relationship between Christ and His people on earth. The living Lord Jesus Christ in heaven thinks for, guides, and directs the activities of His people here on earth.

Sometimes when meetings are held to decide and vote on some policy regarding

something in the church, prayer is made that the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the church will give guidance to help the church in making the right decision. That is a very proper prayer, but somehow it does not cover all that the Lord Jesus Christ is doing. He not only overrules to bring the right decisions to pass, but He actually guides the thinking of each member.

When I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, accept Him as my Saviour, acknowledge Him as my Lord, and am inwardly minded to be obedient and willing to do His will, He sends His Holy Spirit into my heart. The Holy Spirit works in the Christian that which is well-pleasing in the sight of God. When the Holy Spirit is inwardly moving me to do certain things, this is by the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The common problem of the average Christian is that, although he is a child of God in Christ Jesus in the Holy Spirit, yet as long as he lives in this world he is a child of his parents and a child of Adam in the flesh. Every Christian has some inward conflict between being a child of Adam (a child of the flesh) and being a child of God (a child of the Spirit).

The truth of the matter is that even though I am a Christian, I still have what is known as the old man or the old nature, as well as the new man or the new nature. The old nature in me makes me concerned about what I am going to do as a human being. The psychologists and sociologists would try to help me figure out the answer from a human point of view. They claim that if they know where a man was born, whom he grew up with, whom he has been going around with, and what is happening to him at the present time, they can very nearly tell what he is going to do. The Christian with a real relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ will be a puzzle to any psychologist or sociologist on the face of the earth. The Christian is going to do some things for which there is neither rhyme nor reason so far as this world is concerned.

There is no way in human thinking to explain why a person will take money that he has worked for, earned, and saved, and give it to be shared with people in Africa, in Brazil, in Mexico, in Korea. Others would use that money for themselves, but this person gives it to missions because he feels inwardly moved to do it. Sometimes the Christian is conscious of that inward movement. Perhaps in a church service, the words of the sermon prompt one to action. But many times the Christian is not even conscious of what is happening when he finds himself thinking in his heart, "I am going to have to do this." The Christian is being inwardly moved to do these things by the One who is the Head of the church.

Christ is the Head of the believer the way the physical head is the head of the arm, the hand, or the foot. The actions of the hands are decided by the head. The head wills to do and the hands do as they are willed to do, if the man is healthy and well. If a man gets to the place where he cannot move, he is paralyzed; he is sick. Also, if the hands act when the man does not want them to, he has "a case of nerves"; he is really sick. If, however, the members of the body are under control and are obedient to the head, then they act according to the way man wants them to act.

It is the same way between the Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ. If I belong to Christ in a way which is sound and healthy and true, my actions will be motivated and guided by Him. Christians belong to each other as members of Christ's body, and He is the Head of the body.

The Lord Jesus Christ is alive and in the presence of God. He is seated at the right hand of God, having communion with His Father. It is the will of the Lord Jesus to do His Father's will. When the will of the Lord Jesus is manifested in me by the Holy Spirit, I have the desire to be well-pleasing in the sight of God. This desire to be well-pleasing in God's sight is the Lord's moving in me to do this thing. When I try to express my thoughts in

prayer, my thoughts may be inadequate, they may even be wayward, and I may not be able to express exactly what I have in my heart; but while I am praying to the Father, the will of the Lord Jesus Christ who is in the presence of God will affect my own praying. The Lord Jesus always says "Thy will be done." In that sense, as Head of the church, He inclines me to do the will of God. The will of the living Lord Jesus Christ is the Christian's motivating power. At this very moment and always, Christ wills to do the will of God, and all I need to do is to yield myself to Him. Christ is now in heaven in the very holy place of God, and there He is as a high priest interceding on my behalf. He not only intercedes on behalf of my sins, He is actually interceding for what I am to do. He is interceding on behalf of each Christian's individual problems.

Let me illustrate it in this manner. Let us say that I am to live through tomorrow. In that twenty-four hours there will be many things which I will face, decisions I must make, situations I must live through. The Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of God, knows all about my problem tomorrow. He knows the course I am going to take. It is the infinite Lord, who is never weary nor overcome and who shall not fail or be discouraged, who is praying to His Father and prays me into the will of God. When tomorrow unfolds, the only thing I in my human consciousness can contribute is a humble willingness to be obedient and to follow His will. He guides me. I may not always understand why or how, but I can always yield. I can yield in complete confidence because He has planned what will come to me to do. He has prepared the good works in which I am to serve Him. He sets up the situation, and I am moved to do my little part in obedience to Him. That is my place of service.

Often we feel it would be wonderful if every time a Christian did something it amounted to a notable victory. We think it would be a fine thing if every single play made in a game scored a touchdown. We imagine a wonderful way to live the day through would be for everything to be marvelously successful. But things do not work out that way. While the Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth, He was perfect and did the will of His Father at all times; yet He had days of sorrow and grief. If I choose to live along with Him, I too will have sorrows and grief; but I will never be alone. The Christian can rejoice in the Lord because his joy is in Him. Christ is his Saviour and his Lord. Everything is safe in Him, and the Christian belongs to Him. The believer goes through each day walking in the will of God because Christ in the presence of God is interceding on his behalf.

HIS COMING AGAIN

When thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ, it is natural to think of His earthly career. He was born as a babe in Bethlehem; He taught, performed miracles, and did astonishing things; He suffered death. The grave did not hold Christ, however, for the Bible reveals His resurrection, His ascension, and His presence at the right hand of God. And this can seem to be the complete story.

But the Scriptures further promise that the Lord Jesus Christ *will come again*. Christ first came as a servant in humility. He will come again as a king in glory. The prophets foretold that Christ was coming once, and a great many people did not believe it. Christians say He did come; many do not believe it. The Bible says He is coming again, and there are many who do not believe that. All the truths that are in the Gospel - the reality of heaven, God, the soul, eternal life, the resurrection, the ascension, His being at the right hand of God - prepare man to believe that from the presence of God, Christ will come.

Sometimes the second coming of Christ is referred to as the second *advent*. The word *advent* is not a common English word. It means *coming in* or *coming forth*. Some churches recognize one Sunday in the year as Advent Sunday, on which the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is remembered. The second advent is His coming again.

He is coming as a person. He will, as Acts 1:11 states, be "this same Jesus" who was seen going into heaven who will come. People often have the idea that spreading the influence of the Gospel is the same as the coming of the Lord Jesus. These two ideas are not the same. When speaking about Christ's coming again, the Bible means to say He will come again in person.

The coming of the Lord may be thought sometimes to be the Lord's coming into our personal experience. This could happen when several people have been planning or working on some projects of service. Maybe they started thinking as human beings, worked along for a length of time, and then paused for a period of prayer. They had been trying to figure the matter out for themselves, but now they wait, as it were, for the coming of the Lord. They ask the Lord to take a hand in this thing and to take over the leadership of it in such a way that they no longer feel they are doing it themselves but He is doing it. The Lord's participation could be thought of in that way, but this is not a fulfillment of the promise of His return. The fulfillment of that promise is that the body which left this world in the ascension is the body that is to return.

When the Bible speaks of Christ's coming again in power and glory, it is made plain that this coming will be greatly different from His coming as the Babe of Bethlehem. On that occasion He came in humility. He had emptied Himself of His glory. Christ was seen in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter, James and John were with Him. Glory shone around Him. When He comes again He will come in glory.

Poets sometimes describe the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the coming of a beggar to the door. It is intimated that the way the person treats a beggar would be the way he would treat the Lord if it were the Lord who was there. We may well appreciate what the poet is trying to say. He may even be attempting to convey the thought the Lord Jesus expressed in "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The idea is that if I neglect to help the beggar, I have refused Christ. If, however, I do help the beggar, then I have honored Christ. The Lord Jesus takes man's rejection or acceptance of the beggar personally. This is the general idea that if a person helps the poor, he is helping Christ; if he ignores the poor, he is ignoring Christ; because Christ is concerned with the poor. No matter how true such emphasis may be, this is not the meaning of Christ's coming in power and glory.

When Christ comes in power and in glory, He will be here in person. He will be here in a way which the Bible describes as brighter than the noonday sun. There will be nothing of the beggar about Him when He comes in glorious majesty. Some people have seen Christ since He has ascended into heaven. One of those who saw Him was Saul, the Pharisee. You will remember how Saul was on his way to Jerusalem by way of Damascus when "there shined around about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And he said, 'Who art thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.' " This experience blinded Saul. John, who wrote the Revelation, saw Christ on the Isle of Patmos and he "fell at his feet as dead." Christ now is glorified and will never be seen apart from His glory.

When talking about seeing the Lord Jesus Christ, a Christian may at times in his enthusiasm say he wishes that the Lord would reveal Himself. From the standpoint of working with men and letting the Holy Spirit minister to men's hearts, taking the humble effort of the Christian witness and turning such into something powerful and strong, this could be all well and good. But, before asking the Lord Jesus to reveal Himself, I should be prepared for something terrific. It would be a light that would blind the eyes.

No human being has been able to stand in His presence in glory. It is as if one took an ordinary electric appliance and ran power through it that was a hundred times stronger than

it was built to use. That appliance would just burn out. This is exactly how Christ's appearance would affect man. We need not dwell longer on that. When the time comes that the Lord will be revealed, we will be changed. To those who believe, it will be a wonderful, glorious thing; but it will be terrible to those who do not believe; because He will be coming to judge all men, both the quick and the dead.

When Christ comes, He will also receive His own to Himself. Paul says that, at the sound of the trumpet announcing His coming, the dead in Christ shall rise first and then those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them and so shall they ever be with the Lord.

The second coming of Christ is something the believer can carry in his mind and cherish. It is in the plan of God. But long ago my father-in-law warned me not to let my mind settle itself only on the time when Christ would come back to this world. He said it would be far more wholesome for me to think in terms of the time when I will go to see Him. The Lord may not come back for a thousand years, but I am going to see Him long before that, because every Christian person when absent from the body is present with the Lord. The Christian is not far from seeing the Lord at any time.

The world is also going to see Him, because He is coming back to earth to show Himself. Every eye shall see Him. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

BEHOLD THY KING

Christ in Humility

Jesus Christ was the express image of God. He could say while He was here upon earth, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And it certainly is true that He came to show us the Father.

It is important that men on earth should know the truth about God and that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ deals specifically with our personal relationship with God. In a general way all believers know that the gospel brings salvation to us, that through the gospel we can come to know the Lord and by putting our trust in Him we can be saved. This is true. Yet it is important to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ came to show us certain things about God that we should have in mind as we are turning to Him.

The Lord Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Obviously, then, it is important that we get to know the Lord Jesus, because to know Him is to be able to find our way into the very presence of God. He said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." And we are told that as we continue with Him, He will show us the truth and the truth will make us free. So it would seem that in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to this world He had a mission to perform. He was to show us the things of God and make manifest that life is only to be found in God.

Our salvation depends upon our *receiving* the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a passage of Scripture that says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." We sometimes sing a song that has this line in it, "There is life for a look at the crucified One, there is life at this moment for thee." You see, if Jesus Christ came only to give Himself up, if all that He did was to come to die, it would seem reasonable that He could have done that somewhere else. Couldn't He have done that in heaven? Was He not the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world? Well, if He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, why would He need to become incarnate?

Isn't it true that a great many people have the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ showed us the truth about God in taking care of the poor, the sick, the hurt and diseased? Certainly that is true. He did show us the things of God in the work that He performed. But let us not forget He showed us the things of God *in Himself*. The truth that we needed to see about Almighty God was demonstrated in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We could let our eyes follow Jesus of Nazareth, see Him in His work and in His ministry (which includes His death, His resurrection, His being in the presence of God and His coming again). The whole round of truth about the Lord Jesus Christ is, after all, the truth that we need to know that we might be saved. He not only died for us, but He did so openly for us to see.

The truth of the matter with reference to men is that the heart of the natural man is vain. We are self-centered and proud. We are inclined to be arrogant and conceited. Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And so, in the fulness of time "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." The Lord Jesus Christ came to die for sinners.

I want to bring to our attention the fact that the outstanding thing the Lord Jesus Christ did in this world was to deny Himself and to submit Himself to suffering. I want to review things about the Lord Jesus Christ so that we may see how uniformly in every way the Lord Jesus humbled Himself and took a low position so far as men are concerned.

For instance, consider the circumstances surrounding His birth. Now I know that the fact of the Virgin Birth is tremendous, and the glory of God that shone round about Him was wonderful. I realize that His coming was heralded by angels and was marked by other unusual things that happened. But at the same time His birth was almost pathetically humble. As a baby He was laid in a manger. You couldn't get into a situation much more poverty stricken than that.

There was plenty of proud show in that day and time. The government of Rome was impressive. The Jewish people themselves with their temples, their high priests and the formal ceremonial services were very impressive. And there were rich men in those days even as now. There would have been ample opportunity for the Lord Jesus to have been born in wealth, or surrounded by riches, or with control over many of the things of this world. And yet that wasn't what happened. He was born into a humble home and under very humble circumstances. Even Bethlehem was only a quiet little village up on a hillside of Judea. It didn't begin to compare with such cities as Rome, Athens or Alexandria.

Then take His youth. We know practically nothing about it unless we look at the one incident in Luke where we find that at twelve years of age He was taken into the temple. As a Jewish boy He was then at the age for examination concerning His enrollment as one of the members of the community. His mother came after Him and found Him talking with the learned doctors there. When His mother began to chide Him about that, He asked her, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Right after that we read (in Luke, Chapter Two) that He went down with His mother and Joseph and was subject unto them. Here again we have a quiet, yielded, ordinary, humble life.

When you think of His manhood, recall how He Himself said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." This was meant to imply that He had no money. As far as this world was concerned, He actually was destitute.

Apparently He was not particularly striking in appearance. We draw that inference from the way the people treated Him. You will remember that when Judas came to betray Him he had to say, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he." That would indicate that there was nothing exceptional in the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, He looked like the others. In the book of Isaiah we read, "There is no beauty that we should desire him." So far as His personal conduct as a youth and as a young man was concerned, it was unimpressive to other people. I am quite satisfied that there would be an integrity and an honesty and a straightforwardness that in many, many cases would be hard to understand. But at the same time there was no great enthusiasm among the people who knew Him.

Now let's go on from there and consider His ministry. In Luke, Chapter Twenty-two, we read that there was strife among the disciples as to which should be accounted the greatest. He said unto them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them: and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth." This was the character He maintained all the time He was in this world. When He stood before Pilate the governor, Pilate examined Him and asked Him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Then the Lord Jesus said (in John 18:36), "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." This is the way in which He put it about Himself. And He did this in a quiet, yielded, humble fashion.

When we come to the matter of His triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, in Matthew 21:5-11 we read, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto

thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon." Then we read that the multitudes went before and they that followed cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." His coming into the city of Jerusalem in this fashion is called *the triumphal entry*. We feel that way about it because He did come to offer Himself, as it were, as King. And yet, although the people came out in a large company at that time to welcome Him, it really was a very small thing after all. There was no great big parade. All you have here is one man riding on a donkey, coming down the street of the city. By the way, riding upon a donkey was a poor man's means of travel. He wasn't riding a prancing horse or riding in a chariot like a rich man would do.

In the crucifixion we again see how the Lord Jesus was humble. When He was being arrested Peter wanted to defend Him. He answered Peter, saying, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Everything the Lord Jesus did was in accordance with the Scripture. We find that the Lord Jesus came humbly in this fashion that He might be actually taken and put to death because He was fulfilling something that His Father wanted Him to do.

Isaiah 53:7 says, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." If you read the story of the crucifixion in the various passages you will see how He was abused by the soldiers, scorned by the priests, ignored by the people and mocked in His misery. And He accepted all that in a meek way without any retaliation whatever. He let these people think as they would. And His burial, as you know, was in a borrowed tomb. And so He left us an example, suffering for us and bearing our sins in His own body. The Apostle Paul discusses this in Philippians 2:5-11.

The whole emphasis of the life of the Lord Jesus was on the opportunity that exists for anybody and everybody to come to God. We have gloried from time to time in saying that at the foot of the cross the ground is level. Anybody can come to the cross of Calvary. We say, "Whosoever will, let him come," and "Whosoever cometh will in no wise be cast out."

When we're thinking about the King in His humility this is the way God feels so far as our life in this world is concerned: we should humble ourselves and yield ourselves unto death. In the Gospel of John 21:18-19 the Lord Jesus told Peter that as he grew in grace and in knowledge, and came nearer and nearer to being what the Lord Jesus wanted him to be, he would yield himself to the suffering of the flesh. In this way, Peter would be used to honor and glorify God. This is the way of the cross, and "the way of the cross leads home." So far as you and I are concerned, let's remember one thing: "The servant is not greater than his master." It will happen to us, too.

Christ in Triumph

"But God raised him from the dead" (Acts 13:30). This is God's triumphant answer to all the malice of Satan and all the scorn of men. When we look at the shameful cross we see what man can and will do. But when we look at the empty tomb this is what God will do.

Throughout the week preceding Easter our hearts are heavy as we remember the suffering of Christ. This sweet and gentle person, who did no one any harm and yet who suffered so cruelly at the hands of wicked men, endured all this for us. But on Easter, the day on which we remember that the Lord rose from the dead, we rejoice in the power of God that can *and will* raise the dead. All men suffer; and because the suffering of man is all around for us to see on every hand, we are moved in sympathy at the suffering of Jesus Christ. And because we Christians too shall rise with Him, our hearts are thrilled to hear that "He is not here: for he is risen." Somehow the suffering is not so great when we remember the glory that is to follow. The gospel of this lowly Jesus, so tender and mild,

arouses sweet appreciation of Him, but the glad tidings of the open grave fill our hearts with joyous praise as we rejoice in the "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

The rejection of Jesus Christ by His own people was a scandal. Even unbelievers are shocked by it. "He came unto his own, and his own received Him not." All over the world this would be recognized as a sorrow and a tragedy. But the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead opens the heart and mind to new things in a marvelous way. We understand that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "The ways of God are past finding out." It's hard for us to know why God does things the way He does. When we think of the Lord Jesus Christ dying for us, so humble, so meek, I suspect many times we might have wished that He could have just done something impressive. If He had somehow only exercised His power over men in a way that we could understand. But, instead, He was always so ready to suffer and so quiet about it; "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." "When he was reviled, [he] reviled not again."

Then we see the Lord rising from the dead, above all in glory and majesty and power. It's an entirely different picture. It is as if God had allowed man and Satan to do as they would, even to crucifying the Lord. The full power of Satan's ill-will and evil intent was allowed to come to the fullest in destroying the body of Jesus of Nazareth. Then God acted in power to bring His will to pass. And when God begins to act, His first action is to raise the dead.

The amazing thing about this is that God does not confront the forces of evil in a direct conflict. They seem to have their way. They seem to go on until they have completely dominated, even to doing to death everything that is. But God can raise the dead and the victory belongs to Him. After Satan has shot his arrow and it has spent of all its energy and fallen to the ground, then God begins to work.

The skeptical person can be tempted to think that this is a case of God not meeting the issue, that God is allowing the other person to go on as if He couldn't stop him. This thought is very short sighted. The game isn't over when a man dies. That's not the last inning. Man has yet to come face to face with his Creator. God has the last word, and God's last word is that the dead shall rise again.

Christ Jesus had promised that He would rise from the dead. He had told His disciples that, after they took His body and put it to death, on the third day He would be raised from the dead. And so it came to pass, the resurrection proved that Jesus of Nazareth, even while He was here talking about these things, actually was the Son of God. He knew what He was talking about. And now this same Christ Jesus also has promised that He will raise up from the dead all who believe in Him, And who is going to deny Him that? He said if they took His body and destroyed it, He would raise it in three days. And He said that whosoever believeth in Him should never perish but have everlasting life. They did take His body and destroyed it and He did raise it from the dead in three days. Who then is going to say that He will not carry out His promise to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by Him? Christ Jesus has promised that He would bring from the dead all those who put their trust in Him. And the resurrection of His own body was a proof of how God would do this and how God would regenerate all who believe.

In 1 Corinthians, Chapter Fifteen, we find a full discussion of this whole matter. Notice how Paul argued that the resurrection of the body is very much like the growing of wheat. We read in verse 37, "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him." He is saying that you put the grain of wheat into the ground and it must die that the new plant may grow out of it. You remember in John, Chapter Twelve, the Lord Jesus said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Paul went on to say that the new plant doesn't look like the grain of wheat, but it comes out of it. Our bodies, our own human natures, are like that grain

of wheat put into the soil. And when we are put into the grave, then we are to be raised from the dead. And that new stock of wheat cannot grow out unless the old grain dies.

This is not only a demonstration of how God will regenerate all who believe, but this is also a demonstration of how God will deliver from sin. We find this as we turn in the book of Romans to Chapter Six, verses 4 through 11: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. [We believe into Him in His death, yielding ourselves in the same way to die in Him, that we might be raised from the dead in Him as He was raised from the dead]: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him . . . Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body."

The flesh, our old human nature, is the area in which sin is lodged. When we reckon our human nature to be dead as if in the grave, the believer is raised into newness of life. Our sin belongs to the carnal nature. We take it to be dead that the new life we have in Christ may take over. That is the life that is minded to obey the Lord God. In Romans, Chapter Eight, verse 11, we see that this is actually what will take place by the power of God: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ was actual and real. Let me mention that to you again. Regardless of whether or not a person is yielded to Christ, these are facts that can be understood, *must* be understood. The tomb was empty. No one doubted this even back in those days. The soldiers said that somebody came and stole His body away despite the fact that they were paid to guard the tomb. There was no doubt that His body was gone. Even the unbelieving Romans admitted that His body was not there. In the second place, you will remember in the record that the angels were present to announce, "He is risen." There is no question about that record. Someone will say some people don't believe that. That doesn't prove a thing. There are some people who don't believe anything. There is nothing in the Bible that somebody will not doubt. There were people that saw the Lord Jesus Christ and didn't believe in Him. Don't be impressed by the fact that some people don't believe. Some people can't see. That doesn't change the color of the rose. Our Lord's body was made of different "stuff" after He was raised from the dead. It was made of spiritual "stuff." You will see this in 1 Corinthians 15:40-44. I wish you would read that. Then you might remember that after His resurrection He appeared and disappeared at will. He would come into a room that was locked and He could disappear from it while He was talking. And it was in that resurrection body that He ascended into heaven in full view of them all.

Now I stress that for this reason: if you have in your heart and mind the memory of some loved one who has gone and you're looking forward to the matter of the resurrection, you may remember what they looked like the last few days while they were alive in this world. Perhaps their features were changed; maybe on account of sickness their whole appearance was changed. Now when you're thinking about the resurrection from the dead, you're not going to think of them in that sickened look that they had just when they died. It may be that there is someone reading this who has lost an arm or a leg or has otherwise been crippled. You can be sure of one thing; when you are raised from the dead you won't be a cripple. The one-armed man won't be a one-armed man. The person who is blind now won't be blind then. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him."

My reason for emphasizing that His body which was raised from the dead was made of

spiritual stuff is important, because that's the way it will be with us. It is a real body. You remember they handled it. And He took fish and ate it in front of them. This is the body that was taken into heaven. He is alive in that body now, and He is bringing it with Him when He comes. The return of the Lord Jesus will be "in like manner as ye have seen him go." This is the great truth of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our King. Jesus is alive. This can be a matter of real comfort to everyone who is in any kind of sorrow, grief or trouble.

There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. For the just this will be a matter of joyful hope; for the unjust it will be a matter of fearful dread. But this is the truth; this world is not everything. You're not through when you're through down here. You're just moving along into the presence of God. There shall be a resurrection of the dead. And there shall be reunion with Him. The believer will meet his Savior. It will be like the bride meeting the bridegroom, and there will be great joy when we are united with Him. There shall be a reunion with loved ones. We are not to sorrow as others which have no hope. For if Jesus died and rose again, even so will God bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. There is a possibility of living in this world in this power of God, in this newness of life, set free from the sin and the old nature. Paul had it as his ambition in the course of his whole lifetime that he might come to "know him, and the power of his resurrection."

Jesus Christ rose from the dead by the power of God, Today we rejoice in it and we tell the whole wide world - "Up from the grave He arose, in a mighty triumph o'er His foes."

Christ in Witness

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17). Thus did the Apostle Paul refer to his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The word *king* is not so meaningful among us in our culture, and yet over the world it is universally used to denote the ruler, the principal person in the whole group. And there is more involved than his prestige. The word *king* refers to what he does. It is a functional term, because it refers to the function that He has. And when we speak of the Lord Jesus as King, we are referring primarily to His function as the one who is the Lord, the leader, the director of the people.

Part of our distress in this life is due to confusion, to conflict, and to disorder. We're so often going both north and south, both east and west, and round and round, and up and down. For many of us it would be a wonderful relief to have some order introduced, to have some harmony among all the different interests that we have. Or perhaps to establish some value as to relative importance: this is most important, this is next, and this is next, and this is least—that kind of thing. And this is what the word *king* brings to our minds. The king is the one who is in control of all that is under his care.

The covenant with David in the Old Testament promised that the throne of David would be established forever. On the throne would be the seed of David. This promised King is the Christ, the One who is anointed of God. This is how we think of the Lord Jesus Christ as being the "King of kings and Lord of lords."

When we try to understand this word *king*, when we speak about the king's court or the king's people, we think of something ostentatious or majestic. We think of it as a grand display. The idea of the crown jewels is common around the world. Even the Lord Jesus spoke about the glory of Solomon.

But when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself all of this needs to be re-thought. We've got to look at it from the Bible point of view. It will be an entirely different thing from what we would commonly expect. The Lord Jesus said, "I am among you as he that serveth." He was the King of kings, but He was amongst us as One that serveth. This does not mean that the Lord Jesus stepped out of His place as King. This simply means in the truth of God that the king is the servant. This is not to say that serving men or serving the world will make you a king. But it does mean that serving God will make you a king.

It's hard for us to accept the humility of Christ in view of His great majesty. While He was here upon earth as Jesus of Nazareth, do you realize that He would have appeared like a very ordinary person? And here's my evidence: the little children came to Him. Now they wouldn't come to a person who was putting on an act. They wouldn't come to a person who was very, very showy. They wouldn't come to a person who was putting on any big display of power. Mary Magdalene, out of whom went seven demons, came to Him. She washed His feet with her tears and kissed them when she anointed them with the perfume. She could feel very close to Him. At the last supper do you remember how John was leaning on His breast? That would be very much like putting your arm on His shoulder and resting on His shoulder. Do you understand that, so far as the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned, He can be that close to you? Is there anybody you count as a good friend? Do you have someone in mind as your best friend? Well let me suggest to you that the Lord Jesus would be closer to you than your best friend, more understanding of your ways than your best friend. Keep that in mind.

The Lord Jesus speaks to us in our hearts. He doesn't speak with any bombast. He doesn't speak with any great, high, loud tones. He speaks person to person, softly and gently and kindly into our souls. Not so much to show us what to do or how to do, but to incline our hearts to walk with Him. Showing us what to do and how to do it is like showing us the law and expecting us to achieve certain works. But telling us of the love of God, calling us to put our trust in Him—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" - this is the gospel. This is the call of God to you to come and yield to Him, and He will give you an inward guidance. You can live your life trusting in Him, believing in Him. He does not guide you by defining the outward acts, the overt acts that you are to perform. But He does so by impelling you from within. That's why the Apostle Paul could say, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

When we speak about the Lord Jesus Christ being in us as King, in His witnessing and in our witnessing, we don't need to think that we are going to see some big display. But we can have in mind that we'll be inwardly led. He wants to speak to the whole world through believers.

We see this in the book of the Acts. There we do not see His face. We see His people. We see His church, and He is now in His church and moving through them. For instance, when Peter got up and preached on the day of Pentecost and some 3,000 people believed, we could make a big mistake if we start praising Peter. Actually the Holy Spirit had come upon them, and the Lord Jesus Christ was working in them. The Lord Himself by the Holy Spirit inwardly guided Peter and enabled Peter to preach what he ought to preach. When Peter and John were at the Beautiful Gate and the lame man was healed, the crowd came together looking on Peter and John. Peter answered them, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we have made this man to walk?" Then he went ahead and told them that the reason the man was healed was because the Lord Jesus Himself was working through them. He is the living King, ordering the lives of His people and through them accomplishing His tasks. Note that this work is not especially to heal crippled people, but is to call all men unto Him and to bring help to suffering men in the world that they might come and find their peace in Him.

So when Peter and John were brought before the Council, they were given a very serious, threatening command. They were not to preach any more in the name of Jesus, and if they did preach any more in this name, they would be beaten. Long before, as recorded in Matthew 10:16-20, the Lord Jesus said that they would be brought into the courts of kings and of princes and they would be falsely accused. But, He continued, they were not to be concerned about how they were going to answer. It would be given them in that hour what they should say. Even then the Lord Jesus anticipated what came afterward by saying, "It is ... the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Now the people were impressed with Peter and John. "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." I am sure a good many people could go out and praise Peter and John. If you and I aren't careful when

we talk about either Peter or John we might go back to that and point out what great men they were. That would all be misleading. It isn't that these were great men. It was the Lord in them that was great. Their steadfast testimony which they gave in such faithfulness was due to the grace of the living Lord who was in them.

After the Council had warned them never to preach any more and had threatened them with further punishment if they would preach, these disciples went back to the early church and told the whole company of believers about it. What did they do? We find that they all banned together for prayer and prayed to Almighty God to strengthen them to be true in that hour of trial. Here again, don't look at those people to find reason to praise them. Look up in the face of the Lord. This was the Spirit of the living Lord in these people that moved them to the same kind of steadfastness that the Lord manifested while He was here upon earth.

After that the church took note among themselves of any who were short of goods. And they sold surplus goods and gave to the poor among them so that nobody lacked anything. If we're not careful we'll say that those early Christians were generous. I'd like to say those early Christians acted generously. What they did was generous, but you and I should know that what they did was not their own- doing. They were being led to do that. We see the King ordering the lives of His people. The result was wonderful, gracious and grand, but we should be wise enough to give God the glory for this sort of thing.

Later on there arose trouble because it looked as if some people were not getting their fair share of the distribution of food. Certain persons complained. The apostles called the church together and told the church that they should elect seven deacons. The apostles would turn over the administration of the food situation to seven good men whom the church would select. As it actually turned out this was wonderful; it worked out just exactly that way. Are we going to give Peter credit for being that wise? Are we going to say that all of a sudden Peter had exceptional wisdom, so to speak? Or are we going to think that Peter was led? If we understand that this was the Lord Jesus continuing to work and to do of His good pleasure, this will help a great deal. It was the Lord's leading that led the apostles so wisely and humbly.

When the people reacted against Stephen and stoned him to death, you will remember that he looked up and saw "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." They stoned him to death, but we read that he "cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And, "he fell asleep," asleep in the arms of Jesus, safe on His gentle breast, right in the midst of all that stoning. The King, the Almighty King of kings and Lord of lords, was right there taking care of His servant.

So we could go down through all the book of the Acts, step by step, and on into the Epistles and see all the way along among God's people that the Lord in the heart speaks peace. He speaks pity for those who are unfortunate. He speaks purpose so far as our lives are concerned. And His voice in us has power as we yield to Him.

Christ in Glory

"Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). The heavens are true and real right now. You and I don't see them, but they're there. And the Son of man is standing on the right hand of God.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was here upon earth He was the Son of God incarnate in the fashion of a man. He was made in the likeness of man as a deliberate maneuver to rescue us. It was the only way to get us out. It's as though in traveling I slid off the highway and my car is stuck in the mud, right down to the axle. There's no chance for me to get back on the main road. Someone comes along with a tow car and is going to help me out. There's one thing he has got to do. Before he can help me out he's got to attach himself to me down there in the mud. The only way he can do that is to get himself muddy. He must take that

cable and get down into the mud and fasten onto my car before he can pull me up. The Lord Jesus took upon Himself the nature of man and came right down to the cross at Calvary. In a sense He came right down into the mud in order to deliver me.

What I want to bring to our minds in this study is that you and I should be very careful we do not misunderstand and think that because the man got down there into the mud with my car that he's a muddy man. Just because he went down there and got all muddy taking my car out of the ditch, don't say that's the way he lives and don't call him that kind of a person. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to seek and to save the lost. He came as the Son of God into this world. As Paul wrote in the book of Philippians, He deliberately set aside His glory in order to come for us; He emptied Himself and "made Himself of no reputation." In Chapter Seventeen of John He prayed, "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." He had his glory, but He emptied Himself of it. He took on Him the form of man and came down here to help us.

Years ago, my father-in-law said something to me that I feel I want to share with you. He was a little afraid that I might be influenced by the tendency that was even then amongst us Christian people to over-emphasize the humanity of Jesus Christ. My father-in-law said, "If you should see a bank president watching a new office boy handle the wastebaskets, and this boy is awkward and actually making a mess in trying to empty the wastebaskets, and if the banker gets up from his desk and goes over and takes the wastebasket and empties it for the boy, you would make a big mistake if you thought the bank president was an office boy."

My father-in-law had another illustration very similar to that. He said, "Suppose that the banker comes along the hall and a poor scrub woman, who is just earning a mere pittance of money because she is an unskilled laborer, is carrying her pail and her mop along the hall. She comes to a spot where she is just physically not able to do what she wants to do. It's possible, if he were the right kind of man, that he'd go over and handle that bucket for her. He might even pick it up and set it on a bench. He might pick up the mop that has fallen on the floor and set it in its place. And so you would see the bank president picking up this scrub woman's pail and the scrub woman's mop. He might even use the mop and show the woman how to do it so that she can get it done well. If you were to see him do that," my father-in-law said to me, "you'd make a big mistake, if you thought the bank president was a scrub woman. Why not appreciate the fact that you have a very unusual bank president who is willing to do this?" And from that he emphasized to me that just because the Lord Jesus Christ came down to our size in this world and was willing to take on the flesh that we have in order to save us, don't limit Him. He isn't like us. He's the Son of God who came and took on this human form in order that He might help us.

During His earthly career I think He got tired like we get tired, hungry like we get hungry, sleepy like we get sleepy, thirsty like we get thirsty. His appearance was the same as ours—except for the time when He went up on the Mount of Transfiguration, in the presence of Peter, James and John. He was transfigured then. His face became brighter shining than the noonday sun, and his clothing was glistering white, whiter than any fuller's soap could make it. As you think of this, be sure to keep in mind that on the Mount of Transfiguration the Lord Jesus did not assume a character. He didn't make Himself look like something He wasn't. Actually He pulled the veil aside and revealed what He was all the time. But for us He covered His glory in such a way that little children could come to Him easily. Sinners loved to hear Him. The fallen woman came and worshipped Him. The common people heard Him gladly. And yet the Bible goes on with the story and tells us that after His resurrection "God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ."

Today, if you were to hear people talking about Him as if He were a carpenter, they are out of date. You can be kind to them in your heart and mind, but they're not up to the situation. That might have been said while He was here incarnate, but since then He's been

glorified. That means to say that right now He is in glory. His body doesn't look the same as it did when He was here, and He is not in the same situation as when He was here. Stephen saw Him in His glory, standing at the right hand of God. You will remember that that had a profound effect upon Stephen. I drew your attention to it. His face was as the face of an angel. Saul saw Him on the Damascus road and he saw Him in a light that was brighter than the noonday sun. Remember how it affected Saul? He fell on his face, blinded. When he got up to walk away, people had to lead him by the hand. He couldn't see anything. John saw Him, as we read in the book of Revelation. There on the Isle of Patmos he saw the living Lord and he fell at His feet as one dead.

There are many sentimental songs that have been prepared and sung about the Lord Jesus Christ as if you could sort of pal around with the Lord Jesus Christ and talk with Him the way you would get along with some buddy of yours at the present time. They can be very misleading. I sometimes hear people saying they just wish the Lord Jesus Christ would appear now. Do you know what you are saying? Do you realize if the Lord Jesus Christ were to appear right there where you are that you would probably be stricken blind? Do you know that He is moving in a light that is brighter than the noonday sun? People who emphasize walking in His steps are not thinking very clearly. They are making up a little story of their own; and because their intentions are good, I am sure that they will be forgiven. I may not know much, but from my reading of the Bible I know there's no man living who can walk in the steps of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is God.

But you will say to me that it is written in 1 Peter 2:21, "Ye should follow his steps." Yes, in the days of His incarnation you could walk in His steps. But He would take you on just one walk and Peter tells you what that walk is. It's a short walk. That's from where you are to self crucifixion. That's what you can do. You can imitate Him there. After that, He walks *in* you. You don't follow Him. You yield to Him. You don't try and do what He says. You yield to do as He leads. Half the time you don't know what He is doing. You just do as you feel led to do in the Lord. There is only one way now in which you and I can have this sort of relationship with Him. Colossians 1:27 speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory." That is the case. The Lord Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, is given to be *in* you.

The book in the Bible that tells us about the present activity of the Lord Jesus Christ is the book of Revelation. The book of Hebrews does say that He is the high priest in heaven interceding on our behalf. This is true. But, generally speaking, the place where we find out about the Lord Jesus now is the book of Revelation. In the first chapter we find the vision that John had where he saw that Christ Jesus in glory was in the midst of the churches. And He was there with an eye on the churches to appraise their conduct, to evaluate them. If you read through Chapters Two and Three of the book of Revelation, you will see how Christ feels about the churches. Incidentally, we have prepared a booklet about that, and if you haven't received it you could receive it if you wrote to us. Ask for *What Christ Thinks of the Church*.

He is the Judge of the Christian congregations. In connection with the church at Ephesus He pointed out that they were a good and a strong church and in many ways they pleased Him. But He had one thing against them. They had left their first love. He told them to repent or else He would remove their candlesticks from its place, which is to say He would take away their witnessing opportunity if they did not return to their first love, the Lord Jesus Christ. The next message was to the church at Pergamos. He saw it was a good church, a big church, a strong church, a church that was willing to endure. There was one thing that He didn't like. They tolerated error. They allowed people to continue among them who were teaching things that weren't true. He didn't like it.

Then there was the church at Smyrna. They were having tribulation. The Lord Jesus didn't give them any criticism, but He gave them assurance that He knew about their tribulations. He would be with them. He gave them encouragement to be steadfast. The church at Thyatira was the busy church. They did so much. They were all the time working

and doing. And the Lord Jesus appreciated everything that they were doing. But He said you've got something there that I want to point out. You're tolerating a person who is teaching falsehood. They were tolerating a woman by the name of Jezebel, a certain person who was spreading around in the congregation ideas that were not true, intimating to people that they could have the blessing of God with something less of commitment than what they had been taught to believe. This kind of thing was evil and the Lord Jesus told them to put it away or else they would suffer judgment accordingly. Then we come to the church at Sardis. That's an interesting thing because it has this very familiar ring to our ears, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." This church at Sardis was told to strengthen the things that remain because they were so dormant, actually dead so far as the Lord Jesus Christ was concerned. Then we come to the church at Philadelphia. It was a small church, but they had kept the faith. They had kept the Word. The Lord spoke well of them and told them He would be with them.

Finally we read about the church at Laodicea, and all of us get so uneasy at this point. The church at Laodicea was rich and apparently strong, big and powerful, but lukewarm, having no real zeal. The hardest thing the Lord Jesus said about any of the churches He said about that one. He said that He would have to spue them out of His mouth if they didn't change this casual, indifferent, neutral attitude. But at the same time He gave them perhaps the greatest promise that there is. And here again we take this to heart. This is what the Lord Jesus today will say. He is the King in glory, but despite this fact, He can say, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." The living Lord Jesus Christ wants to help.

In every one of these churches that the Lord Jesus examined He gave a promise. He will be with the over-comer everywhere. Every one of these churches will have some people that will overcome.

When we go on in the book of Revelation we find the Lord Jesus is standing by the throne, receiving the worship, the adoration and praise of all heaven. He will engage in war with the forces of evil and He will defeat this evil. After that He will reign in peace, in joy and in glory forever. And the redeemed will share in that glory as His bride. These are the wonderful things that the Bible points to with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ in glory who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF CHRIST JESUS

1

Do you realize that God in providence prepared the world for the coming of Christ?

In studying the life and teachings of Christ Jesus I want to discuss what was involved in His coming in the fullness of time, as recounted in the following passage in Galatians 4:4, 5:

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

This was the marvelous announcement of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which was presented to the whole wide world in the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. The Son of God was born of a virgin in Bethlehem in Judea but His ministry and His message were to the whole wide world. In order that all men might know the news of Jesus of Nazareth there needed to be communication from person to person. In those days word got around mainly by word of mouth, person to person. Mankind often erects barriers between people that prevent the free flow of ideas and people who live in one area often stay away from people who live in another area. But at the time that Christ was born the whole world was under the government of Rome who removed these local barriers which prevented local hostilities. Rome would not allow quarreling among the various people in the empire.

There was at that time what has been called "the Pax Romania," which is the Peace of Rome, when all men were controlled so that there would be no disturbances. In this condition of peace Rome imposed taxes upon the people of that day and trade was developed by traveling salesmen. All people spoke Greek, giving them a common medium for communication. All this was developed by secular practical circumstances. When we say they all talked the same language we have in mind they all understood the same language although local areas might have their own dialect.

The Jews, who travelled everywhere, had definite traditions and at that time they all would have held up to you Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (who became Israel), David and so on. Their leaders cherished prophecies from godly men of old. There was the Abrahamic Covenant, there was the Davidic Covenant and there was the new covenant promised in the prophets. And the Jews clung to certain ideas in their culture: they had concepts of sin, of righteousness, of judgment, of mercy. Everywhere the Jew went these ideas would be spread. In their national consciousness they held certain hopes: they expected a golden future.

The Kingdom of God was a concept, an idea, that was developed in the time of the captivity when the Jews were captives of Babylon. In those days the whole world was acquainted with the kingdom of Syria, the kingdom of Assyria, the kingdom of Babylon, the kingdom of the Persians, which appeared one after another to crush the kingdom of David, the governing house in Israel. But in the time of Daniel there emerged the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven — the Kingdom of God — because Daniel interpreted the experiences of Nebuchadnezzar to show that one day God would rule. And in his visions he saw the coming of the Messiah, the prince, who would come to rule over all.

Now the Kingdom of God, sometimes called the Kingdom of Heaven, meant that God would be in control and this concept stressed the sovereignty of God: He rules. It stressed the Covenant with Abraham: God would dwell with His people. It stressed the covenant with David: God would rule and produce order among mankind through the Son of David, the Messiah. And the future glory of the Jews would come to pass in the Messiah and that was promised to them. All of this was in the consciousness of the Jewish people as what they had in mind by the Kingdom of God.

The Messiah, which is the Hebrew name for Christ, was the chosen One of God and prophets told that one day the chosen One of God would be identified. He would be the righteous Servant; the righteous Branch; variously named and described in the Old Testament prophecies but always seen as the Victor over the Kingdoms of men. Daniel saw that unhewn stone coming out of heaven and falling on the image and smashing it and growing until it filled the whole earth. That was the figurative way in which Daniel foresaw the time when God would, through His Servant, the Messiah, rule so far as this world was concerned. The Messiah would bring to pass all of the promises of God, which Paul said are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus.

In II Corinthians 1:20 we read, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." All the issues of time and eternity are involved in what He, the Messiah, did. He was not an angel from heaven; He was One from among the people and was sometimes called the Son of Man. He would triumph over all enemies and this is seen in the Scripture in the book of Revelation. This One would be King of Kings and Lord of all. He would rule over all. This was the idea the Jewish people had. The coming of the Messiah would take place following the coming of the forerunner. In those days when the king traveled overland there would be a forerunner who would go ahead to make sure the roads were passable and everything was in order. John the Baptist understood himself to be that way. In John 1:23, John the Baptist said it was given to him to "make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah."

We read in Isaiah 40:3-5, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." (The Lord was coming as King of Kings and Lord of all.) "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Because this Messiah who was coming would actually be God Himself and we know He was the Son of God.) "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low" (the highway will be straightened out, the hills smoothed down, the valleys built up, everything on the level) "and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

That is the promise in Isaiah that John the Baptist said he came to fulfill. And thus we have set forth what was involved in the fullness of time. God has brought all these things together. Rome, as the central power, kept the whole known world of that time in peace. The Jews, wherever they went, had their unshaken and undiminished attitude toward God. They had in their minds the Kingdom of God: one day God would rule. And there were the kingdoms of men — Syria, Assyria, Babylon and the Persians. And over against the kingdoms of men the kingdom of David in the country of Israel and afterwards Israel and Judea could not withstand their pressure. They were overcome but one day God would reveal Himself from heaven and He would take charge. The Kingdom of God would be established through His chosen Servant, the Messiah.

May the Lord help us to understand more and more of what a wonderful thing it was when the Son of God came into this world to bring to pass the will of God in the Gospel.

Have you any idea what the virgin birth really means?

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem. His mother's name was Mary. The circumstances surrounding His birth were very unusual. The story is simple, though it includes elements that are truly remarkable. This story of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ should never be told out of the context of Scripture, as the Word of God. Apart from the truth of God the story is incredible. Jesus of Nazareth was born physically, humanly, as any other human being but He was not as any other human being.

When we come to the story itself we note many unusual things. An angel announced His birth. Before His body was conceived in Mary an angel came to tell her that she would have a child before she had ever been with any man. Nobody else could have brought that message; this was someone from God. Angels were present the night He was born; they were out in the field with the shepherds and they surrounded Him. We get some idea about His own attitude with reference to His birth in Hebrews 10:5-7:

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body has thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.

These words are saying something like this: when Jesus of Nazareth came into this world as the incarnation of the Son of God, He was the Son of God Himself, He came to do the will of God. He did not come to bring something in His hands, like a sacrifice; He did not come to place something before God, like an offering. He came to give Himself. And this points to the heart of the truth in the Christian Gospel; we do not get right with God because of what we do: we cannot do enough. We do not get right with God and have His blessing because of what we have: we do not have enough. We receive the blessing of God when we yield ourselves into His will to do His will. There is something in Philippians 2:5-8 that we should take note of:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This passage shows that the coming of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God was a voluntary act on His part. It involved for Him a deliberate decision while He was with His Father. He emptied Himself of His glory and came into this world to do His Father's will. In some respects His coming was similar to what John tells is the case of a person being born again when we read these words in John 1:13, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The story of the virgin birth is mentioned in only two of the four Gospels. Mark does not say anything about it and John does not say anything about it, but Matthew and Luke do. When we think about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, each of the four Gospels give that a central place. And each of the four Gospels give the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ a central place. In his account Matthew, in the first and second chapters, tells how Joseph was prepared in a dream to accept the idea that this young woman to whom he was engaged to be married would give birth to a child from God. And in the second chapter of Matthew we read about how the wise men came from the east to worship Him because they had seen His star in the east. These things point into another world. In Joseph's dream an angel of God spoke to him and the wise men came because of the revelation they had received.

Luke tells how Mary was prepared: the angel Gabriel came and told her that she would have a child. The supernatural features of the story are very important; they are essential to an understanding and any attempt by a natural person to try in various ways to reduce this or that element so as to make it appear to be natural is wrong. When I was professor at the Seminary teaching this in my classes, one of my students asked if I really believed this account. When I answered in the affirmative he then said, "You have a university degree and you probably took biology. I said, "Yes, and before I ever took a course in biology I knew all that you have in mind. What is your problem?" Whereupon he asked how it could be possible that this child would be born without a human father. I remember how I said to him, "Do you have any room on your chair to move over a little, because I want Mary to sit beside you." That is the question she asked Gabriel and she had not been to the university and studied biology, but she knew. She asked the angel, "How can this be?" And the angel told her that "with God nothing is impossible." I told that student when Mary asked Gabriel to explain it to her, Gabriel did not explain it and would it be all right if I just did not explain it to him. We all enjoyed that moment.

The coming of Jesus Christ was the incarnation of the Son of God, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth." There are two aspects that make the virgin birth necessary: first, there is the pre-existence of the Son of God. Remember, He was eternally the Son of God and we read in Philippians 2:5-8 how the initiative is in the Son of God. " ... being in the form of God . . . but made himself of no reputation." (That was His act; He emptied Himself.) "And took upon him the form of a servant." (He was not a servant but He took that form.) "And was made in the likeness of men."

Now Adam was made in the likeness of God but that did not make Adam God. And when the Son of God was made in the likeness of men, the outward form was like a man but He was always the Son of God. "And being found in fashion as a man" (that is the way He lived and He did it on purpose) "He humbled himself." At the time they came to arrest Him, Peter wanted to defend Him and He said, "Don't you realize that I could right now ask my Father and I could have twelve legions of angels?" Jesus of Nazareth did not have to endure any of the indignities heaped upon Him but He came to do His Father's will and that was, to yield. He could not be a child of Adam because He was the Son of God.

The second aspect to have in mind here is His sinless nature. If He had been born as a child of Adam, as you and I were, He would have been sinful by nature. But He was born a child of God. And when we have all these things in mind we can also keep in mind a general thought: the only place in the world you will ever read about the birth of Jesus Christ is in the Bible.

And regardless of what interpretation we give it, there is no doubt in our mind at all as to what the Bible teaches.

When the Apostles' Creed was formulated, which undertook to set forth the teaching of the apostles in the early church, they said that "He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin." There is no doubt what the Bible teaches. The Lord Jesus Christ was actually in Himself the Son of God.

3

Did you know the soul needs to be prepared to receive Jesus Christ?

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." It is common to speak of accepting Christ and an easy error follows. We tend to think that anyone can accept Christ at any time in any way. This may well be because we overlook what Christ came to do. He did not come to show us how to live so that anybody could start doing it; He came to save

us from our doom. But the Gospel is not forced on anyone. Jesus Christ must be received by the willing soul. It is when the soul realizes it is doomed that it becomes willing to receive salvation. This realization comes when the soul is conscious of personal sin and of guilt and is repentant before God.

Now John the Baptist preached the law of God — the Ten Commandments, and all that is involved to induce repentance because there is no soul that sinneth not; however, many people hide their sins. And the Scriptures say that "whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." The only way a person will ever confess and forsake his sins is when he knows about them. And the only way a person will ever know about them is when he faces the law of God.

John's father was a priest by the name of Zechariah and his mother's name was Elisabeth. She was a cousin of Mary of Bethlehem, the mother of Jesus of Nazareth. Zechariah and Elisabeth had no children and were now in old age. An angel told Zechariah that he would have a son from Elisabeth; Zechariah doubted the message and because of that he was struck dumb. We read in Luke 1:13-17, "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." (That is, this child that would be born.)... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

In the last verse of chapter 1 we read, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." We read in Mark 1:6, "And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey." All of this indicates that this person John appeared to be like a country person: his clothing was the clothing like that of the country people and his diet was the diet of the country folks. By the time he was thirty years of age John was already well known and when he preached out in the open areas outside the city we read that all Jerusalem went out to hear him. His message was simple, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand," and "Repent and believe the Gospel."

In the days of John the Baptist it was the practice of the children of Israel to offer sacrifice for sin. This was never changed until after Christ Jesus died on Calvary's cross. In John's time people were still offering sacrifices, which was proper; but the worship must be sincere. Offering the sacrifice alone was not adequate. As a matter of fact, the Old Testament prophets preached this same thing and if we turn to Isaiah 1 we get an idea of how the prophets in the Old Testament talked to the people. For instance Isaiah reports God saying: (Isaiah 1: 11)

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

That was the very thing they were supposed to do when they came to worship God and here He is telling them that He is fed up with it when they are bringing in these sacrifices. We read further, "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" (When we boil that down to everyday language it means, "who asked you to come and pretend that you are worshipping me?") "Bring no more vain oblations" (going through the exercise of worship when you don't mean it). "Incense is an abomination unto me" (incense was associated with praying. This is saying "praying is an abomination unto me," going through prayers, just saying them). "The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with" (God is saying He cannot put up with it). "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands" (gesture of prayer). "I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." This implies that just going through the routine of public services does not count;

that is not the important thing. Let us turn now to Matthew 3 and we will hear John the Baptist: (Matthew 3:7, 8)

But when he saw (that is, John the Baptist) many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.

That is the way John preached to them — heart-searching challenge to all who come to the house of worship. If you are going to come to worship God, mean it. We read in Mark, "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." You go through your exercises, you bring your sacrifices, but you must mean it. Because John fearlessly preached the truth of the Gospel, Herod, prompted by his wife, had John beheaded. But before that happened John, when he was in prison, sent a committee of several of his disciples to interview Jesus of Nazareth, who had started preaching. It had not troubled John when people came and reported that more folks were listening to Jesus of Nazareth; he said the friends of the bridegroom rejoice with the bridegroom. But he sent these people to ask Jesus of Nazareth the question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" It will help to understand this if we keep in mind what Peter said in I Peter 1:10, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." The Old Testament prophets had said there was a way of approaching God that would be revealed. It would be called the New Covenant and they preached about it. They inquired and searched diligently:

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

There was a big problem for those Old Testament prophets. They knew that Messiah would suffer — the 53rd chapter of Isaiah describes it. And they knew that Messiah would reign — the 10th and 11th chapters of Isaiah describe it. And they knew there would be glory. They could not understand that. There was actually a theory among them that there would be two Messiahs — two Christs. One would come to suffer — as the Lamb; and one would come to rule — as the Lion. What John did not know, and those people in the Old Testament days did not see clearly, was the resurrection.

That is how it is that the person who suffered could also rule. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you. ..." In the book of Revelation we read that the Lamb will be on the throne but the Lamb is identified this way: it is the Lamb that was slain and raised from the dead who will be on the throne. Effective evangelism today, when people carry out the message of the Gospel, begins with this message of John the Baptist, "Repent" and goes on to say, "Believe the Gospel."

4

Would you think a really good person could ever be tempted?

We shall consider now the baptism and temptation of Jesus Christ. Baptism as a practice was not begun by John the Baptist; it was a common practice in those days — not only among Jews but among other people. It was in the culture; a simple practice that symbolized the reception of the message. When a teacher or speaker presented a challenging message some hearers would respond and submitting to the ceremony of baptism was a sign the message was received. The message John delivered was repentance for the remission of sins. We should remember that John was preaching to the Jews who

practiced offering sacrifices to God for their sins on the basis that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. And that was true. But the Old Testament prophets and John preached the necessity of making that offering with a repentant heart. Just making the offering would not do.

When Jesus of Nazareth came to be baptized by John, he was reluctant to do it. His message was repentance and he knew that his cousin Jesus of Nazareth had no need to repent. There is probably no greater tribute to the manner of life that Jesus of Nazareth lived than the fact that his cousin John saw no evil in Him. John said, "You do not need to come here; I need to come to you." A tribute on the part of a man who was sensitive, filled with the Holy Spirit from the beginning of his life.

At the time this practice was performed by John the Baptist (it behooved Him to fulfill all righteousness) there was a voice from heaven, which lifted this occasion out of the ordinary. This authenticated everything as from God. It might be important to notice how, in that voice, the triune God is revealed. Many people wonder about the Trinity — about three persons in the one Godhead, and they are inclined to feel that it must be the one person — the one God in three different aspects. But notice this: when that voice came from heaven "This is my beloved Son," that would be the voice of God the Father speaking about Jesus of Nazareth there with John. When that happened the Holy Spirit came down as a dove and settled upon Jesus of Nazareth. So in that incident the three persons of the Godhead acted singly and separately so that we cannot possibly think that it is one person in three different ways.

We come now to the matter of the temptation of Jesus of Nazareth. In Matthew 4:1 we read, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." This is something we need to note. Sometimes we have a feeling, if we have difficulty or something comes up that challenges us, as though God is not watching over us. But are we ready to realize that He might lead us into that very situation on purpose? Here was a course of action presented to the Lord Jesus in the temptation which promised personal satisfaction and that is the way temptation comes.

There are three avenues of temptation suggested in I John 2:16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The lust of the flesh: you can use the word appetite; it would feel good. The lust of the eyes: imagination; it would look good. The pride of life: vanity. If I did that or I had that it would set me up. Along those three avenues temptation comes; that is the way it was with Eve in the garden. God had told Adam and Eve that all of the trees in the garden were for their use but one and of that one they were not to eat. We realize that the situation was set up in such a way that Adam and Eve would be confronted by this one restriction and when Eve looked at it she saw that the fruit of that tree was good for food: that would be the lust of the flesh. And it was pleasant to the eyes. That would be the desire of the eyes. And it was a thing to be desired to make one wise: that would be the pride of life. You will remember Eve took of the fruit and ate. She sinned.

When the Lord Jesus was confronted by this temptation we see something new in the function of the Word of God. You realize that in answering the temptation of Satan He quoted Scripture. He used Scripture as the Sword of the Spirit with which to resist the temptation of Satan. "It is written." My own thinking is that we are on the wrong track when we try to figure it out. Arguing about it — no. Find the word of God as it is written. When Satan presented the suggestion "Turn these stones into bread" because He was hungry after forty days of fasting, He answered and said, "Man shall not live by bread alone. It is written (and it was written in the book of Deuteronomy) that man shall not live by bread alone. And when Satan again quoted Scripture to Him, "It is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee" and he took Him up to the top of a high mountain and suggested that He

cast Himself down and prove that He was the Son of God the Lord said, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

There is a marvelous principle of Bible interpretation here: we compare Scripture with Scripture. This is written over here but look to see where it is written again — some other word of Scripture — and the truth will be in the balance. The sword of the Spirit (and the very word *sword* is a weapon for attack), the way in which He defended Himself in attacking Satan by quoting what Almighty God had said, was most effective. Just think: He did not argue what would happen if He did wrong; He did not reason it out; He did not state alternatives: He could do this or that. He simply quoted Scripture as it is written.

This leaves us, then, face to face with the realization that just as the Bible tells us about Christ and reveals the marvelous truth of the Gospel, so the Bible tells us about Satan. There is much we do not understand, that we cannot explain. The whole significance of the reality of Satan is lodged in the councils of God. Christ comes to redeem: Satan aims to destroy. Christ is the truth: Satan is a liar and the father of it. Christ acts to reveal: Satan acts to deceive.

Satan is permitted to test, to tempt, God's people and we might keep this in mind: if he did not hesitate to tempt Jesus of Nazareth, he will not hesitate to tempt us. I often say the best word I know about Satan is this: Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.

5

Do you realize that the manner of life which would be acceptable to God is described in the Sermon on the Mount?

That which is shown in the Sermon on the Mount is a manner of living quite beyond human ability and understanding. It is set forth to show what God would approve even though it condemns the human soul because man does not keep it. This is the manner of life that God would bless and man needs to know what God will accept. In the opening part of this sermon, in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 5, verses 1 to 12, we have the Beatitudes, a portion of Scripture children oftentimes memorize. This is a description of Godly living; a kind of living there would be in the Kingdom of God. When God has His way in the soul, when He is ruling as King, this is how the person would live.

The Beatitudes were never intended as a goal; this is not something to strive for. This is man's mistake — a common error of the human heart. We read what should be and immediately we think we will do it. This is not the consequence of effort — you could not do it if you tried. This would be the result of having the will of God activated in a person. When you and I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as our Savior and Lord and yield to Him, God does something in us that He calls being born again — regeneration. God then gives to us the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit within us will prompt us to do the will of God. And when we do the will of God it will look like this in the Beatitudes. All of the Beatitudes are to be found in the Old Testament.

Matthew 5:13-16 is a very familiar passage:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

If people live in obedience to the indwelling Spirit of God and follow through on what He

wants them to do, they will live in accordance with what is described in the Beatitudes and be blessed. Salt makes food savory and salt is also a preservative and a few believers in any given situation help. Again, you are the light of the world: wherever there are believers, people can see things because by comparison others can learn. Folks are blessed by the testimony and life of true believers.

In the rest of chapter 5 we read that righteousness — the condition of being right in God's sight, to be real and true and sincere must be inner. The Scribes and the Pharisees of that day who went by the Scriptures of the Old Testament, were those who talked a good life. They could tell what the Bible required but the Lord pointed out that the righteousness of those in the Kingdom of God has to be more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; it is in the heart and soul of the believer.

The law of God says do not kill but the Word of God and the power of God in the soul prompt us to hate not; the law of God says, in so many words not to commit adultery but the Spirit of God in the heart prompts the individual not to even think evil. The law of God arranges for justice — an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (and by the way, that is not the law of the jungle: the law of the jungle would be if you knocked out my eye I would not want to knock out your eye, I would want to knock your head off). No; when you see justice operating you are already seeing love in action: fairness and equity. But that is not grace; that is not the way God would do it. He would go further: He would go the second mile. The law might require that you walk with a man one mile but grace would prompt you then to walk two miles. The law would require you to give him a coat if it was cold weather but grace would prompt you to give him an overcoat also.

In chapter 6 we come to religious practices — praying and almsgiving. The praying is to be in secret; "Enter into thy closet, shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret and He will reward thee openly." And almsgiving is to be done without sorrow or sadness: give to the poor with gladness. These are the ways the Lord pointed out that religious practices should be unto God.

We are shown in the latter part of chapter 6, verses 19 through 34, that the ambition of the believer is to please God, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." He then brings out several things that, when I first became a believer, I found hard to understand, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." I was almost sorry that was in the Bible. I was brought up to work for a living and here it seemed as though He was saying one did not have to work. I later learned that does not mean the Lord Jesus is saying the meadowlarks will sit on the fence posts and God will drop worms into their mouths. Actually, the robin is out there on the lawn looking for the worm. You have heard the expression "getting up with the chickens." If you are to behold the fowls of the air you will get up in the morning. The great thing about the robin looking for the worm is that the robin thinks the worm is there and he looks for it. It is good to have that in mind. Our ambition should be to please God.

He also spoke about the lilies of the field. Look at them: Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. One could ask how that can be but if you think about it, everything Solomon had that looked so glorious was put on him from the outside but everything the lily had came from the inside out and this is what the Lord is teaching.

Chapter 7 is very simple and clear: we are not to be critical of others or condemn them, although we are realistic in our judgment of others to avoid evil. And praying should be practiced and here is a well known formula: "Ask, Seek, Knock." And finally, there is a warning: beware of pretense. The straight gate against the wide gate: few enter the straight gate to eternal life, many go in at the wide gate unto destruction.

The false prophets who bear no fruits are pointed out: many will be disappointed, thinking they have done everything they needed to do in this world, and will find in the world to come that the Lord will say, "I never knew you." And finally, the solid foundation for living in the Kingdom is to do the will of God. Those who obey His Word are the people who build on a solid foundation. Thus there is described for us in the Sermon on the Mount the manner of life that is acceptable to God and we will keep in mind this is what is produced in us by the working of the Holy Spirit. This is what Nicodemus had in mind when he asked the Lord Jesus how anybody could ever do this and the Lord Jesus told him, "You must be born again."

6

Can you understand why Jesus of Nazareth performed so many miracles?

It seems easy to think of God being Almighty. We say, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty." The first name for God in the Hebrew Old Testament in the book of Genesis is Elohim, which means "the strong one." When the Son of God became incarnate He looked like a man. There was no supernatural strength in His body but to be able to do His work He needed to be accepted by the believers of God. How could any person get that conviction? In Matthew 9:6-8 at a certain point He said, "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." He performed the miracle with power by way of identifying Himself as actually the Son of God. Here we can see the significance of miracles.

Not all of the miracles which Jesus Christ performed are recorded. In one place John said he thought the world itself could not contain the books that should be written if they were all recorded. But these are selected. John said in chapter 20, verses 30, 31:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

These miracles are recorded not only to show His identity with God but they show the scope of His authority. We shall be looking at some of these now and shall see that in a number of incidents Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated control over natural elements. In Luke 8:22-25 we see very remarkable action on His part, where He stilled the storm at sea. There are important aspects to be noticed:

Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

Think of it. Notice that in this story He was in command. The disciples looked to Him for help. No wonder we read on from there, "And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this? for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.' They saw him as one with authority. We read in Matthew 14:22:

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and

when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me.

Whatever you may think of Peter as a man, he did not lack in courage. He got down out of that boat and walked on the water but when he saw the wind boisterous, he took his eyes off the Lord Jesus and he began to sink. In our daily life we sometimes come into situations that are like a storm; when that happens the Lord can draw nigh unto us and He will speak, "Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid." When He says that many have a disposition to say, "Lord, bid me to come unto thee." And when we come, according to His call, then look at the wind and the waves (the circumstances) we begin to sink. But the Lord did not hold Peter responsible for his fear; when Peter cried out "save me," He reached out and caught him.

I want to draw your attention to one more illustration along this line: in Mark 11:12-14 we are told as He walked along and saw a fig tree, there were no figs on it. He made the comment that no man would get any figs from that tree in the future. When they came by the next day the tree had wilted and Peter said, "The fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away." And the Lord said, "Have faith in God." This is significant because of a suggestion here that all fruit-bearing is by the power of God. If He could withhold the power of God and it would wither, so we must count that when these trees grow and bear fruit, this is by the power of God.

In many other cases we find that Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated His control over disease. If you think of disease as a symbol for sin, there is much to be learned in the following verses. For instance, in Luke 5:12-15 we have the leper who came to the Lord and said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And He looked on him with compassion and said, "I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him." Let that word speak to you. On other occasions He might seem to have used other means but here it was His word and His word has the authority.

In Luke 5:18-26 we have the case of the palsied man, a wonderful story about a challenge for friendship. Four friends brought him to the Lord and it was the faith of those friends that turned the tide. We read the story of the centurion's servant in Luke 7:2-10 and how the centurion's faith was rewarded and the servant healed. In Luke 13:11-17 we have the case of the crippled woman of whom the Lord said, "whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years." Does this mean Satan has the power to bind and cripple us? He did in that case but the Lord set her free. And in Luke 18:35-43 the blind beggar kept crying out and the Lord asked what he wanted, "What will you have? And the beggar said, 'Lord that I may receive my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.' And immediately he received his sight."

Now in all these amazing incidents you will not find anything grotesque. He did not make anybody see with their ears — no. He made them see with their eyes and hear with their ears and

walk with their feet — that kind of thing. There was nothing anti-natural but certainly supernatural — yes.

Do you think demons are actually real?

In making a study of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and as we read the record in the New Testament, we are confronted again and again by the reference to demons. We read in Matthew 8:28-34

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

Can you accept this story? That is the way it is in the New Testament. We need to be conscious of the fact that there are people who have this kind of experience. In Mark 1:23-28: we read:

And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region around about Galilee.

Did you notice again the words from the unclean spirit? "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Now turn to Luke 4:32:

And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou coming to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

The record is too plain and too simple to be mistaken. One of the reasons why we read these scriptural passages is to attest to the authenticity of the accounts. And now in Mark we read at the beginning of chapter 5, verse 1-6:

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him.

Such persons are encountered today. I suspect that we may not have even met these people because their condition is diagnosed differently today and whenever anybody is like this, we have a way of referring to them as if they had lost their mind or that something had happened to them psychologically and they are put away as people who are insane. We read in Mark, chapter 5, verse 6:

But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee, by God, that thou torment me not.

This was the same sort of reaction; the demon recognized the Son of God. Notice Mark 5:8-13:

For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea (they were about two thousand), and were choked in the sea.

Remember, we read another passage in Matthew concerning two men of Gergesenes to whom the same sort of thing happened. Notice in Mark 5:14-16 how this is similar:

And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

The Lord wanted the delivered man to testify. The testimony of deliverance on the part of that man prepared the people to later receive the Lord. Luke tells us that when the Lord came back that way many people came out to hear him and were blessed.

All of this brings to mind that when Jesus of Nazareth was here He demonstrated the power to deliver human beings from spiritual oppression. We read them in the Scriptures

and feel moved to believe they are actually true. Those of us who believe in the Lord could render a service to afflicted souls if we understood more of the power and the activity of Satan and the way in which he harasses human beings.

8

Do you really think that if a person dies, he can live again? In our meditation about the life and teaching of Christ Jesus the following passages are most significant. We read in John 11:25, 26:

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

These are remarkable words. Death is as common as life. It is strange in some ways to say, but death is more impressive. People being alive do not attract special attention but a dead body is always noticeable. To talk about God, heaven and hell brings thoughts of death. And when one asks oneself what is death, the amazing thing is that death is just the absence of life. Life is gone. We ask ourselves then — what is life? And here we are up against the fact that no one really knows. About all one can say is that it is a condition in which certain processes go on. Death is merely the absence of life. We are glad that we can have life; we seek to save it by every means and if we have some questionable feelings about our own life we certainly want the lives of our children and other persons saved.

Jesus of Nazareth claimed to have authority over life and said this was given to Him by His Father. In John 5:21 the Lord Jesus said, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." That verb *quicken* means *make alive*; to have it come alive like a bud on a tree in the spring of the year is quickened when it starts to grow. Again in John 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Jesus of Nazareth performed miracles to show that He was the Son of God and of all the miracles he performed, perhaps there is none as significant as His power over death. We read in Luke 7:12:

Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

It was a tremendously amazing thing he had done. Nothing is argued, nothing is explained, nothing is proven: it is simply done.

Another story is told three times: in Matthew 9 you will find it in verses 18,19 and then in verses 23-26; in Mark 5:22-24 and then verses 35-43 and Luke 8:41, 42 and verses 49-56. Each of these stories tell about the man who came to the Lord Jesus and told Him, "My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live. He touched her by the hand and the maid arose. Mark says, "My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live." And we read, "He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cu'mi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee), arise." And straightway she arose.

And Luke tells us about the man who had one daughter and she lay a-dying and he came and talked to the Lord Jesus who went to his house, took her by the hand and said to her, "Maid, arise." And her spirit came again and she arose straightway. There can be no doubt about the message for us. Perhaps the most impressive case of all is in the raising of Lazarus, which we read in John 11:1-2:

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

While we are looking at this we might take note of the fact that because we belong to the Lord and are sure He cares for us, that does not mean that we will never have sickness (John 11:4-6).

When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

When Mary and Martha sent Him word that "he whom thou lovest is sick" that is like prayer. They sent word to Him the way you and I, in praying, send word to God. He stayed where He was two more days and after that He said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." When he came Martha ran out to meet Him and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." She knew He could have kept him alive. We then read (John 11:25-34):

Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.... Where have ye laid him?

Something very important happened as He stood by the grave and all were around, mourning: Jesus wept. Pause for a moment: He knew what He would do. Why did He weep? Out of sympathy or out of compassion? This is why: He told them to take away the stone that was rolled up to the grave because they understood Lazarus was dead but when Jesus Christ came, He could change it. He asked them to roll away the stone because they needed to open up the case and when we come to the Lord in prayer — it may be about some things we feel discouraged totally about, we need not be surprised if the Lord should say, "Take away the stone." Open it up. So they did and He raised Lazarus from the dead.

9

Do you realize that you learn something in every event you experience?

Jesus of Nazareth used events in which He was involved to teach the eternal spiritual truths of God. The story of the woman who came to anoint His feet and to dry them with the hair of her head is told in Luke 7:36-50. You will remember how the Pharisee in whose home He was visiting at the time felt that Jesus of Nazareth did not act in the way he expected Him to. He indicated he thought that if Jesus of Nazareth was a highly spiritual man He would have known what kind of woman it was who was touching Him because she was a woman of the streets. Jesus of Nazareth knew how the man felt and said to him, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." And He told him a parable about how a certain man had two servants: one owed him 500 pence and the other owed him just a few pence. When neither had anything to pay he forgave both of them. The story goes on to say that when the servant who had been forgiven the large sum of money was dealing with the

servant who owed a little, he was very strict and insisted on receiving exact money; if he did not have the money the man was to be put under bondage to work it out. The people came and told the master that the person to whom he did forgive the large sum would not forgive his fellow servant.

The Lord told the parable how the master called the servant in and reminded him that he had forgiven him this large sum and now this other servant owed him just a little and he could not forgive him, so he cancelled the forgiveness and turned the man out. The parable is very pointed and the people knew what He was saying but He said to Simon the Pharisee, "Which of those two people that were forgiven, the one with 500 pence and the other with just a few pence, would have loved the master the most? and the man said, "I suppose the man whom He forgave the most." And He said, "Thou hast rightly said." He then pointed out that when He had come into his house the Pharisee had treated him with scant courtesy but this woman had actually washed His feet with her tears and anointed them with precious ointment. He went on to say "Her sins which are many were forgiven" and that was the reason why she loved Him as she did.

This brings to us a very simple truth: to love God more it will be important to appreciate the forgiveness of sins more. The more I appreciate the forgiveness of my sins, the more I will love God. In verses 29-36 another incident occurred. When the people came to the Lord Jesus and asked Him to show them a sign that He really was from God, He told them that the only sign of the Kingdom of God that would ever be manifested would be the resurrection. Entrance into the Kingdom of God would be by death. The new life is the life of God in the believer and that will only appear in those who have yielded themselves to God in the sense that they have crucified themselves. He took that incident when they were looking for a sign to find the occasion to tell them the only sign they would ever have would be the resurrection because that is the true sign of the Kingdom of God. We enter into the Kingdom of God by reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God.

In Luke 9:46-48 there was some argument that had come up among the disciples as to who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven and the Lord Jesus took that occasion to teach them that the way to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven is to take the place of a servant. He took a child and set this little child before them, telling them that expect they would become as little children, they would not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And in Luke 10:38-42 there is a familiar passage, the occasion when the Lord Jesus was in the home of Mary and Martha and while He was there Martha complained about Mary, who did not help with the housework. And He told her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and concerned about so many things. Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her." Being preoccupied with details is not wise when it comes to dealing with God. Mary's way of living is the better way, to seek first the blessing of God and other things will be added.

In Luke 13:1-5 another incident is recorded: People came to the Lord Jesus and told Him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Certain Galileans had been killed while they were worshipping God and Jesus answering said unto them, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He took the occasion of this incident of calamity to teach that calamities are not careless accidents. God is in control and He is overruling. The believer will be able to look for God's hand in every calamity because when that occurs God is in it.

In Luke 17:11-19 there is a very similar passage where the Lord actually benefited ten lepers. Only one came back to give thanks and Jesus of Nazareth made that the occasion to point out that he was the only one to do so. Giving thanks to God is noticed; He sees. And

the Lord Jesus taught that thanksgiving to God is proper and failure to do so is the first step away from God; the first step into apostasy.

In Luke 19:28-40 we have the Lord Jesus coming into the city of Jerusalem riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass. What we see there is that the coming King of Kings is humble. Grown people and children all went out to welcome Him and don't miss the fact that the animal walked quietly with Jesus of Nazareth riding on him although he had never been ridden before. Another incident of interest is told in Luke 21:1-4, a familiar incident of the poor woman who came to make a donation in the temple. We read He looked up and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury; He saw also a certain poor widow casting in two mites and he said:

Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

He took that incident and talked to the people about servants being judged not by comparing what they do with what other people do but by understanding their opportunity according to the individual's opportunity what was the action and this is what God sees.

We have reviewed a number of the practical incidents in which Jesus of Nazareth taught the people around Him in the course of the events as they happened because the people could see them even more clearly what the will of God actually was for them.

10

Did you know that the truth of God's will can be set forth in common language?

We continue our study of the life and the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth by noticing His style of teaching. He preached the will of God using the everyday language of common people. In Luke 4:1-13 we have that well known incident when Satan tempted Jesus of Nazareth in the wilderness. In facing the temptation Jesus of Nazareth simply quoted Scripture saying, "As it is written." He offered no argument; He offered no explanation or special insight. He just said, "As it is written." There is no unique insight needed to face the temptations of Satan. What we need to know is written in the Scriptures.

The Bible has the authority and the clarity to show us and to lead us. When we read on in chapter 4, verses 16-29, we have a record of how Jesus of Nazareth was preaching in the synagogue and He did not make any new disclosures from God. When He talked to the people in the synagogue He said to them, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." He had read to them a passage in Isaiah and then He talked about the passage and pointed out that in His own actions, in His own being there and presenting Himself before them, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." As simple as that.

In the next chapter, Luke 5:30-39, we have the incident when Jesus of Nazareth was facing the scribes and Pharisees who criticized Him about the fact that He associated with Publicans and sinners. In dealing with them He used plain common sense. There is no shaft of psychological insight like a flash shining through this — not at all. He used ordinary, everyday common sense. They criticized Him because they were in sin and He answered them by pointing out the obvious, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."

After all, the sinners should be invited to church just like sick people should be taken to the hospital. Is the church supposed to be a place where a person can get to know God? Then bring in the people who need it. This is the way the Lord would speak. No profound psychological discussion of the influence of culture — anything of that nature. And in

chapter 6, when some of the Pharisees criticized the disciples for shelling wheat to eat on the Sabbath Day, claiming that was a form of harvesting and they were breaking the law, Jesus of Nazareth used an incident recorded in Scripture involving David to show that man can interpret regulations in the light of actual need. Need prevails over regulations. Since man was put into the world to have dominion over it, He used the expression, "The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." He is in charge of everything, including the regulation.

This is rather striking and some people have difficulty accepting this but they should look at it. The disciples could be blamed for harvesting because they did shell the wheat — there is no doubt about that, but He did not argue about it and He did not point out how small the Pharisees were in making this criticism. He faced their criticism with simple discussion: man had been put in charge of things in this world; he was to subdue the earth and this is part of his dominion — even the matter of interpreting regulations. What He said was simple, straightforward. The actual situation with need is more important than the regulations which are made for general conduct.

In Luke 9:23 Jesus of Nazareth revealed the will of God for all who want to follow Him. He did not bring special insight or discuss the kind of psychology a man needed to have in order to become a believer. He pointed out something that anybody can do at any time, anywhere. He did not tell them to change their location or give up their livelihood; He gave simple guidance in following Him which is just this: let him deny himself. It is as simple as that.

Jesus of Nazareth gave instruction to the seventy before they went out to preach in Luke 10:2, "Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." Anybody listening would know what He means. And toward the end of the chapter we come to an incident I know a great many people are acquainted with; when Martha came to Him and complained that her sister, Mary, left her to serve alone, He simply told Martha, "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." No argument, no comparison of personalities — just a simple statement of fact.

In Luke 11:28 we see where Jesus of Nazareth was told His mother had been specially blessed because she gave birth to Him. He turned attention to any who obeyed the Gospel by saying, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." That is interesting because while He had nothing against His mother, and did not question what the angel had said to her (that she was blessed above all women), instead of making a discussion of that He simply drew their attention to the fact that anybody who hears the Word of God and keeps it is among God's chosen and preferred people. "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." In other words, as we have considered these matters it is very clear that the great truths from God can be simply stated in ordinary, everyday language.

11

Do you realize that a story is often more convincing than an argument?

"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them." These words, found in Matthew 13:34 followed a number of His parables in that chapter. A parable has been defined as an earthly story with heavenly meaning; a story that describes the procedure that can be understood. For the parable to be effective it needs to be the kind of story that can be understood by the person hearing it and it is told to illustrate some aspect of God's will among men. Jesus of Nazareth taught people the mind and the will of God in parables and we have this remarkable statement that

"without a parable spake he not unto them." We could use the *word Illustration*, which we often say are like windows in a sermon — they show far more than the words of the sermon convey.

Let us notice some of these parables in the book of Luke. We turn first to Luke 5:36-39:

And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

In these words the Lord Jesus is recorded as having pointed out to the people something that John, in writing about it, says in another way, "You must be born again." As the grace of God comes into the human heart it needs to come into a regenerated human heart. I need to be different in order to receive and appreciate the truth of God. And when it comes to talking about being born again you might have in mind that it is not something one does for oneself. When you were born the first time into this world you did not have anything to say about it and so it is when you are born again. This is something God does for anybody who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ — receiving the Gospel and committing himself to the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be regenerated and become a new creature in Christ Jesus. And in him the grace of God will operate.

In 7 above, the Lord Jesus was in the house of the Pharisee and a woman of the street came to anoint His feet with perfume, shedding tears over His feet while she was doing it and wiping them with the hairs of her head. The Pharisee had in mind that the behavior of Jesus of Nazareth was strange. If this man were a prophet He would know what kind of woman this is but He did not seem to shrink from her. Then the Lord Jesus told a parable in verses 41-48, which we have previously studied.

In Luke 8:4-5 we have one of the most familiar parables in all the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. We commonly call it the Parable of the Sower and the Seed but it could well have been given the title "The Soil." The titles we give to these parables are not inspired; the titles are our way of handling them. The Scriptures do not use it that way. In this case you will remember the sower went forth to sow and as he scattered the seed as was the custom in sowing in those days, it fell on different kinds of ground. And the point in the parable is that the kind of ground determines the response. Some that fell on the wayside (that is, on the beaten path) lay there and did not get into the ground and the birds of the air came and picked it up. Some fell on stony ground and it sprang up quickly but had no roots and withered. Then some fell on the weedy ground that was covered with thistles and thorns; the seeds sprang up but the weeds choked them and they did not become fruitful. Some fell on good ground and they gave forth a harvest.

So the Lord Jesus is teaching the people this way that the message told to different kinds of people will bring different reactions. The parable itself is simple and clear and anyone can read it and know the truth that the Lord is seeking to share.

In Luke 10 we have a wonderful story: the parable of the Good Samaritan. This has been called the most effective piece of literature in the world. Probably caused more actual change in the conduct of people than any other writing in the whole literature of the world. It gives a clear distinction of attitudes toward property; it has a deeper meaning than we ordinarily think because it shows how people feel with reference to property. As the man was walking from Jerusalem to Jericho he fell among thieves. The attitude of thieves is:

what is yours is mine and I will take it if I can. While the man was lying in the ditch a priest came by, saw him and went on. A Levite came along next; both did the same thing: what is mine is my own and I will keep it, and both kept going.

When the Good Samaritan came along his attitude is expressed this way: what is mine is yours if you need it. He dressed the wounds and took the man to an inn to be cared for. We have the parable of the importunate friend in chapter 11. It told how a friend came to another friend past midnight, asking for food, and the Lord said that even though the man in the house would not get up and give him the food on the basis of friendship but because of his need, He would get up and give as much as he needed. This brings out a simple fact that need is more dynamic and more moving than friendship.

In Luke 14 we have the story of the great supper. All were invited and a number of them began to make excuses. Perhaps this parable is the most commonly neglected, probably because few people like to hear about ignoring the invitation because it may be final; there may not be another one. The most remarkable collection of parables in Luke, I think, is in Luke 15. They are the parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. These parables were told to the Pharisees by way of emphasizing God's interest in seeking and saving the lost and probably the greatest insight given to us in this parable is that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. You might have in mind the lost sheep knew it was lost but did not know the way home. The lost coin did not know it was lost. But it was. The lost son knew he was lost and he knew the way home. Nobody came for him. The shepherd went looking for the sheep. The woman swept the house to find the coin but nobody went for the son. He knew the way home.

All of this is conveyed in story fashion, bringing to the heart and mind remarkable truth. I might bring one more parable to mind: the incident of the Pharisee and the Publican. Both were going in to pray. The amazing thing is that the Pharisee, who was a good man, and the Publican, who was understood to be a sinner, came into the presence of God and because the Pharisee was conceited and proud, God did not hear him but because the Publican was humble and repentant, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

In these remarkable ways Jesus of Nazareth taught the will of God and the Word of God by using parables.

12

Can you see the importance of miracles in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth?

Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal the Gospel of God. I am sure each of us knows that and we have it in mind. The Gospel of God is the glad tidings that souls can be saved. There is one great fact that we should keep in mind: salvation is not by any natural process; the soul is not saved by anything man does. It is not how smart he is; how good he is or how active he is; it does not depend upon man at all. It depends upon the living Lord Jesus Christ, who will save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him. This fact that salvation is not by any natural process is associated with another great fact: it requires a supernatural element. It will take an original act of Almighty God.

In order to understand and accept the Gospel that God sent His Son into the world to seek and to save the lost, the sinner must be ready to believe supernatural action because that is the way it is going to be done; to be ready to believe that Jesus of Nazareth has the power, the authority and the willingness to act supernaturally. He could have told them in so many words but that would still be His word. He performed miracles and the supernatural beyond the ordinary experiences and attracted attention in that way. He indicated the procedure anyone should follow in coming to Him and he also indicated the power of God that would

be exercised when God would save that soul.

We turn now in the book of Luke to a number of passages which will help us to see how the Lord Jesus taught the people — how He showed them His procedures. In Luke 5:4-11 we read:

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

We may be sure those men were impressed by this action on the part of Jesus of Nazareth. Later in this same chapter we read (Luke 5:12-16):

And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.... And behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

In other words, only God could do either one of these things (Luke 5:17-23).

But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins (he said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today.

In this Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated that He could do supernatural things. Beginning at verse 6 in chapter 6 we read:

And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus. And it came to pass in those

days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

In Luke 7:1-10 we have the occasion when the centurion came and said, "My servant is sick. Speak the word and he will get well." Jesus of Nazareth spoke the word and the man got well. There is an account in the same chapter when He was going along on the street and saw a funeral procession. A widow's son had died, her only son. He stopped the procession, went over, and touched the bier where the casket was being carried and said to the dead person, "Arise." And he did.

Jesus of Nazareth conveyed a message to the people among whom He dealt, telling them what God's will was and that God intended to bless them. And in chapter 8 we have another interesting incident — the stilling of the storm at sea. There were no human beings involved. He was not addressing Himself to anybody and allowing any kind of reaction on the part of people He talked to the elements and He commanded the waves to be still and they were. Only God could do that, and He was God.

The feeding of the multitude was recorded in Luke 9:12-17. About 5,000 were there and they were fed with a few loaves and fishes. These miracles were performed in the course of the teaching by Jesus of Nazareth. Obviously these miracles set it forth plainly — only God could do these things. Yes, He was God — the One in whom we have put our trust. We give Him the praise and the glory.

13

Can you see how arguing would ever be helpful in sharing the Gospel?

Sometimes a person to whom you tell the Gospel has preconceived ideas that prevent him from believing what you say. We shall be considering something that happened in the life of Christ Jesus and it has to do with the fact that while He was living here and sharing with people the truth of God, He did spend some time in argument and several of these instances are recorded. In my own experience, as I was seeking to come to belief, I was helped with the passage in Romans 10:9-10, where Paul says:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

That bothered me. I felt aggrieved that such an impossible condition should be laid down. I was committed to an idea I had picked up in high school and I felt it was valid that miracles are impossible. Everything was guided by natural law and when I talked about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ I just overlooked it. That could not have happened and that is also the way I felt about the Virgin Birth. When I read about the various miracles I thought that was an old fashioned way of describing what it looked like. All of which was because I was committed to a basic idea which was wrong. The basic idea I had was that miracles are impossible. If one has that in mind he cannot believe the Virgin Birth, or that He opened the eyes of the blind or healed the leper with His Word or raised the dead. If one does not believe in miracles he cannot have the God of the Bible and that effectually thwarted my acceptance of the Gospel. But in my own particular case I was able to argue myself free from this idea and I came to see that if there could be no miracles then how did the world come to pass in the first place?

By the grace of God I was helped to see the weakness, the fallacy of the ideas I had been holding. Now let us look at some instances in Scripture. We read in Luke 11, beginning at

verse 14:

And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. And others, tempting him sought of him a sign from heaven. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

As you see it, why didn't the Lord just say they were wrong in this discussion and then tell them the truth? He discussed the matter in such a way that He called upon them to admit that their opposition was not reasonable. As long as the people held the view that He cast out demons by cooperation with Satan, they could not see Him as He really was — the Son of God. The argument was based on common sense. He did not say He was too good or too holy for that. He took their own point of view and said in effect, "you are saying I am cooperating with Satan in casting out demons. That means the devil is sharing with me in the casting out of demons and that means he is against himself. That does not make sense. When once the preconceived error was removed, then the testimony of the Lord Jesus could challenge.

The Gospel presents God as benevolent and gracious and challenges me to count on God being ready to help me. In the human being there is naturally skepticism about God's goodness and graciousness. And when we turn to chapter 12 we read a familiar passage in verses 22-30:

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what he shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

Now listen to this argument:

Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls . . . Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

He reasons with them that their natural skepticism, in which they doubt that God will do them good is unfounded because if they look around in nature they will see that God does do good, so that because of the cynical skepticism in the heart God will never do anything good for me is not reasonable. The Gospel teaches that God will save and deliver at any

time and at any place. In chapter 13, verses 11-17 tell of the healing of the woman who was bound for eighteen years:

The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

In other words, the argument was always pointed against the error they had in mind; it was never used to strengthen the presentation of what He had to say because what He had to say was just as the Word of God. But the opposition to that word that comes out of my heart could be reasoned with and argued with. In dealing with people who have ideas that may be wrong, we can argue with their ideas but when it comes to the Gospel we simply tell it as it is.

14

Can you see how my expectation of what will happen can affect my daily living experience?

Jesus of Nazareth revealed the promises of God which can affect the human being. In thinking of my past and of the days gone by, in my heart I can say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." Then I think of the present and the greatest thing I can say to myself is, "Thou God seest me." I look ahead to the future because I am moving into it with the uncertainties, because no man knows what a day will bring forth, and I can hear Him say, "Lo, I am with you always." This is the way in which we are blessed by the revelation that is in Christ Jesus.

The future intrigues people. We cannot help being interested in it. For young people the future usually is a challenge to hopeful imagination of big achievements. Young people are always going to do something bigger and better than it has ever been done before. Old people have the dread of coming disaster. They know death is sure and they are moving toward it. In between for the mature people, those who have been around in the world and know about life, there is oftentimes a cynical skepticism of probable loss. Every way we turn there is always the chance our team will lose the game. The future, even though it does not always look good and always promises us wonderful things, is none the less challenging and intriguing to us.

Believers have the basis for hope for a glorious future because God will be in it and when Jesus of Nazareth was here He talked to people time and again about that which would come in the future and told them things that would be helpful for them. In Luke 9:22 we read these words:

The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

This was something He told them all to have in mind. They were looking to Him as the Son of God, with the power of God, and he warns them to have one thing in mind about His coming crucifixion: it will happen. And that is a fact every believer needs to remember: self-crucifixion will come. Somewhere up the road ahead of us there will come experiences that will be shattering out of which we are to turn to God. The future has something in store for the believer personally and it will include passing through his experience of the cross. Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."

As the believer comes to the Lord and moves onward, he can keep in mind that this is the

way it will be. In Luke 13:28-30 are words along another line:

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

This is a sober word; it is talking about the future. The fact is that some people have overrated their own response to God's call. They have in some way responded to the Gospel and they have assumed that what they have done is acceptable to God. Believers cannot be sure of their own adequacy.

When I think about the future and what I have done as the basis of my expectation I can be uncertain. So the Lord presented a report of the past with the prediction of what will happen. In the past some people did actually believe and He named the patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets. In the future some will be shocked to learn that their response was not valid. The Lord Jesus mentioned the fact that a big showdown will surely come and some will be left out. And it is important; we need to think about it. God's plan for the future includes the return of the Lord. Our Lord Jesus taught several parables to emphasize that the servant living in the world today should have in mind that his master is coming back and will ask for an accounting. In His teaching Jesus of Nazareth taught that certain things would happen with reference to the future. Standing in the city of Jerusalem He gave them to understand that the city would be destroyed and the temple would not have one stone left upon another.

The second truth He emphasized they should keep in mind is that the Lord will return and they also should have in mind that when He returns Christ will set up His kingdom. In predicting these developments He challenged believers to be diligent; they were not to depend upon temporal things and they were

not to give final commitment to the things of this world. Now the harvest will come. The Lord Jesus is the Savior and when He saves He will save forever into eternity but not everybody will believe Him and they will be destroyed; when He comes back He will judge. He will judge according to the law of God and there will be separation on that basis.

In predicting these developments He challenged believers to be very careful and to put no final dependence upon the things of this world. They were to lay up their treasures in heaven. They were to know that judgment will occur and separation will take place. In Luke 21:5-38 He gave them to understand this whole world will be destroyed. How can this be dynamic for our living? For one thing, it will cause us not to be too much attached to what is here and it will cause us not to be too much involved in our expectation of what will happen here. We will be more interested in spiritual matters.

It is a very salutary thing that people who expect to be in the presence of God will take steps to order their lives. We want to be acceptable in His sight; we want Him to see that we're sincere in our response to Him. So we recognize that Jesus of Nazareth taught the people about the future.

15

Do you realize miracles were necessary in declaring the Gospel?

Since Jesus of Nazareth came to reveal the Gospel in His teaching and in His work, it was inevitable that He would work miracles. Why? The Gospel tells of God's plan to save sinners and His plan to save sinners is not by showing them how they can manage to do the right thing because they cannot do it; it would never come to pass. The Gospel is a message that tells you God will come into the believer and use His power in raising the dead, to

actually lift that individual out of himself into the life of God.

So very much is involved in the phrase "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Let me say that is not "Christ/or you, the hope of glory"; it is not because Jesus Christ died and I go free because my name is on the church roll. It is true that Christ Jesus died 1900 years ago but it is also true that three days later He arose from the grave and later He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs in the space of forty days; He ascended into heaven where He is now. But that is not all: He sent His Holy Spirit to come into the heart of believers and show the things of Christ, and makes it possible that God will work in the believer to will and to do of His good pleasure. That is the essence of the Gospel.

The secret of spiritual victory is that God is able to raise the dead. In my natural self I am dead in trespasses and sin and He is able to raise the dead; I receive Him into my heart and He operates in me. The way God does it is by overruling the natural processes; He is far greater than anything in nature. When Jesus of Nazareth went about teaching people the will of God and what the work of God would be, He demonstrated this by works of wonder that overruled the natural situation. Let me list some of these for you as they are found in the book of Luke.

In the first chapter we read about the Virgin Birth: Almighty God actually produced the body in which Jesus of Nazareth lived through Mary but God Himself was responsible for it. When you think that through, get the whole picture in your mind: think back on the creation of the world. I received the life that I have from my parents and they got it from their parents; and so on back and back until we come to the first man, Adam. Where did he come from? Of course, you will say God created him. Exactly. If God created Adam the first man, God created the body of Jesus of Nazareth, the second man, and just as Adam was the first man and all those who are born of the flesh are his children, so Christ Jesus was the second man and all those who have been born again by faith are His. He was the forerunner of regeneration.

We read in II Corinthians 5:17 that "every one who is in Christ Jesus is a new creature — a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new." And so the Virgin Birth — this exceptional event, is absolutely in place as the beginning of the Gospel of God. In the third chapter of Luke we have the baptism by John, who had been baptizing many people by the river Jordan. When Jesus of Nazareth came to be baptized, John shrank from doing it. Although Jesus of Nazareth was his second cousin he felt he was not fit to do it, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee." But Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). And at that time the Holy Spirit came as a dove and settled upon Jesus of Nazareth — a supernatural event — and the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." All of which was miraculous.

We continue to read in Luke 4 that when He was in the synagogue a man was there with an unclean spirit and Jesus of Nazareth commanded that spirit to come out of him. Here we have the reality of demons - beings that were invisible, all spiritual composition nature - and this opens an entire other world. We are accustomed to dealing with people but this is with spirits. That also opens the door for angels and for the reality of the Holy Spirit and all of this is absolutely part of the whole story.

Later on in chapter 4 see Him healing the sick — men with all kinds of diseases. There can be no doubt about the testimony. Anybody reading the New Testament knows that Jesus of Nazareth healed the sick. Then in chapter 5 we have the instance where He told Peter to go into the lake and catch some fish and we remember Peter told Him there were no fish out there; that he had gone out the night before and toiled all night to no avail. But He told Peter to go and he said, "At thy word I will let down the net." He caught so many fish he could

not bring them in but had to call on the other boats to assist him.

We read in chapter 6 that He was in the synagogue on the Sabbath Day and a person was there with a withered hand. In full view of all, He told this person to stretch out that hand and it was restored. Mind you, no one challenged the authenticity of that event.

Let me remind you that when you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, He will inwardly bless you. You can ask, talk with Him, and you can share with Him. This does not mean that some power will be placed under your control that you can use for your own purposes and to your own advantage — no; but the things that God will do are extraordinary, they are miraculous, and this is what the Lord Jesus Christ taught.

We thank God for the Gospel. We rejoice in it and pray that God will help us to keep all these things in mind that we may fully appreciate what we have in Christ Jesus.

16

Do you realize that being obedient to God in your life does not mean that you will have no trouble?

In turning to God for salvation, the believer expects blessing and he will receive it. We know that joy has been promised, with rest and peace. It sometimes comes as a shock to realize that walking with God entails suffering. The Lord said, "Marvel not if the world hates you; it hated me before it hated you." And again, "The servant is not greater than the Master," and "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). And in Luke 9:22 we read these words of Jesus of Nazareth:

The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

Notice the way that was worded: it was not just that this was going to happen but it is phrased in such a way as to imply this *needed* to happen. If we are ever going to be free from the inward tendencies we have to be wayward, we need to go through an experience of suffering. It will be necessary. The old man (the human nature) in us must die and dying is not easy. Let us look in Luke 22:41 at a comment based upon an incident in the Garden of Gethsemane:

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

What did this mean? Far more than I know, but I do know one thing, it is very clear: He willingly yielded to His Father's will that He should die. I think far more than physical death was involved but we know the will of God was that He go through and suffer death. In that same chapter we read (Luke 22:49-52):

When they which were about him saw what would follow (when the soldiers came to arrest Him) they said unto him, Lord shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

Another account of this incident is in Matthew 26, beginning at verse 51 and these incidents should serve as a guide to us. One way or another we, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, will come into situations we do not like and that are definitely not in our favor. Our disposition will be to fight back or to run and the Lord has set us an example: yield to it. In Luke 22:42 we read, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Again in that same chapter, beginning at verse 63, we read, "And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, "Prophesy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." He submitted to cruel abuse at His trial and no attempt was made to obtain a fair trial. He would not seek to escape the cross; He had to go through it even as you and I have to go through it if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here the Son of God sets the pattern. Born into this world in the flesh, He needed to die in the flesh because He would be raised from the dead. And that is the hope for you and for me.

I have one more word to say with reference to this suffering He endured when He was doing the will of God by yielding Himself: In Hebrews 5:8, "Though he were a Son, yet learned the obedience by the things which he suffered." Wouldn't you understand right away that I need to learn something; that I need to learn what it is to walk with God? That I will when I suffer; when I pass through experiences that are hard to endure. This experience comes to every believer; in my case it came when I was entering the ministry in a public way. When it happens to you, you will keep in mind that the servant is not greater than his Master.

That is what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. He was to learn obedience — what it means to obey God when you are in the presence of those who are not yielded to God. When we are learning about the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth it will come into our mind very clearly that He showed the will of God by yielding to accept death; He endured abuse, and He accepted the cross.

17

Did you ever wonder why Jesus Christ spent so much time with His disciples after He was raised from the dead?

It is very important to realize why Jesus of Nazareth took so much time with His disciples after He was raised from the dead; much more than the story of what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. This is a prediction of what will happen to every believer in Christ. To establish the fact that the body was actually raised from the dead was not simple. It is hard to believe that as we have heard it over and over again. We celebrate it every Easter and still it is difficult to believe it to be true that the body was actually raised from the dead — from a state of death into a state of life.

This is very important. The sentence of dying goes on all the time. Man lives by breathing — he eats and drinks in order that he might live. And the body is decaying all the time. Sometime, when life has departed, the body will quickly deteriorate because it is dead. Now God comes into this situation with the power to raise the dead and He demonstrated this in Jesus of Nazareth, who demonstrated it in His life. He died in this world as other men died. On that particular day two other men died with Him — one on each side of Him, then he was raised from the dead to demonstrate the fact that God could raise the dead. This was done in several different ways. First, the grave was found — open and empty. That is recorded in Luke 24:1-8 and Matthew 28:1-8; in Mark 16:1-8 and John 20:1-2. Luke tells it very simply: he mentions that there were two men there in shining garments who told the people who came to see the empty grave "He is not here but is risen." Matthew tells of an earthquake, and with it the angel of the Lord rolled back the stone and they said to the

women, "He is not here but is risen." In Mark we are told that when the women came to the grave they said, "Who shall roll away the stone?" They found the stone gone and the messenger — the angel — told them, "Tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you into Galilee." And in John we have the story of Mary Magdalene. She came back and told the disciples, "They have taken away the Lord," and indicated that she did not know where they had put Him. This is the story and the whole world needs to face the fact that grave was found empty after the Lord had been in there.

The next thing we notice is that the women brought the news to the disciples and this is also reported in all of the Gospels. We turn to John 20, beginning at verse 11 and read:

But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardner, saith unto him, Sir if thou have borne hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

These must have been stirring moments. How could the disciples possibly grasp this whole truth? We read that Peter and John went to the grave to check the report (Luke and John both tell about this). John reached the grave first and looked in but he did not go into the grave. Peter went in and he saw that the garments were there and also the napkin folded that had been about His head. I have often wondered why that was recorded in Scripture. He was actually there in physical being and He could take the napkin, fold it and put it aside. And He did. We learn that the risen Lord Jesus — the risen Jesus of Nazareth — appeared on the road to Emmaus to two of the disciples. It is recorded in Luke 24, beginning at verse 13:

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus him self drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

It has been said that Luke 24 is considered one of the most important portions of Scripture, for obvious reasons, and I suggest that you read it carefully again to get the full import of our Lord's message to those two disciples. In verses 36-49 we read:

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

They thought He was a ghost. It was shocking to see that person alive whom they had seen die on the cross. He did this to impress upon their minds that it was literally true that He was raised from the dead. He continued, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I

myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered (you see, they were greatly impressed, but they could still have doubted it) "he saith unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them." That was absolute proof that was a physical body.

Remember, a doctor wrote this. And as we read in the last verses of Luke 24 and in John 21:21-25, the risen Jesus of Nazareth showed Himself to be alive by many infallible proofs. The book of Acts tells us that He showed Himself to be alive over a period of forty days. All of that impresses upon our minds that by the power of God a person can be raised from the natural into the spiritual. It means that no matter how weak we may be, or how faulty we may be, by the grace of God we are born again in Christ Jesus and there will be in us something new and permanent that will be from God Himself.

The new birth will bring us into fellowship with God by the power of God. For God can raise the dead — even me, even you.

18

Do you realize how important it is that a believer should know that Jesus is alive?

One aspect of the Gospel that I feel is commonly overlooked is that Christ Jesus is alive. What He now looks like is unknown and unimportant. I have in mind that anybody who has burdens to bear would be so much helped to remember that the Lord Jesus is actually alive, and any person who has been hurt should remember that He is touched with all the feelings of our infirmities now. He knows these things now because He is more alive than we are, and He is with us.

When Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead He took His disciples apart and said, in the concluding verses of Luke 24:

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

That is the way Luke ends his Gospel. Now let us read a few verses, beginning at verse 9, in the first chapter of Acts:

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Notice that that is just the way it reads: they saw Him go. They were watching. It was broad daylight:

And while they looked steadfastly up toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

I am told that the Greek word translated *gazing* could very well be translated *gaping* —

looking with open mouth. Long after I had begun preaching the Gospel and even after I had become a professor at the seminary, it came to me with a very sharp emphasis a certain question: why did Jesus of Nazareth arrange that He should be taken up into heaven in full view of all the company of the disciples? We know that when He was transformed on the Mount of Transfiguration there were only three men with Him — Peter, James and John. And again, if He had just wanted to go to heaven during all of those hours when He was out of their sight, He could have gone. The very obvious reason must be that He wanted them to know for sure that He was actually in heavenly places. I emphasize it because that is true for us. Nothing has been changed. He is just as real in the presence of God now as He was really in the presence of God then.

I emphasize this because I am interested in the person who has problems, who has a burden to bear, a sorrow to endure — a person who is in trouble. Keep in mind He, the living Lord, is touched with all the feelings of our infirmities. I want to point out some other things that Jesus of Nazareth showed his disciples. When thinking about the ascension we receive, as it were, an extra blessing, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." In Acts 1:8 something further is said:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

He made this comment to all of them. He would not add to what they already had in mind but He would make everything very real and effective for them and for other people. In the second chapter of Acts, verse 1, we read, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." I suspect perhaps many of you already know that speaking of the day of Pentecost fully coming — meaning when the period which is called Pentecost in the Bible actually took place, it meant there were fifty days from the time the first fruits were offered before God to when the harvest was brought in — the fullness of the harvest. And you might have in mind that it was fifty days from the time that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead to the time when the Holy Spirit came upon all the disciples, who were there, seated in one place, and suddenly a sound as of a mighty rushing wind filled the place where they were. It was the sound that filled it, not the wind. And "cloven tongues like as of fire" (not tongues of fire, but like as of fire) sat upon each of them. And they all began to speak of the wonderful works of God in the various languages of those who were present.

In Acts 3:6 we read how, when Peter and John met the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." We can say that the risen Lord actually healed that lame man through Peter. That is the way it is done. Peter made the following comment in Acts 4:10:

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

Remember that the Lord Jesus is now in the presence of God and He has been glorified and made both Lord and Christ. This is the time He really enters into the function that is called Christ, when He is King of Kings and Lord of all. In chapter 7, verse 55, we have the testimony of Stephen, the deacon:

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said,

Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

The risen Lord was seen in heaven by Stephen and in chapter 9 you will find that the risen Lord was seen by Saul the Pharisee on the Damascus road. And there is one further word in Acts 9:34, where we find the risen Lord healed the man who had been ill for eight years through Peter.

In other words, the living Lord is working even now and I hope one thing lingers in your hearts and minds: Jesus of Nazareth is alive. You can turn to Him and He is minded to be with you and to help you.

19

Do you realize that the spreading of the Gospel depends upon the testimony of born again Spirit-filled believers?

The grace of God described in the Gospel needs to be believed to be received. It is never pushed on anyone. We are reminded of this by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:13:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?

Just anybody telling the Gospel story is not enough; it needs to be someone who has a mission for it. God's hands need to be in it. Remember the familiar passage that records the words of the Lord Himself (Matthew 28:19-20):

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising 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, always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The Word is to be spread but it is to be done by people who belong to the Lord. In John 20:21 the Lord Jesus told His disciples, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Then again in Acts 1:8:

Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Thus it becomes clear that when the Lord Jesus Christ left this world He committed evangelism — telling the Gospel story — to His believers. I think one statement in Scripture that many Christian people have failed to really look at is where the Lord says, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." It seems almost too much to understand that the welfare, even the spiritual destiny of other people, should be dependent upon any one of us. But that is the way it is.

Have you ever considered that you are here because of your parents? It is equally true that for those who come to know the Lord and belong to Him, they will be there because somebody brought them the message. That is the way it is done. Why it is done that way, I don't know. One cannot help but feel that if it had been given to the angels to do, maybe it would have been done well. Imagine turning over to His followers, as weak and wayward as they proved to be, this great task "Go ye into all the world and teach all nations." But He prepared His disciples for their mission and this is what we want to think about now.

The first thing that happened was their conversion and in that connection I think the conversion of the Apostle Paul is probably as clear an example of what the Lord Jesus does as anything that we have. And he understood it that way. Look at I Timothy 1:16:

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul understood his own experience to be, as it were, a pattern for all others. And when we think about how Paul was met on the Damascus Road by the living Lord, let me point out just a few simple things the like of which could happen with every other believer. He saw Jesus Christ personally. And you come to deal with Him personally. And then, the Apostle Paul asked "Who art thou, Lord? What wilt thou have me to do?" These are the elements that are to be found in conversion everywhere.

First of all, the Person of Jesus Christ and then "what do you want me to do?" The second thing which He did was to bring them to conviction and if you turn to the first three verses of Acts you will read how the Lord Jesus, in the space of forty days after He was raised from the dead, after He had appeared to them, "by many infallible proofs showed them that He was really alive, bring to them conviction. For over a month, from day to day, they had personal contact with the living Lord giving them this conviction: Jesus is alive, and this is basic for the witnesses of the Gospel. There was then given to them their commission that we read about in Acts 1:7,8, "... and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

In the fourth place there was correction. After they had received the conviction that Jesus was alive and had seen Him ascend into heaven, where He was interceding on their behalf and they had received from Him also the commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, they were together and they received a correction. One of the apostles was missing and his place had to be filled; whatever was wrong about their arrangement needed to be made right, and this is true to this day. If you undertake any responsibility for Him, don't be surprised if, in your own heart and mind, you will feel there is some change you ought to make. And don't let anybody talk you out of it. Someone may ask, "If I go to serve the Lord, do I have to be any different?" Let me just say: if you serve the Lord you *will* be different.

The fifth thing I want to bring to your attention is that under God's guidance and by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, they were brought into a communion as we read in Acts 2:1-4. They were with each other and they were with the Lord. Then while they were there we remember the experience of Pentecost: suddenly a sound as of a mighty rushing wind and then there were the cloven tongues, like as of fire, that sat upon each of them. But the experience was that the Holy Spirit came to be in them and the Holy Spirit's function was, as the Lord Jesus Himself had told them, to take the things of Christ and show them unto others. You can think of them being consecrated because the incoming of the Holy Spirit definitely sets them aside as unto the Lord.

Have you realized what preparation this was for those who would witness? You may be called upon to teach a Sunday School class and you will feel willing to want to do everything you can. You may feel that you are not worthy but still you must feel you will do anything you can. You hate to say no but let me just say something to you: certainly it is open to you. Certainly you could do that kind of work but let me suggest that you do not do that kind of work as you are as a human being. For that you need to have spiritual preparation and personal dealings with the Lord Jesus Christ. And if there is something that is not as it should be in your life, have it corrected. It is very important — this work that you will do. And then, have communion with other believers. Be in fellowship with others — do not work alone. And finally, accept from God Himself the presence of the Holy Spirit

in your heart. In this way you will be prepared to be a witness unto Him.

20

Do you realize that the living Lord is now interceding for His own?

The Gospel is about the work of the Son of God. He came into the world incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, to seek and to save the lost. Man was lost in his sins; Jesus of Nazareth died as a sacrifice acceptable to God. And so it was set forth as basic, "whosoever believeth in Him shall never die." He rose from the dead in the newness of life to make regeneration possible. Because He rose from the dead, we can be free from sin. Sin will be around and in us but sin cannot control us because we are in Him. He sent forth the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers to show the things of Christ making it possible for the believer to live with Christ in you, the hope of glory. Thus the believer is inwardly blessed; God working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. The believer now has two natures: the flesh, which he came by naturally, and the spirit, which he came by through Christ when he was born again. Because of the flesh, the believer may err, he may falter, he may sin, he may be weak but now we come to a wonderful truth. We read in I John 2:1, 2:

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

That is a remarkable statement and what I want to bring to our hearts and minds just now is this: there is a living Being right now in the presence of God, interceding on our behalf. The ministry of Jesus Christ goes on now. We read in Acts 1:1, 2:

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up.

I want you to feel that word *began* because He continued it afterwards. While He was here on earth He began to do and to teach the Gospel of God; He continues that now through His disciples. In Acts 2:32-36 we read:

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom he have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

During His life on earth He began to do and to teach and continues that now in and through those who believe in Him. In the case of the Apostle Paul, when he was still Saul the Pharisee, we read this in Acts 9:3-7, the occasion when he was accosted by the Lord Jesus:

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who are thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

When you read that is it possible for you in your own heart to sense the fact that it actually happened. There is right now in the presence of God a living Being who has His eye on you and who will call you to serve Him. We will not all be called to the same kind of service that Saul was called to but we will have our mission pointed out to us from Him. In the same chapter, verses 15 and 16, we read:

But the Lord said unto him (speaking to Ananias), Go thy way: for he (speaking of Saul the Pharisee) is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things we must suffer for my name's sake.

The living Lord may call a person to serve. There is something else wonderfully true and this is set before us in Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." If you are a believer, you are able every day to live to remember there is in the presence of God a living Lord always ready to intercede for you.

You will remember a certain incident before He passed out of this world, how the Lord Jesus was talking to His disciples and He especially directed a word to Peter. We find it in Luke 22:31-33:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

The Lord Jesus knows exactly the situation you are in; He knows exactly what you are going to face. And He knows the problems that will come up and the burdens you will have and He prays that your faith should not fail. He is always in the presence of God on your behalf. There is an important statement in Colossians 1:27, and in this case the Apostle Paul was writing to believers:

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The living person of the Lord Jesus Christ is actually operating in you. It is not just an idea; He is a person and He is with you. The Lord is operating within the believer who is trusting in Him and if that believer is yielding to the Holy Spirit then the Lord is working in him. You do not have to bear burdens alone. No given situation can happen that He does not know about; He knows before it happens and He intercedes on your behalf before it happens, as He did with Peter. He knew Peter would face serious testings and He prayed for him that his faith should not fail. And so it will be with you.

The Apostle Paul expressed all of this so well in Gal. 2:20:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Now in everything that I have written I hope that I have kept before us constantly the thought: it is God; it is the Lord working in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. Remember, this is not something you have to do. The fact is that the living Lord Jesus Christ is right now in the presence of God — praying for you. And by His Holy Spirit is actually in you and is operative, so that you will be helped as you live by the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

From Death into Life

Why does the doctrine of the resurrection give so much hope to the Christian?

To answer this question I want to discuss both the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection of Christians. In other words, we will discuss the whole truth of the general doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. This was one of the significant phases in the life of Christ. We recognize that the life of the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the Scriptures has several distinct aspects: He was born of a virgin; while He was in His active ministry He worked miracles that astonished the onlookers; He died on Calvary's cross for the sins of the whole world, especially for those who believe in Him; He rose from the dead, leaving an empty grave; He was seen by His disciples after the resurrection off and on for forty days; He ascended into heaven in full view of them; He is there in the presence of God, interceding on our behalf; and this same Jesus shall so return in like manner as He went.

This, very quickly, is what we have in mind when we talk about Jesus Christ. Now, the very central part of this is the resurrection and what matters so far as you and I are concerned, and especially in our living, is that resurrection from the dead is real. There is another life possible after this life—not this life over again, not a second living like we did the first time, but life of a different dimension.

Perhaps this is the most incredible idea that can come to a person. How well we can understand Job's question, "If a man dies, will he live again?" And yet that is what the gospel of Jesus Christ says. Jesus of Nazareth Himself taught this. The people of His day and time could not understand it either. Early in His ministry the Lord Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Then we read, "Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" (John 2:20). John then explains, writing as he did after the fact of Jesus' bodily resurrection, "But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said" (John 2:21-22). So, right at the beginning of His ministry He told them that He would be raised from the dead.

Later, but still early in His ministry, He spoke of the resurrection of all mankind, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:25-29). He was preparing the people for the idea that there would be a resurrection of the dead.

God not only, for the sake of Jesus Christ, forgives the sins of those who believe in Him, but God will also, through the Lord Jesus Christ, raise the dead, not only eventually in the world to come but now, in this world, it is possible to live in the newness of life.

As we look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ we will see that *in* Him the believer is

raised, *by* Him the believer is raised, and *through* Him the believer is raised into the newness of life. Christ Jesus did not remove death, He overcame death; He triumphed over it. Death is still here and it is real, but it has lost its sting. You remember how Paul expressed it: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" These are the familiar words in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Hear them again, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive, and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Through all the ages and all over the world, Christians have had this truth in mind, and in all languages where the gospel is preached and understood they have repeated the wonderful promise the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples when He said to them in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." It is to be feared that some of us repeat these words as if they were poetry. They are beautiful—just as beautiful as any poetry we will ever read—but they are also real. At Eastertime we are all reminded that Christ arose and we all realize that was wonderful and amazing; but at all seasons of the year we need to remember that believers, too, will be raised.

Please note that in the resurrection it is the whole man who will be raised. Paul said, in writing to the Thessalonians, "I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved" (5:23). While it is significantly true that our bodies shall be raised, it is also true that our spirits and souls will be raised into the newness of life. This was the great ambition of Paul, that he might know the power of Christ's resurrection. It is important that we grasp the idea that the will of God leads the believer to be crucified with Christ that he might also be raised with Him. Thus we find in John 12:24 these familiar words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The Lord spoke these words just after He had said, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." And He tells about falling into the ground and dying that He might bear fruit. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25). Apparently what He is saying here is that this life is real and death following this life is real, but there is another, a better life after death.

Something of this truth can be seen even in the natural world. A grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies and out of it comes the plant, the stalk of wheat that grows and bears seed. Think of it in the case of any seed that is planted in the ground: a bean plant will grow from the bean seed. The plant does not look like the seed that was put into the ground, but it does come from the seed. You remember what happens to caterpillars: they become cocoons, then they emerge as butterflies. All of this is used in the Scripture to indicate to us that something else is coming—a new life is possible in Christ Jesus after the believer dies to this world.

Yes, we do move from death into life.

The Comfort of the Resurrection

Can you see how God's faithfulness to His promises can be a comfort to the believer?

The Bible deals with the issues of life and death and actually discusses conditions which involve living and dying. There is nothing more fundamental, more elemental, than what the Bible discusses about man. In the Bible we read that God created the world and made man in His own image. As we read the Bible and look around about us we get the impression very clearly that God keeps, sustains, and maintains the world by His own power. If we think of the world as being an expression of energy, it is Almighty God who controls the power that is in this world. We also learn from the Bible that God judges the world; He is a righteous Being and He judges the world in His own righteousness. Then we realize the very sobering fact that God will destroy the world that He has made.

Jeremiah learned a great lesson when he went down to the house of the potter and watched him at his wheel making vessels out of the potter's clay: when the potter had formed a vessel that did not please him, he crushed it and put the clay back and made another vessel out of it. This experience of Jeremiah made him understand more clearly God's sovereign control in this world. God will destroy the world that He made. But then we see a marvelous truth—God saves the world by His own grace. This world that was doomed to destruction will, by His grace, be reconstructed. It is clear to us, then, that God rules the world in His own sovereignty.

As we study the Bible it becomes clear to us that God is over all. Now, the Bible account shows that the creation, that which God made, does not always obey Him. Then we see this sobering truth: those who disobey, the sinful ones, shall be destroyed. But there is the gospel, the Good News: Man can be saved! "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him [shall] not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). It is true that if a man believes not he is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. But it is also marvelously true that whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish but have everlasting life.

The practical problem that is faced is this: if destruction is universal and all men are condemned to death because they are sinners, how can I be delivered? This is what is pictured for us in the Bible. There are various ways in which it is set forth, some more clearly than others. The account in Genesis, for instance, presents how man multiplied: there were Adam's children and they had children, and generation after generation multiplied until the earth was filled with them. But sin was rampant and sin grew worse until God, in judgment, sent the Flood. Although God had made man in His own image and put him in this world, He also sent the Flood as a judgment upon the earth to destroy all mankind. But there were those who were saved. God knew how to deliver the godly out of this judgment, this condemnation, and Noah and his family became the progenitors of the world as we have it now.

So we have Adam's descendants being destroyed by the Flood and yet out of the Flood, saved in the ark, came Noah, the father of the new generation.

Therefore, salvation has three phases. It begins with a person being physically alive but in sin and incurring the judgment of God; this living person has the sentence of physical death within himself and when his earthly life ends, death will take over and his earthly body will be destroyed; but out of physical death will come deliverance into living in Christ. This is sometimes indicated, as we shall see when we study it again, in nature and in all of nature leading up to death. Out from death comes the spirit. When we think of nature we have to add death, then we add the spirit.

Think of those three names—nature, death, and spirit—across a page in front of you. On the left-hand side of the page is the word "nature"—natural, human. In the center of the

page put "death" —destruction. On the right side put "spirit" —the children of God—the Spirit of God—eternal life. All of this is brought to our minds in various ways, but I want now to read Romans 5:12-21 and 6:1-19:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one [that one would be Adam], many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as by the offence of one [that would be Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [that would be Jesus Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. [There is brought to mind the contrast of what happened in Adam and what happened in Christ Jesus.] Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul goes on to say,

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh...

The rest of chapter 6 and chapter 7 find Paul's thoughts going back and forth over just one thing: that your old man—the human nature—was doomed to death, but the new man—the spiritual nature that is in Christ Jesus—is actually raised to everlasting life, "planted together in the likeness of His death"—that we might be raised with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. This is what we have in mind when we think of the simple truth as set forth in the Bible. There was the first creation which ends in death and there is the new creation that goes on to eternal life. For this we thank Almighty God.

Resurrection to the New Life of the Spirit

Are you aware that you cannot get into anything better unless you are willing to get out of where you are?

"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself " (Luke 24:25-27). These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus to the two disciples walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the day that His body was reported gone from the tomb. Early in the morning the disciples had gone to the tomb and found it empty. All day long there undoubtedly had been excitement. Who knows how many different persons had tried to understand or explain what had happened, and now as the evening hour draws near these two disciples are on their way home, walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, when this stranger comes along and walks with them. When asked why they are so downhearted they tell Him it is because of the things about Jesus Christ. Then He spoke these words; He reminded them what was taught in the Scriptures; what was promised. They may well have walked for an hour or more on their journey while He expounded on the Scriptures.

Now, He had just been raised from the dead and He was present there in person. What do you suppose He talked about? Do you think He talked about His resurrection? We are told He talked about the things concerning Himself. What things? Things that were written in the Old Testament. Not the fact that His body had been raised from the dead and brought back to life again. He was right there in person, but that was not the thing He was talking about. I am going to suggest to you that He was talking to them about the significance of His resurrection—that there is life after death, and what that means. During the time He was talking to them they did not recognize Him; apparently that was not necessary. They were not looking at the person so much; they were looking at the Scripture. Afterwards they said, " Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Later He met the disciples in the upper room and the first thing He did was to convince them that He was literally and physically alive. We don't know how long that took; it would not be very long. He asked them to touch Him and when they yet believed not for joy He asked them, "Have you any food?" And they brought Him a piece of broiled fish and honeycomb and He took it and ate before them. "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45).

I suspect He talked to them for several hours about what was in the Bible. Many times since I first read this I have gone back to the writing of Moses in the Old Testament, trying to understand what He talked about. It certainly was not that He was alive—He had shown them He was alive. He showed them that in a few minutes without talking about the Scriptures at all; He asked them to put their hands on Him and handle Him "and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And He asked them for food and He ate.

That was a public, actual, literal, physical demonstration.

Now, what portion or portions of Scripture did He expound to them? How did He open their understanding? Do you suppose that now with the resurrection a reality He could complete His message about eternal life that He had been talking about to them? We are going to look at one aspect of the Old Testament and it will be helpful if we take it as a parable. The children of Israel developed in the course of four hundred years in the land of Egypt. They came there a large family of about seventy persons and now there were hundreds of thousands of them—a large company of people who were counted as foreigners, aliens, and treated as slaves.

This is Israel in Egypt. Notice that that same group of people was brought out of Egypt across the desert into the Promised Land, thereby demonstrating a great representation, a great revelation of the will of God. Something like that is to happen in the spiritual world. So the question is: What can we understand about Israel in Egypt? Let me point out these things to you: Egypt was not their home —Canaan was their home. Egypt was not the promised land. There was no promise that in Egypt the Hebrews would be blessed. Never were they promised that in Egypt each man would be sitting under his own fig tree, that each man would be free to worship and to serve God and have his own possessions. In Egypt they owned nothing and they did what others told them to do; there was no chance in Egypt for each Hebrew to have his own dealing with God. There was no peace for the people, no rest or quietness among the people, and no power. They were slaves. There was no joy in Egypt; Israel was in distress. All of this is a type of the soul in the natural world. The believer is in distress in this world; the Christian will have tribulation. This is not his home; here in this world he has no promise. This is very important.

What can we understand about Israel in the land of Canaan? That was their home, their promised land that was to be given to them of God. In Canaan the Hebrew people would be blessed; there each man would sit under his own fig tree and each would be free to serve his God—to come to Him personally. All of the great words of triumph are in Canaan—peace, rest, quietness, power, victory, and joy. All of this is a type of the soul in the spiritual world. The believer who belongs to God is blessed in the Lord. In the Lord he is at home for he has the promises of God. This, again, is very important and our preaching and teaching should emphasize that in Christ Jesus the believer is blessed.

In that other world of the spirit the Christian is at home and he freely does the will of God and he has the blessing of God. The believer does pass from living in the natural to living in the spiritual—a process through which the Lord brings the believer. There is a further truth: the believer is led through this process and must respond in obedience; the soul hears the call of God and responds by turning to God.

The truth of the matter is that the soul must let go of the things of this world, give in so far as God is concerned, and turn from idols to worship the living and the true God. The soul will then receive God's promises.

This is implied in the resurrection from the dead.

The Freedom of the Resurrection

A rancher can use horses bigger than he is, stronger than he is—they are useful to him in his work so long as he can control them.

In the entire life of the Lord Jesus Christ the resurrection is the big thing, the important thing. It is because of Christ's resurrection that we can be saved, and this is something to understand. It is more than just understanding that the body of Jesus Christ rose from the dead; its meaning is to be found in the writings of Moses and in the Psalms and the Prophets

about the Lord Jesus Christ.

We read in Romans 6:11-23:

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. [You will have this sin in your body, but don't let it *reign* in your body.] Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are now studying the truth of the resurrection. The Bible teaches us that in this world there is a great contrariness, that is, in this world there are a great many things against a great many other things. Let me illustrate to you: a man walking is a demonstration of victory. Take the body we have—what would it naturally do if left to itself? What does the body want to do? It wants to fall down—gravity pulls it down. A living person exercises his strength against gravity, he skillfully keeps his balance, and his will to direct his movements makes it possible for him to walk where he wants to go. A living person has victory, then, over the power of gravity.

We live by breathing. Our human body is using up oxygen all of the time; as the blood passes through the arteries of our body it is carrying the oxygen out to the tissues and carrying back the waste material, and in the tissues of our body the oxygen is being used up all of the time. What does that mean? We must have oxygen to live and oxygen comes from the air. Not only must we have air around us, we must have it in our lungs, else we would die. We could be surrounded by the area of the whole universe, yet we would die if we did not have air in our lungs.

The same is true with our strength. Each person who lives has strength to move because he eats food; movement burns up tissues and these tissues must be replaced. The tissues that are used up when our muscles move are replaced, when we eat, by digestion. If we want to live we have to eat food and this is true about everything in this world. Let me put it this way: the living being must control certain elements around him in such a way that he may be able to use them to live. This is also true spiritually and it was pictured in the Bible in the history of Israel.

When Israel entered the land of Canaan, the land of promise, they found the land occupied by Canaanites. According to the Scriptures, God's will was that the Canaanites should be destroyed. Israel in actual practice disobeyed God and let them live, and in the land there were both Israelites and Canaanites. How can Israel be blessed in the revealed in

the history of Israel in that time of Israel's history that is called "the time of the judges."

Turn to Judges 6:1-6. In this passage is recorded an incident that will reveal something of this very thing, where the children of Israel were subject to the Canaanites round about them and the consequences of this subjection.

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds.... And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.

The children of Israel were in general distress because they were subject to the people of Midian.

The situation illustrates the condition of believers in this world who are in bondage to sin. Israel as slaves was very much out of character; they were not supposed to be slaves. When the flesh dominates the spirit there is shame and distress for the Christian. But something can be done. In the case of Israel, God sent a deliverer whose name was Gideon and Gideon led the people of Israel to victory; he showed them how to win. Led by Gideon the people of Israel were victorious and blessed; and the spiritual truth is that when the spirit dominates the flesh there is glory and joy.

I want to draw your attention to something: the same people who were in bondage to Midian became free citizens over Midian. The one thing that was necessary was the work of the judge who would identify sin and lead the people to repent, to turn to God and accept His grace; God would set them free. The relationship afterward would be different from the relationship before—this is the important fact we must be made aware of. As long as the children of Israel were under the Canaanites there was misery and distress, but when they became masters over the Canaanites there was peace.

This is true in the Christian experience as well. As long as the Christian is subject to his body, his flesh, and his sin, he is miserable; but if he will be in charge of and in control of his flesh and master these things he can be at peace. The process of overcoming the flesh and having victory in the spirit is involved in the resurrection and that is what we will be thinking about—when we can actually be raised from the Head and, in the newness of life, live a life of victory and peace.

Heaven Is Real

The promises to Israel in the Old Testament depend on the fact of heaven to be realized.

When the Lord Jesus talked to His disciples about heaven He was not standing in a cathedral; He was not reciting a poem. We need to realize this. We are accustomed to thinking about the things of Jesus Christ in church. We go to church, listen to the choir sing anthems of praise to God, then we hear the preacher read from the Bible, and once in awhile he refers to heaven. We come away from church and do not hear the word again until the following week. Is that the way it is?

There was no church building when the Lord Jesus talked to His disciples. He did sometimes talk in a synagogue; that was all He had. More often He spoke in the open road or out in the open field. He talked about heaven sitting in a boat and He was not reading a poem or giving expression to some fantastic and fanciful ideas. When He talked about heaven He was referring to something real.

When you and I think about heaven we need to remember that heaven is real now. There are persons who do not believe in these things, some who do not know what to believe. Those of us who do believe in God need to learn what the promises of God are. How can we learn? How can anyone living here learn the truth about what is up there? Let me tell you: this is what the Bible is for. The revelation came from God through the prophets and the apostles by His Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. In the wisdom of God the truth of what is true in heaven and eternity was demonstrated here upon earth. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

We are thinking about the resurrection and there is one general truth that is very important: an inadequate form of living can die and be raised from the dead in a different, adequate form of living. An acorn has in it what can become the oak tree. The oak tree in a certain sense was in the acorn but the acorn had to fall into the ground and be destroyed as an acorn: it was dissipated, it disintegrated as an acorn before it could grow into the oak tree. Let me repeat: a person can live in a limited way—faulty, weak, inadequate, unhappy, miserable, helpless, defeated. This way of living in your physical body and in your human mind can be destroyed in death, but you can live again in a new way—able, strong, and victorious.

Have you ever noticed the bulb of a lily? When these bulbs are placed in the ground or in a flower pot in the window they begin to grow; as they grow the bulb doesn't stretch—it doesn't become the lily, but out of the bulb there grows a lily. The lily is beautiful and decorative, but it came out of the bulb. The bulb did not make it, but the bulb had in it what became the lily by the processes of living.

Paul used examples like this to illustrate this fact. John Doe, living in this world in his own limited human way, passing through the experience of death, can be raised from the dead into the newness of life and still be John Doe, but not in the same way: he is a different person. Mary Doe can be living in this world—limited, faulty, with her own personal peculiarities, weak and many times discouraged with living. She can pass through the experience of dying and come out of it in the newness of life—strong, shiny, victorious in Christ Jesus. Life afterwards is different from the one before. The first—called the old—can die and be raised in what we call the resurrection in a new, different form.

We have been noting this in different manifestations and I want to draw your attention to how this was set forth in the Old Testament. Let us consider Israel, the people of God. There are three stages concerning Israel as the people of God. First, Abraham received the covenant from God; blessing was promised because of his obedience. More than four hundred years later Moses received the Law of God showing the people what the will of God was, but they did not obey it. Then David, as king, received the covenant from God. Obedience was to be brought to pass by the king. But they failed again; in that period of time there were both good and bad kings. David and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah—were godly men; but on the other hand there were Jeroboam, Ahab, Athaliah (the wicked queen), and Manasseh—all of whom were wicked. In those days Israel in their human nature, with the promise to Abraham and the promise to David in hand, failed to obey and were incorrigible even though they received instructions from God. Then came the judgment of God which resulted in the destruction of the nation. The northern nation was destroyed by Assyria and years later the southern nation was destroyed by Babylon. Because of sin, Israel died.

There was a new covenant promise that of these people who had been carried away captive in their sins, whosoever would repent and would return to God would be received and regenerated. God said, 'I will give them a new heart. I will put my spirit within them.' Through the Messiah they would be given the privilege of becoming the children of God

with the life of God in their hearts when the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon them.

To repeat: In the first covenant there was promise that blessing and victory would be given to Israel; but when Israel sinned they came through sacrifices to receive grace to help them to obey. Then they were given a king who was to activate God's will, but they did not obey. The nation was divided, became disobedient again, worshiped idols, and finally became incorrigible. That is human nature. In judgment the nation was destroyed. That is the second phase.

But there was restoration—the willing ones came back and they were given what they could never have earned or won—opportunity and means to rebuild the temple and the city. Some returned to the land from Babylon. They did not fight; they did not die. Everything needful was provided for them. They were the same people but they were not the same kind of people. They had been changed.

We must realize that the resurrection is in between the first life and the second life. You and I have the wonderful prospect of being raised from the dead to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Death Is a Doorway

No person can have real peace until he has come face to face with death.

If a man dies, shall he live again? Yes! This is the crowning thrust of the gospel of Jesus Christ: a man when he dies *will* live again. Perhaps this is most keenly appreciated when a loved one dies, when a parent has seen a child die. There is no time when the thought of the angels is as dear and as sweet to the heart as when one stands there and sees a loved one die. It is most helpful then to remember that Christ Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Oh, how we rejoice to remember those words when some dear one—perhaps a mother or a father—dies, and leaves this world. How wonderful to be able to say as we Christians so often do say, "My mother went home," or, "My father went home," because we are sure, and rightly so, in our hearts of the reality of the resurrection from the dead.

Death? That is one of the finalities in living. No matter how it is spoken of—whether in levity or soberly—death always comes to our minds as something final. It is an unalterable ending; it is irrevocable. But you and I are going to ask ourselves right now—is it really that way? Christians lose so much when we fail to follow through on this whole idea. We know death is real; but it is *not* final.

The gospel brings much help as we live day by day; the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ can be very comforting to the heart. It is wonderful to know Christ Jesus in this world and to walk with Him day by day. But for a Christian the crowning comfort comes when we die. It is when death comes that the victory bell should be rung, for it is then that we triumph over all enemies. I remember what a moving experience it was to attend the funeral service of a young man who had died suddenly just when he finished preparing for a professional career. All of the friends of that family were shocked and their hearts went out in sympathy to those bereaved parents. But the parents turned the experience into one grand triumphal victory. Do you know how? In that church sanctuary the service was concluded by singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Going right on through in glory with the colors flying—going home to God.

We shall die, yes. But we shall not stay dead. Oh, no! The natural man can see only from here to the grave; the future may be unknown and he may live through variables here in this world, but the end is sure—death. This implacable certitude of death is not true. As it

stands, death before us is fearful—it is menacing. For the natural man's mind death is the last act. He speaks of being after that "six feet under." Before we look at the gospel let us point out at once that the natural man is mistaken in his thinking. Even though the natural man cannot see beyond the grave, he is going beyond the grave. He may not be going to the resurrection of life, but he is going on. Man has always had an intuition that he is going on; everywhere in the world, among all nations and cultures, there is an undertone of expectation that when a man is through with this world he is not through. Poets have expressed the longing of men and the fear of men in various ways.

I do not doubt there are many persons who wish their existence would end at the grave; those who have unpaid bills, who have run up a score against themselves which they hope they will never have to pay off. That is the case of people who have sinned and sinned; they hope that when they are finished here on earth, life will be done with. But that is not the case. When a man dies life is over here, but for the man—no, the man is not finished. It is from the revelation in Scripture that Jesus Christ rose from the dead that we know the resurrection is real.

We do know that whatever possessions a man may have in this world he must leave. He cannot take them with him. Whatever joys, whatever pleasure he may have had—good or bad—they are finished. Whatever friendships there were here, whatever hopes he cherished, and whatever plans he made are now in the dust. That is true.

I remember a family, a neighbor of ours out in the country. Some fifteen years earlier one of their boys, nine years of age, died. On the night before he died someone had brought an orange to him. He was feeling too sick at the time to eat it and he said to his parents, "Just put it on that dish over there on the mantelpiece where I can see it and when I wake up I will have it." Fifteen years later I saw that dried, wrinkled, dusty orange still on the dish on that mantelpiece. That is the way it is with the natural man. Death robs us so far as this world is concerned.

Many people consider death a hole in the ground and they feel when they go down into the hole that is the end. For the Christian it is right at that point that the gospel raises a shout of triumph. We sing, "Up from the grave He arose in mighty triumph over His foes." Death is not a pit but a passageway. Death is not a hole in the ground, it is a tunnel. To be sure you go into the grave just as do all people who die, but you go through the grave into eternal life. To be sure we cannot avoid death, but it is equally true that death cannot hold us. The Christian can be free from the fear of death. Death *is* an enemy and the grave *is* dark; dying *does* interrupt and it *does* strip; it *does* break up and it *does* end—but it is not final. It cannot be avoided, but it need not be dreaded.

When a Christian looks ahead he sees death, but death is a doorway. Out of this world, yes; but through it and into the world to come. You may be sure when you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ that when you are through here, you are going there.

The Spiritual World Is a Real World

There is a world other than this one.

As we continue our study of the resurrection we find many things that seem strange to the human mind; although those of us in the church are inclined to feel that we understand it because we have heard about the resurrection, we have read the Scriptures, and we have sung the hymns. But we may not fully understand it—we may have heard all of these words and still not know their real meaning. When it comes to trying to understand what is really meant by the resurrection there is so much that seems strange to our natural minds. The truth of the resurrection will never be understood by what I would call the natural mind of

the natural man.

One of the passages that tells us about the resurrection is I Corinthians 15:35-54:

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. And as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Thus the apostle Paul writes about these things. Keep this passage in mind. Notice that here two worlds are mentioned: the natural world and the spiritual world. These terms, "natural" and "spiritual," refer to realities that are not just quantities of thought. It is not a case of saying that this man is talking about natural things and this man is talking about spiritual things just because there is a difference in ideas. Natural is centered in nature, that is true, and it means the created world, even this earth. Spiritual is centered in spirit and it refers to the world of God, that which we would normally call heaven. Now the natural things are known to everybody, but the spiritual things are known only to those who believe what is recorded in the Scriptures. In the natural world and in my own natural self I am conscious of this world through my senses as I hear, see, touch, taste, and smell. There are five senses and the things that I sense comprise the mind of the natural man. In my spiritual being I am conscious of the spiritual world—the world where God is—by faith. We need to be very careful about our understanding of faith.

We read in Hebrews 11:1, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" and I want to underscore something to you: *Things*—real things—not imagined ideas. Faith is the substance of real things hoped for, not seen as yet. Often people speak of having faith and what they really mean is that they *wish* very much or they *intend* to do something. This is "make believe," pretending that the thing you say is going to be true. You don't have any particular reason beyond the fact that you say it. That can be thrilling. Any number of people have thrilling experiences when they live in the world of

their own "make believe," but it is not really so and it is not Christian faith.

The spiritual world centers in God and God is real. God is spirit - we can't see Him - we can't touch or handle Him - but He is real. He is invisible. That is, we cannot get to Him with the senses to hear Him, taste Him, smell or touch Him, but He is real. We read in Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." So we say that God is real and heaven is real, as are our souls and spirits. Why is it necessary to say "by faith"? Because they are invisible and since they are invisible they can never be experienced physically; I would never know about them in my human mind unless I were told. Let me say again: this world - the natural world—constitutes my consciousness of everything that I carry in mind and memory based on what happens in the natural world.

The other world—the spiritual world—is also in my consciousness if I will take the promises to be true or that which is said about it to be true. We say that the natural world of this creation is the habitat of the natural man who becomes conscious of himself and sees himself as a person; the spiritual world is the home of the spiritual man who becomes conscious of Christ. It is natural to think of what pleases self but it is spiritual to think of what pleases Christ. Because of self-centeredness the natural man tends to move toward self; he does his thinking in terms of self-service: self-entertainment, self-indulgence, self-will, and self-power. Because of Christ-centeredness the spiritual man tends to seek approval from Christ by seeking the welfare of others; he becomes an outgoing person.

The natural man thinks in on self; the spiritual man thinks out on Christ; the natural man becomes conscious of hunger; the spiritual man becomes aware of loneliness. Because of hunger the natural man seeks food; he is never satisfied. You remember the Lord said to the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." That is true about everything in the natural world. Because of loneliness the spiritual man seeks fellowship with God; he shall never thirst again because the Lord promises him, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

It is possible to move out of this natural world in which we live through death into the spiritual world, and it is a common temptation on the part of man to try to keep both worlds; this is a very subtle thing to understand. We live *in* this world but we are not *of* this world. The believer is translated out of this world in death into the world to come and this is what gives the resurrection its great meaning.

The Spiritual World Contrasted with the Natural World

Why is it so hard to comprehend the spiritual world?

In the preceding study we considered the very important passage in I Corinthians 15 in which the apostle Paul referred to two different worlds—the natural and the spiritual. We are now going to consider one being in the flesh and another being in the spirit. In the Christian experience we come from the flesh into the spirit—out of the natural into the spiritual. It will be helpful to turn again to I Corinthians 15 and read verses 35-50.

Some may wonder if it is important to have this in mind; they may as well ask, "Is heaven important?" There is a tremendous difference between thinking of this world as if it were the real thing and heaven just an ideal notion, or whether we think of this world as temporary and heaven as permanent. We need to ask ourselves the question, "How important is heaven to me? How important is God and how important is eternal life?" If importance is attached to anyone of these, then it is very important to think of the resurrection. In this world we are flesh and blood; in that world we shall be in the spirit.

The natural world all around us is experienced by us through the senses. We see, hear, taste, smell, and touch it. The spiritual world is experienced by us through faith in reading the revealed Word of God. The Christian is involved both in the natural and the spiritual; he is involved in things that have to do with this world and with those that have to do with the world to come. The natural lives in the material, the spiritual lives in the spiritual. The natural, material world has limitations in time and space; the spiritual world has no limitations. We are interested in the fact that a man may move out of the first into the second; he may come out of the flesh which leads into death and then through death he may be raised in the spirit. The flesh has in it the seeds of death and comes to nothing—to ruin. In that emptiness God will raise the dead and lead him on into eternal life. Why is this so hard to grasp? I think one reason is because so few people accept it that way. Many people who talk about heaven do not believe in it. A man may talk poetically and imaginatively and be called a very spiritual man when he is only using language and referring to ideas that are intellectual and not basic. Many people just do not believe in invisible reality; they do not want to look at it. For many people the idea of God and everything pertaining to God is too cumbersome, too threatening. They feel they have enough trouble in this world that they can see without getting into that world which they cannot see. The fact that the entire spiritual world is not visible, not audible—it cannot be sensed—is too much for many men. They do not know the Bible and its meaning with regard to spiritual realities. The common fallacy is that whatever is physical is real and whatever is spiritual is imaginary. Even the miracles in the New Testament were held to be manipulations of the natural world by clever subtlety, whereas faith is more like radar. If you are acquainted with the phenomenon of radar you know what I mean when I point out that this instrument can detect the location of mountains hundreds of miles away because a radio signal is beamed against them and it bounces back. Faith is like that. It is not a simple thing to hold, and along the line of the connections that are made in the natural world there can flow the spiritual power of the world to come. What looks like a normal human situation may be the work of God. For instance, a man may be talking to another man, using words that convey spiritual truths to the heart of the other and God may be blessing it so that there are actually three present.

I sometimes think of the carnal as copper wire. This wire may be used to tie up a package, or to conduct electricity. It may be the means of bringing electric power to machinery, or the means of communication by electricity in a telephone conversation. The electricity cannot be seen, but it has power. To be sure, the flesh can be beautiful and refined, but flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Long ago the poet said, "The paths of glory lead but to the grave." So far as this world is concerned, no matter how good flesh and blood are, they cannot inherit the kingdom of God. All natural forms will die but God can and will raise the dead into new life. The life of God in Christ Jesus which is available for the person who believes will be different from the old life. No one in the old life will ever be able to walk acceptably in the ways of God, but in the new life this can be done. The spirit is not an improvement of the flesh—the spirit is a substitution for the flesh. The spirit is something else again. It is not an extension of my human nature—it is an exchanged form of my human nature—that is the way in which we are to understand the meaning of the new life. In the resurrection we pass from the old, natural, earthly man to the new, spiritual, heavenly man. This translation is what we refer to when we speak of the resurrection from the dead, living again after death but living in a different way.

From Earth to Heaven

Did you know that in the Christian gospel heaven is just as real as earth?

"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." That is the way the Bible starts. We read in

Genesis 2, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished" and God was seen as the creator of the heavens and the earth. As we try to understand the significance of the resurrection of the dead we are especially interested in these two ideas: heaven and earth. It is very important to have these two worlds in mind: the earth on which we live and heaven where God is. We are in the flesh but the spirit is available. Man is to subdue the earth and have dominion over it and God, although He is spirit, is nevertheless Lord of heaven and earth.

Man's body is of the earth. You will remember that the Lord took the dust of the ground and fashioned the body of man. But there is more to a man than his body. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; yet in the plan of God, man is first made of the earth; surrounded by the things of this world he gets his satisfaction in the things of this world. Heaven and earth are two different places, yet they are interrelated in such a way that God is Lord of each and of both.

Jacob was given a profound insight into the relationship between earth and heaven in his vision at Bethel (Gen. 28). It is commonly called Jacob's ladder; actually, Jacob saw a stairway between earth and heaven. Not only did he see this connecting link, but on this ladder angels of God were ascending and descending, implying that what happened down here mattered up there; what was willed in the presence of God is worked out down here. When Jacob saw the relationship between the things on earth and the things in heaven he made a vow as to how he would live on earth, trusting in the God of heaven. His vow was based on the reality of God in heaven. Later, you will remember, Jacob wrestled with the messenger of God who came at the ford Jabbok and there received from the messenger the blessing of God.

This teaches us that a man on earth, with his body made from the dust of the earth, can have dealings with God in heaven. Earth and heaven are connected, as Jacob saw it in the ladder. We read in John 1 how the Lord Jesus was talking to Nathanael and identified him as having been under the fig tree. Nathanael wanted to know how He knew him and the Lord Jesus said, "Thou art affected by the fact that I saw thee under the fig tree. How much more will you be impressed when you will see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." He used the figure of Jacob's ladder for and offered Himself as the connecting link between earth and heaven.

Daniel brought to mind that the God of heaven had sovereign power over the earth to set up and to take down any man that he saw fit. He could lift up a king or he could cast down a king, and Daniel foresaw that the God of heaven would one day send out the Messiah who would set up a new kingdom under God. God would send His Son to redeem and to save His people. In the record that we have of the Lord Jesus Christ while He was here on earth there are glimpses of heaven shining through. There was the remarkable birth of this child from a virgin. And bear in mind Gabriel and the angels on the night of His birth. During His public ministry here He performed miracles and again when we think in terms of His praying experience He lifted His eyes unto the heavens and said, "Father, I know that thou hearest me always." Then there was the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

There was that shining glory on the Mount of Transfiguration and in all of the actions of Christ Jesus the powers of heaven and the glory of heaven were revealed again and again. The New Testament records how He came to earth, took on Him a prepared natural body, performed miracles, died, and was raised from the grave. He ascended from earth to heaven and will return from heaven to earth. Salvation involves the believer being translated from earth to heaven. Paul writes,

"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second

man is the Lord from Heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (I Cor. 15:46-50).

Here we read these two words again and again—"earthy" and 'heavenly.'" Earthy is anything that comes out of the earth; this is not necessarily bad although it may become bad, or dirty. Flowers come out of the earth; grain comes out of the earth. When we say the things of the earth are earthy all of the works of man are included. Everything that man has done by invention and by his ingenuity of engineering is earthy; everything that technology has produced is earthy. Certain pleasures are also earthy, among them satisfying hunger. There are values that are earthy, even esthetic values—everything in science, art, and in religion, in the sense that it comes from man with one common trait.

Notice this: all of these earthy things are temporary. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, it is the Word of God that endureth forever." Heavenly joys with spiritual benefits are free. The poet writes, "'Tis only heaven that is given away. 'Tis only God that may be had for the asking." Like the manna that came down as bread from heaven so there are certain benefits coming to the believer from heaven; the believer may be in the world but he is never of the world. Much of this is implied on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John were on that mount with Jesus of Nazareth and they saw Jesus transformed before them, the natural body was unveiled and He was seen as He was, the Son of God.

The Bible speaks of our being translated out of earth into heaven; there is a transition and that is the event of death. Between earth and heaven is the experience of death when the earthy will die, but the power of God can and will raise from the dead. I am reminded of something I saw at the oceanside: boats from the ocean were being brought to the edge of the pier and then, with a crane, they were lifted up and put on trailers behind cars. There was the boat, which had been sailing in the water, now being put on a trailer and hauled over the highway. It is the same boat but it is in a different place—out of the water and onto the trailer by the crane lifting device.

So it is with a man when he is raised from the dead. A man of the earth can be raised into heaven.

The World of the Christian

A Christian belongs to the other—the spiritual—world.

In our study of the resurrection we have been thinking of the fact that the Bible frequently contrasts earth and heaven—this world and that world; the things of nature and the things of the spirit, speaking of the difference between the two. In Philippians 3:20-21 the apostle Paul makes a statement that is very significant to us. In the King James Version it reads, "For our conversation is in heaven" but that word "conversation" does not mean spoken dialog between two people; it means, rather, a manner of life. A good translation for that is to say, "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body [or the body of our humiliation], that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

The apostle is referring to the prospect that we have as Christians. We live in this world, but our citizenship is in heaven; we are expecting to go there and to be changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. The Christian really belongs in heaven, where he is a citizen. That is one reason why in the Bible the Christian is spoken of as being a pilgrim

and a sojourner. He will keep the laws while here and he will try to be a good neighbor. It is like an American living in France—he may be living there but he is not a Frenchman. So the Christian lives in this world but he really belongs in heaven.

Sometimes he is ridiculed because of this; people may laugh and sneer at him and I am sure that at times we have felt keenly the contempt of those who speak of us as being of the other world. A Christian should never deny that he does belong to that other world, nor should he be ashamed of it. Certainly I am of the other world and so far as my relationship with this earth is concerned, it is a temporary situation. One of these days I will be leaving.

Think about the Lord Jesus Christ. He came down from heaven into this world and He went back into heaven from this world and even while He was here among men He said that He was in heaven while He was actually experiencing things of this world. When we say "this world" we refer to the whole complex of action and behavior that is carried out by men who seek to satisfy the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. So far as this world is concerned it is the whole structure, everything that is done together by men who are seeking to accomplish their purposes. The Bible says the fashion of this world passes away and what is implied is that it will not last. Here we are, meeting and dying in this world; Jesus of Nazareth showed how to win the victory over this world. He said, "In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." How did He accomplish this? By yielding to it; I am not speaking of a poetic paradox—He was put to death, then He arose from the dead and in this way He was able to effect salvation for all who believed in Him.

The reality of the two worlds is to be seen in some of the parables. In Matthew 13 we have the parable of the wheat and the tares; you remember how these two were allowed to grow together until the harvest, when there would be a separation. Both grew together in the same field but they were not alike; at the harvest there was a separation and different destinies. The Christian, living in this world among men, has tasted the powers of the world to come; it is possible that while here on earth he can be related to heaven; this world is marked as temporary and unstable. Death is the end of all in this world. It is the harvest, and living here is a fearful business for men who are thinking of this world only—dreading the end because, no matter how beautiful it may be, the rose will wither.

This is eloquently expressed in one of the best-known passages in the Old Testament:

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it (Eccles 12:1-7).

That is death. It is frequently a subject of poets in literature. They speak, as did Swinburn, of the pale loveliness of death, which is all this world has to look forward to. With only this prospect the heart of man will despair, but as Christians we know there is another world. Jesus Christ lived, died, and arose here; He lives there. When a man dies he shall live again. The grave is a tunnel and for the Christian it opens out into light; death is a doorway we pass through. In this world there are men and in that other world there is God; in this world

the works of men, in the other world the works of God. When the believer is brought into newness of life he lives in the context of the works of God. One day we shall be there in the presence of God and we now live in the light of that knowledge.

The Literal, Bodily Resurrection of Christ

Did you know that the resurrection of the body of Jesus of Nazareth is considered to be the best authenticated fact in ancient history?

"But God raised him from the dead." This is the way the apostle Paul spoke about it in Acts 13:30. He was speaking in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia; he addressed people whom he called "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God." In speaking to them Paul reviewed the history of Israel and the facts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth up to and including His crucifixion and burial. When he had reached that point he stated the profound words above.

We read further in that chapter, verses 31-35,

And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption, but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

Paul was emphasizing the fact that the body of Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. When He was standing in the city of Athens on Mars Hill confronting the intellectually minded people of that city, after sketching the world view that they themselves accepted, Paul openly said to them, "Because he [speaking of God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). That is the way the apostle stated it, openly saying that God raised up the body of Jesus Christ. And for this witness Paul was commonly recognized.

When he was in court Festus spoke to the governor of the fact that this prisoner spoke of one, Jesus, which was dead whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And in standing before the council of the Jews, Paul plainly says, "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." Later in his defense before Agrippa when he was on trial for his life he said to the king, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" There was apparently no doubt at all that the apostle Paul believed in the physical, literal resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And there seems to be no doubt that is what the early church believed. This is what the apostles believed.

You will remember that in the Apostles' Creed we confess, "On the third day He rose again from the dead." What do the Gospel records say? We read in Matthew 28:1-2, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." You say, "What? An angel of the Lord?" And I say, "Yes, an angel of the Lord, just as you read it." He descended from heaven and rolled back that stone and sat upon it. You say that is astonishing. It was. Amazing. You say, "I just don't see how

it could be." Maybe not. There is much we don't know. But there it is.

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 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. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

And I want to tell you these women went to that sepulcher, they looked into that tomb, they saw the angel, but they didn't see a body.

They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy and ran to bring His disciples word:

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch [that is, some of the soldiers] came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. [That is, at the time the Book of Matthew was written.]

And I want to tell you, it hasn't stopped being said to *this* day.

All kinds of people are saying, in all sorts of manners, that this wasn't true, that this didn't happen. But there is no question about what Matthew said, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted." So don't be surprised if there are people who doubt today. There were people who doubted in the time of the disciples.

Now let us turn to Mark 16,

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

You find it hard to believe; so did they. "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them." It was the same everywhere. It was hard to believe and

we are just going to be face to face with the fact that these early disciples did finally believe it. The early church was convinced of the actual resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we think of all these things, we can bring them together in our hearts and minds and appreciate the fact that the body of Jesus Christ, the body of Jesus of Nazareth, was taken down from that cross, wrapped in linen, laid in a new tomb, a large stone was rolled in front of it with a reinforced guard of soldiers to prevent any tampering with the tomb; that stone was rolled away, that grave was empty, an angel proclaimed, "He is risen." He actually appeared to Mary, He appeared on the road to Emmaus to those two disciples, afterward He appeared in the upper room and challenged the people, "Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And when they yet could not believe for joy, He asked them, "Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them" (Luke 24:41-43).

Now, there is no question at all, there cannot be any doubt in anybody's mind that the New Testament Scriptures plainly say that the body of Jesus Christ was literally raised from the dead.

Was Christ's Resurrection Real?

When we hear the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ read or talked about, do we think the grave was really empty?

It is an astonishing fact about the mind of man that he can say he believes something when he really does not. Many people hear the resurrection story of Jesus of Nazareth at Easter services. They rejoice when they sing, "Up from the grave He arose in mighty triumph over His foes" and appreciate the lilies that decorate their churches, reminding them that this beautiful flower grows out of that dark brown bulb. The resurrection is symbolized before us and we rejoice in that. Many of us will want to share in the comfort of the resurrection and if we have lost loved ones we will be glad to talk to one another about the reality of seeing them again when we get to heaven.

Many will do that who do not believe that the body of Jesus Christ was literally raised from the dead; they will say, "Oh, that is impossible" or, "That could not be true." And I tell you, "It is true." There are any number of people who want to be accepted as Christians, yet would hesitate to say that they believe that the body of Jesus Christ—the flesh and bones of Jesus Christ—was brought out of the grave alive. It is true that some people say and sing these things who do not really believe them. Thus their spiritual experience is weak and unsatisfactory. Some feel that if they had been living then and could have seen it they could believe. Don't be too sure about that. Thousands of people who lived in that day did not believe. If you cannot believe today with all of the evidence in history and testimony in witness of the living Lord Jesus Christ, you would not have believed if you had lived at the time of His resurrection.

Some say it is not important. Far more than important, it is absolutely necessary. In writing to the Christians in Rome, Paul says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

I want to raise the question, "Was the body of Christ Jesus literally raised out of the grave?" Perhaps my own experience along this line will be helpful to some. You may know that I was not born a Christian. I was very much interested in understanding things in the scientific field and I was naturally skeptical. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork," but I had trouble believing it. The evidence was all about me; but there was, as it were, a veil over my heart. Very slowly, after I became a

school teacher, I came to accept and to believe in my heart the reality of God. But then I ran up against this barrier: to believe in the resurrection of the body of Jesus of Nazareth. I could accept it as an idea, as poetry, and I could sing about it; but to feel it was real and that one could have walked into that tomb at the time the body of Jesus Christ was there and actually have seen His body wrapped in linen cloth, then later find the body gone, having been literally raised from the dead, that was not easy.

One day, on my father's farm during school vacation time, I was working in the wheat field. I remember setting up sheaves and what we call "stocking" the wheat in the field. These questions were in my heart and mind and I was impressed by what Paul had said that if I did not believe in my heart that Jesus was raised from the dead I could not be saved. Because my mind had been so conditioned to believe in natural law I found it difficult to believe in miracles; I thought things had to happen according to regular procedure; but at the same time I could not let it go. Apparently there were people who *did* believe it; the Bible said we should believe it, and the Christian gospel demanded that we believe it. I was desperate; I needed the blessing of God, so I kept thinking about it.

On that particular day in the wheat field I decided to go over it slowly and I asked myself, "Why can't you believe it?" I could not have done it, of course not; but could God have done it? True, I had never seen it, but then there are many things I have not seen. People who believe it said nothing like it had ever happened before nor would it happen again. This was of God, not of man; this was the Son of God, not an ordinary human being. But again I asked myself, "Could God actually raise the dead?" Then I thought, "How did Adam get here?" I remembered the Bible tells us God created man in His own image.

That afternoon in the wheat field I was stunned when the realization came to me that the creation of Adam was a greater wonder than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What we have in the creation of Adam is that God made him out of nothing, whereas now, in the resurrection, He raised a man back again into the life he had had before. Take, for instance, myself. Does anybody claim I have been forever? No. Then there was a time I was not? Yes. However, the Bible puts it plainly that the body of Jesus Christ was literally raised from the dead, and we have that hope.

The Resurrection Body

Do you have any ideas as to the kind of body Jesus Christ had after the resurrection?

In our study about the resurrection we are talking about the resurrection of the body; we are not talking about the continuing of an idea or about the passing on from generation to generation of certain plans and purposes. We are thinking about the body of Jesus Christ—the one that was nailed to the cross at Calvary and was taken down dead, wrapped in linen cloths, and put into a grave where it lay until the third day. We are talking about that body coming to life again—being raised from the dead. This is what we mean by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Turning to I Corinthians 15:35 we read:

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

You will notice that in this discussion Paul is using the illustration of putting a kernel of wheat into the ground and letting it disintegrate there and in a sense die. Out of it comes the wheat stalk and the wheat plant that does not look like the kernel of wheat that was put into the ground. It is a different thing. So with reference to the resurrection of the dead. This is

what he is talking about. In verse 39 we read,

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: ["Celestial" means heavenly and "terrestrial" means earthly. The one is of the heaven and the other is of the earth.] but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. [They are both bodies, but they are different.] There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.

At the time the body died it was a corruptible body; at the time the body is raised from the dead it is an incorruptible body. "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power."

Let us illustrate: this man, John Brown, who was put into the grave, that body was weak enough to die. That body will be raised from the dead in a body that will never die. This is worth stopping to think about. There is a body the elements of which are nature's, and there is a body the elements of which are spirit.

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Here Paul is going back and forth in two kinds of living—natural living and spiritual living; earthly living and heavenly living; an earthly body, a heavenly body. And so he goes on to say,

As we have borne the image of the earthy [we look like our human parents], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [and look like the heavenly Father], Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

It is true that the first time we were born it was in a corruptible body; our bodies were made of the dust of the ground in flesh and blood. What Paul is pointing out is that there is another world and there is a different form of living that we call the kingdom of God. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither does corruption. My corruptible body inherits incorruption.

Behold, I show you a mystery [something that is hidden, something that people would not know about, but I can tell it to you]. We shall not all sleep [that is true. There will be one generation that will not die; they will be here when Jesus Christ comes back. There will be one such generation.] but we shall all be changed [those that went into the grave and those who didn't go into the grave]. For this corruptible [my human body] must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible [this body of mine which can decay] shall have put on incorruption [shall have become a form that cannot be destroyed] and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

This is the classic pronouncement about the resurrection, especially the resurrection of the body. I want to examine the actual record of what happened here to the Lord Jesus Christ, with reference to verse 35, "With what body do they come?" In what I have to say to you now I want you to keep something in mind. Remember, I believe in the resurrection of the dead. I believe in the literal resurrection of the body of Jesus of Nazareth. I think that in that

resurrection body He challenged any kind of test and showed by many infallible proofs that He was really alive. I believe that Jesus is alive now; I believe heaven is real. I believe the ascension from this world to that world actually occurred, that it is real. I want to look at these Scriptures, to look into the promises of God, and I am going to ask again, "When I am raised from the dead, what sort of body will I have?" We can say one thing at the outset—lay this down as a floor to walk on—my body will be like His. It does not yet appear what we shall be like. When He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is and so I will say that my body will be like His.

The Body Changed

Do Christians expect to have their bodies again after their resurrection? Do Christians really expect to have their bodies again? Paul discusses part of this very matter,

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (I Cor. 15:12-26).

Does a Christian expect to have a body after the resurrection? Yes. Does he expect to have his own body? Yes. Now that body will be composed of different elements; it will be made of different materials, and it will have other properties. The body that the Christian has after

his resurrection will never perish. It will never suffer any diseases. That body belongs in heaven where there is no pain, no sickness, no death. Paul referred to this in another place, "This mortal shall have put on immortality." Our earthly body is actually referred to in the Bible as the body of our humiliation, and it is to become another body which will be glorious. We find this in Philippians 3:21 where Paul writes about the Lord Jesus Christ" who shall change our vile body." That is the way it is translated in the King James Version. A good translation of that Greek phrase would be, "Who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body [the body of his glory] according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

As Christians we have the prospect of having our bodies changed in their nature, in their essence; that new body will never decay. We can find comfort in this aspect of the resurrection, especially those who may possibly think of a beloved mother who has gone on to be with the Lord. She may, in this world, have become weak, weary, and worn, and as she grew older she may have become feeble and she may have been sick until she died. But never again. When she comes in the resurrection she will be living in a body that will never die. That little blind girl that you know: you can tell her the gospel story of the Lord Jesus Christ and promise her something. If she puts her faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and receives in Him the new body that God has prepared for her, she will not be blind. She

may be blind in this world—she will not be blind over there. And that little crippled boy who has had only those twisted legs during this life will not need crutches when he gets over there. There will be no one in any kind of distress there.

So what can we expect in this resurrection body? To be really raised from the dead? Yes. Forever. With a body that can obey anything that I want it to do? Exactly. With a body that can appear and disappear at will, not subject to the common ordinary laws of this world? Just so. In a body that will be subject to my direct will, whatever I want to do, it can do without any difficulty? Yes. With a body that can serve Almighty God and the Lord Jesus Christ again and again without tiring and without being weary? Yes. Nothing that hurts or destroys will enter His holy mountain. Can the Christian person expect to be in a body that he need have no fear will ever turn away from God into disobedience? Just exactly that. He will be kept by the very power of God.

We shall have fellowship with our loved ones in the world to come. The question might be raised in someone's mind. "Will we look the same as we do now?" I cannot tell you. It does not yet appear what we shall be like; but we do know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him. We do know that the disciples, when their eyes were opened, recognized Him, which proves that He looked enough like Himself so that they could tell it was He. So we will look the same? Well, perhaps not entirely so. Those who are troubled with some disfigurement or some blemish on face or body, there will be nothing like that. You have scars on you just now? There will be no scars there because you will be as He is. Will we know each other? Oh, yes, we will know each other. This is to be our expectation; this is what the apostle Paul said. We will be caught up together with those who have gone before and be together with them in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Will we, in that life to come, in that being with the Lord, know what goes on down here on earth? I don't know. The Bible doesn't say. It doesn't give us any idea about that at all. Can I project what it will be like? Can I figure out now what it will be like there? No. I can't even imagine it. It does not yet appear what we shall be like. We know when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Should this frighten me? Should it worry me? It is going to be new and different and I will not even feel like I am at home because it will be so different. It will be something like this: suppose I have been living in a certain house, built, perhaps, of wood—if that house could be transformed into a marble mansion and instead of wood be made of precious stone, should that worry me? Should that trouble me?

Perhaps there may be some who would have just some little feeling that "I don't know that I will be comfortable, or feel at home. Shouldn't I be somewhat afraid of what is going to happen since it is all so new and different?" Years ago there was in my congregation a woman who was troubled with a heart ailment of such a nature the doctors had told her she might pass away at any time. I used to go to see her in my pastoral calls, and when I visited her I was struck by the fact she never seemed to be worried. I marveled at it and one time when I had come to know her well I told her of my interest. "Isn't it true that your condition is such that you might go at any time?" She smiled and said, "Yes, that is true." Then she added, "By the way, how sure are you that you will stay? You know, it is not so different between us." I asked, "Doesn't it trouble you?" "No, why should it trouble me? You mean, because I have never been to heaven before? When I came here as a baby I had never been here before. God arranged for loving hands to care for me, He will be there when I go up there and I feel quite sure He will take care of me there just as He arranged to take care of me here." She wasn't the least bit concerned. When she thought about dying and being raised from the dead, she was going home. Her Savior was there.

Will Everyone Be Raised?

Did you know that Christians believe that all men will be raised from the dead?

When the apostle Paul preached in various places he did not come as representing any large company of people. There were no great cathedrals or big sanctuaries for him to stand in. This was a man who preached on the street corners and who talked in men's homes; who stood by the wayside and discussed matters with people. On occasion he did have a number of people to talk to when he was in court, accused of being a public nuisance, having to explain what he was doing.

On one such occasion while he was in court explaining himself to Felix the governor he made this statement,

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets; and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men (Acts 24:14-16).

This is the statement that the apostle had to make of himself. I want to draw your attention especially to this affirmation on his part. "Have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:14).

When our Lord Jesus was teaching He is quoted as saying,

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).

I am sure there will be many people to whom this will come as a shock. Everyone is to be raised from the dead. Those who have done good unto the resurrection of life and those who have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. This is the way Jesus Christ taught it and this belongs to the Christian's view of man and the world.

We are just now thinking about the resurrection of the body—far more than just the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ, but that to begin with. Because the body of Jesus Christ was raised from the dead we understand that man will be raised from the dead. You see, the Christian holds a view like this: man was made by God; man actually had nothing to say about this world. He has nothing to say about the life that was given to him. God could make him as He wanted and man had nothing to say about the natural processes. We have much knowledge today that has been discovered by scientists, and I know that all of the natural processes are under careful scrutiny by intelligent and trained men. There is one thing that everyone of them will say: they will not be able to change the processes of nature. The sun rises in the morning and shines during the day and sets in the evening, regardless. It does not matter one bit whether that fits into man's program or suits anybody's economic situation.

To be sure, man has some things he can do. He can make choices. He can turn his back on the sun or he can face the sun; he can get out into the sun or he can walk in the shade. And he can manipulate by hand things that are in this world. He can plant beans if he wants to plant beans, or he can plant potatoes if he wants to plant potatoes. But he can't make the beans and potatoes grow. He can adjust himself by moving, but he won't be able to change the mountains in their place or the sea where it lies. As to his own responsibility, the fact that man was made responsible to God and that he is going to have to give an account for the things that he has done—this is God's doing.

Why does the prospect of the resurrection bother some people? There are those who feel guilty, who know they have done wrong and they want to hide out—some even want to hide from God and they avoid worship services, reading the Bible, and praying. They will not really appreciate meeting Him. Yes, there are people who would be glad if there were no resurrection. But their feelings will not change matters at all. Have you ever been so busy during the day that you wished the sun would not set at night? But it did. And have you ever been in bed in the morning—tired, worn, and weary—and wished the sun would never rise? But it did. Your feelings didn't change anything.

To ignore the prospect of the resurrection is actually to remove a strong control over your own conduct. Have you ever noticed how differently you feel about shoes when you stop wearing them? Do you remember how carefully you took care of them—even polished them for protection and resoled them on occasion. Then there came a day when you discarded those shoes. They quickly became dusty, dirty, and were thrown into the trash. Or perhaps you can think about paper that you used when you were trying to make a sketch. After you had finished the sketch, what did you do with the paper? Into the trash can. Have you ever had the experience of a suit of clothing that you kept perhaps for years, cleaning and mending it, taking care of it. But then there came a day when you were through with it and it was discarded. How did you treat it then? Or perhaps there was a certain company you expected to work for. As long as you thought you were going to get a job there, how did you feel toward them? Then the day came when you were no longer interested in the job, then how did you feel toward them?

This is the way it is with life: if you have no expectation for the future, if you don't expect to be raised from the dead, and if you are not expecting to meet God, your attitude is careless toward God. To give up hope makes for deterioration. It will cause your whole attitude to go to ruin. Sometimes you may ask, "Well, does anybody know about this resurrection? Maybe those folks who doubt are right." I want to put before you one witness—one person—the testimony of Jesus Christ. That is what I have to say. After all, that is who I am; I am called a minister of Jesus Christ and I want to tell you something about Him. He expected to be raised on the third day. Do you think He was? He promised to raise up any who would put their trust in Him. Do you think He was wrong? He demonstrated His power when He raised up Lazarus from the dead. Do you believe it? And then I would ask you, "When is the prospect of the resurrection a comfort?" Not everybody is afraid of it. There are people who actually rejoice in it—for the lonely and unwanted and out of place the thought that "in my Father's house are many mansions" is a joyous one. "If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." The weary, those who are worn—what a wonderful thing to think that you can be raised from the dead in the newness of life and have rest in God. The suffering—what a wonderful thing it will be to be in existence and to actually live where there is no sorrow and no pain. The victim—people who have been wronged—what a wonderful thing it will be to be brought up from the dead; to be brought back into the presence of God and have things set straight. The people who have been mistreated—what a wonderful thing it will be to have relief and to deal with Almighty God. The distressed, the people who are burdened and troubled—how marvelous it will be to be in the blessedness of His presence. Or the bereaved, the people who have lost loved ones. Have you ever been around where there are Christians who have lost loved ones? They are looking forward to being with them again. Perhaps you would say, "But the Christian will have to face judgment." Oh, no. The fear of judgment is all gone for him. His case was settled out of court.

Will all Christians have the same experience in the resurrection? I would say, "In a certain sense, Yes and in a certain sense, No." Each one who believes in the Lord will be full to overflowing, no matter whether he is big or little; so in that sense, Yes. People will differ from each other and in that sense, No, but they will be blessed. Every Christian—every single Christian—will be blessed in Him.

How Powerful Is God?

Have you ever felt that it was hard to believe in the resurrection?

Why do you find it so? Right away you can say, "Well, you couldn't do it." I know I couldn't do it. Is that why we find it hard to believe? With the historical record of what happened to Jesus of Nazareth before us, with such things as the testimony of the empty grave (nobody questions what the record says), the witness of the disciples who saw Him, do you think they all lied? The Scriptures present the story as truth; do you think the Bible is a great big fake?

We have been thinking of the resurrection of the body. Once in awhile we even hear some preacher who will say it does not matter whether His body was raised or not; they think it is inconsequential. That is not the case with Paul. When he was writing about this in I Corinthians 15:14 he said, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain." This word *vain* means "empty, useless." This will give you an idea of what Paul preached about. Again in verse 17 he says, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain. You are yet in your sins." This brings out the truth that to be delivered from sin is not just a prize for believing the Word of God—it is a result. When you are delivered from your sins you share in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and if Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead, then you won't share in His resurrection and you are yet in your sins. As a matter of fact, it was this very doctrine that was the reason Paul was persecuted. In Acts 23:6 we have the report of Paul standing before the council of Jews, where he pointed out that it was because "of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question."

Nobody criticized Paul for what he had to say for the poor; nobody criticized Paul because he was interested in going out to win people to Christ. What they criticized Paul for was that he said the dead would be raised. "Of the hope and the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question." In chapter 24, when Paul stood in the presence of Felix the governor in defense of himself, he made the comment that he had hope toward God which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. When Paul moved around among people and they listened to him talk, one thing Paul always emphasized was that this life is not everything. We are going to be brought into the presence of God—each of us—those who have done right and those who have done wrong. Every man will be raised from the dead.

Again in his defense before Felix, Paul reiterated that they had nothing against him. They could not hold a particular charge against him and make it stick "except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day." That was the one thing they held against him. It is worthy of note that in his preaching Paul did not only preach the historical fact of the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ but he pressed the meaning of that resurrection into daily living. Being held a prisoner because of this very doctrine, he was called before Felix time after time to speak. Felix called Paul before him, hoping to hear some important thing and also hoping that he would receive money from Paul as a bribe to let him go. When Paul came before Felix we read, "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." When he did, Felix trembled. Mind you, Paul was in jail basically because he preached the resurrection of the dead. When Festus became governor he sent Paul to King Agrippa and this is what he wrote about Paul,

Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

(Acts 25:18-19).

That was the thing they really had against Paul. We need to take a long look at this fact. Why was Paul in jail? Why was he in bonds? What objection did they take to his preaching? Why was he opposed? Because he preached the resurrection of the dead.

We read that standing before Agrippa he said,

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers.... For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Then Paul asked this question,

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?

This is the way Paul talked to the king and this is the question I want to raise with you today. Why should anyone think it strange that God should raise the dead? Let it be kept clearly in mind that Paul was noted for this one basic trait in his preaching: he preached the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. In what context shall we understand this doctrine?

First of all, I want to say this doctrine is being preached in this world, right where you and I live. What do Christians say about this world? They say, "God created the heavens and the earth"; God made the world. He designed it. He could have made it anything he wanted to. We may not yet know all about this world. Scientists are discovering many things, but God knows and one thing you and I can have in mind now is that the whole world is in His hands.

Now I want to raise another question: If He wants to raise the dead, who is going to prevent it? God made the world like He wanted it and if He wanted to make it with resurrection in it, who is going to stop Him? This message, this doctrine, is preached about man. What do Christians say about man? God created man in His own image. The Scriptures say something like this: What is man that thou art mindful of him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels. God made man; He judges man and He redeems man. In His own time God sent His Son to be born of a woman, to live in this world as a man, to be incarnate and to die, then to be raised from the dead. This is what Christians say. If God wants to call man before Him after the man has died, can anyone stop Him?

What do Christians say about Jesus Christ? They say that He was the Son of God; that God took upon Him the likeness of man. Someone will say, "I could never believe that" and I will tell you, "Oh, yes, you could." Maybe the truth is you *won't* believe it. I will agree with that, but don't ever say you *can't* believe it. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Consider the Scriptures. What do Christians say about the Bible? That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; they call the Bible the Word of God. The Bible clearly teaches the resurrection. You will say some people don't believe the Bible. I know. There were people who did not believe in Jesus of Nazareth, and He was perfect. There have always been unbelievers—they are not new. The woods are full of them.

What about the Christian? What shall we say about that because it is being said by Christians? Who are these people? They are people in whom God is working by His grace. I can remember long years ago when I was an unbeliever and a skeptic, meeting an old farmer who believed in the living Lord Jesus. I asked him one time, "How do you know Jesus is alive?" With a smile he looked at me and said, "I have dealings with Him." Now, there are skeptics, I know. Are they exceptional? Oh, no. There were scoffers who mocked Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross and you can consider the way they indict all believers.

Think about the skeptics who continue doubting in the face of all the Christians. Do you want to join them? And the agnostics —are they unusual? Oh, no. How much do they know? By their own claim, they know nothing. Let them speak for themselves. Or the atheists. Are they new? No, there will be a few of those. The Bible says "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Make no mistake about it. The Bible, the Christian, the whole world is to hear the message. God raised Him from the dead. Yes. God can raise the dead.

What Does the Bible Say About the Resurrection?

Do you ever have any doubt that there will be a resurrection of the dead?

In John 5:19-30 we read,

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

That is the record of what the Lord Jesus Christ had to say. Let us turn to John 6:39-40:

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Can you doubt this? Everything depends on Jesus Christ and I ask you—How do you feel about Him? Jesus Christ said, "I will raise him up at the last day," and you and I know that last day has not yet come. Do you think there will be a last day? Until now there has not been. He has never raised anyone yet unto eternal life. Do you think He will? The resurrection could take place only if God would do it. Once more I ask you, do you think He will do it? Do you think He could? You will remember that Gabriel told Mary nothing is impossible with God.

Some years ago a fellow minister told of something that had happened in his family. He had a boy twelve years of age who, at a certain stage, came one day to his father's study very sober, very quiet, and said, "Dad, I have trouble." The father said, "What is it, son?" "Well, I am troubled about Jonah. How could a whale swallow Jonah?" The father replied, "You know, son, I have had trouble with that story, too, but my trouble was not with Jonah. My trouble was with the whale. Where did that whale come from?" He said his boy sat

there for a while, quietly, then with a quick smile he looked up and said, "Thanks, dad, I was just wondering." Do you recognize what the boy saw? If God could make the whale, do you think it would be a great trick for the whale to swallow Jonah? If God wanted to raise the dead, couldn't He? Then we could ask, will God *want* to raise the dead? Who would know the mind of God; can you think of anyone more likely to know the mind of God than Jesus Christ? Do you think it is reasonable for me to assume that I will know what God will do? Can you see that if I do not know that God will do it, then I do not know that God will not do it? He created man without asking anybody; He made this world without asking anybody's advice and He rules this world as He sees fit.

Now as to what God intends to do tomorrow and what He *will* do tomorrow, who would ever know? Ah, but there is One who does know and He has already told us. Jesus of Nazareth could say that the Father loved the Son and showed Him all things that He did. The Father shows the Son what He will do; the Father commits the doing of what He has in mind into the hands of His Son. The will of the Father is the resurrection of the dead and the Son will raise the dead. If I believe in Jesus Christ I will believe in the resurrection. Christians have always been comforted by the promises of God. We read these wonderful words of comfort,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

Can there be any doubt what that means? I know there are people who do not believe. I am sorry. The question is, "Do I believe? How do I know?" I will tell you: God will raise the dead; the Bible says so. If you read the writings of the apostle Paul there will be no question as to what *he* thought. It was Paul who said, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." And again, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not even as others that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

The apostle taught the resurrection of the dead; the early church believed it. Throughout history Christians have witnessed to it. Preachers and evangelists believe in it; missionaries and godly men believe in it. So, let me humbly confess to you, I verily believe God will raise the dead, and I can say, "Thanks be to God. Praise His holy name. Hallelujah. God will raise the dead."

Walking in Newness of Life

Have you ever wished that you could be different?

We read in the third chapter of the First Epistle of John as follows,

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

"We shall be like him." What a wonderful prospect! What a glorious hope! I am sure some will doubt that this can be. They feel that they certainly could not do it. So far as that is concerned, they are right. Change yourself? Oh, no. The Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is quoted as saying, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" The answer is, of course, obvious. Nobody. I cannot change myself— but *God*

can. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, we shall all be changed; but not here in this life.

It is true so far as this world is concerned that the leopard cannot change his spots, but we have other prospects in this world. We have another way and Paul describes this in the resurrection:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption [that means the body that was put in the grave will decay but the body that is raised from the grave will never decay]: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory [the body that died and was put in the grave did shameful things many times; the body raised from the grave will never do shameful things]: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power [the body that fell into the grave was oftentimes weak, the body that is raised from the dead will never be weak, will have power]: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. (I Cor. 15:42-46)

It needs to be emphasized here that something else can and will be. We read in verse 47,

The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

What all of this actually amounts to is that I, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, will be different; not only when my body is raised from the dead but from the very time that I give myself over to God and am accepted of Him. Once I stood before God in myself as I was; now I stand before God in Christ as He is. Once I stood before God as a sinning person; now I stand before God as a forgiven person. Once I stood before God as a person interested in serving self; now I humbly but definitely stand before God as one who would serve Christ. Once I stood before God in my own weakness; now I stand before God in His strength. I often think of a man I once knew. Friends would ask, "Why is it, Uncle Tom, that you never seem to be uncertain or worry about the future?" And he would answer, "It's true that I personally often tremble, but I am on a Rock and while I may tremble on that Rock, the Rock never trembles under me."

There was a time when I looked on men to get; I wanted to get what they had if I could. Now, by the grace of God, I can truthfully say that I look on men to give. I wish I could give to them the things I know about Christ. There was a time in my natural self when I wanted to have things and inasmuch as I am natural to this day, my natural self wants to have things; but now, in the Spirit, truly I want to please Him. There was a time when I belonged to my own family. You know that saying "Me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four and no more." Now I find that I belong to the whole world.

All men, like myself, are made of God. There was a time in my own spirit when I was impatient; and now, by the grace of God, I can wait and wait. There was a time when it was very easy for me to be irritable; and now, by the grace of God, in Him I can be calm, quiet, and at rest. There was a time when I looked to men to see what they would do; and now I look to God to see what *He* would do. There was a time when I used to feel, "It is now or never"; and now I can truthfully say I can think it is forever. Once I could not keep myself from wanting present pleasures; and again I can say that in the Lord above all else I want to please Him forever.

Now what could possibly bring about such change? So far as the old man is in me and so far as I am still human, inasmuch as there is anything natural about me, everything about

the first is there but, by the grace of God, knowing the Lord Jesus Christ and accepting Him and the gospel, the other is true. We read in Titus 2:13-14,

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself. There was a time when I could be obsessed with my own wishes; now I can feel that above all else my desire is that He should be pleased. This is more than a change of mind and intention; it is not only a matter of being reconciled to God but of being born again. We read again in I Corinthians 15:49, "And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." You see, when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we will be different, because in yielding ourselves to Him we are crucified with Christ and we will be raised with Him in the newness of life. We remember how He said about Himself, "I do always all things that please my Father."

This is the way it can be with us. The Holy Spirit activates the will of Christ in the heart of the believer and those of us who are Christians can know that our hearts turn to Him as flowers turn to the sun. Our eyes turn to Him as the bride turns to look at the bridegroom. Our hands reach out to Him as a little child reaches up his hand to his mother's hand. Our spirits long for Him "as the heart panteth after the waterbrook—so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1).

How can I further this change within myself? By yielding myself into the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will enable me to live and to walk in newness of life.

Will Wrongs Be Righted in Heaven?

Do you expect that whatever is wrong will one day be made right?

There are those, perhaps, who feel unhappy to think that the man who has done wrong will get away with it; their natural reaction to injustice would be a desire to see him get his deserts. The man in traffic who races past and risks damage to others, or the businessman who cheated—our natural reaction to all of these could be a desire to retaliate, to get even. I wonder if some do not actually look forward to life in the next world with such an idea as this in mind.

Our Lord Jesus Christ told a parable that teaches what happens in the afterlife; this is the one sketch of living after this world that we have,

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. [Notice that he was conscious: he had feeling, he suffered, and he had the powers of recognition.] And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. [This man, after this world was over, was conscious and was hurting and asking for mercy.] But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. [In that state of consciousness after this world there will be memory of what happened here when we are there.] And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they

pass to us, that would come from thence. [This is a truth we need to soberly consider. In this world we have a chance to get on either side; after this world, no chance.] Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. [Notice his continuing consciousness. Now he is aware of his five brothers; he does not want them to come where he is.] Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. [What that says today is that they have the Bible, let them go by the Bible. Let them hear the gospel.] And he said, Nay, father Abraham but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. [As much as if to say it has not been put realistically enough. Send someone back from the dead and then they really will turn.] And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:19-31).

In reading this passage one is struck by the fact that the rich man did not want his brothers to suffer his fate. There may be a good deal of discussion about heaven and hell; there may be a number of people who say they don't believe in hell and some who have only a vague feeling about heaven; but I will tell you one thing: nobody living wants hell for his folks and everyone who has ever thought in terms of heaven would like it for his loved ones. As you think about that parable notice another thing: no retaliation; no getting even. It was not the case of Lazarus having much to eat and the rich man going hungry. Not that. Here is a profound truth: after the resurrection, in the world to come, the believer does not care about the things he missed in this world. And the unbeliever will be personally destroyed. In other words, there is no carry-over into the life after this of what is going on here. You and I might think, humanly speaking, that it would be a good thing to have it that way, but truthfully it will not be. What does all of this mean? It means that for the believer it will not matter. After the resurrection from the dead it will not matter what he suffered here. Seeing the Lord will be so wonderful. Things he did without down here—he couldn't care less. Possessions that he lacked in this world will not matter. He will be free from covetousness.

What about the unbeliever? It will not count. The story is told that in the court of King Frederick the Great the commander in chief of the army was seated next to the chaplain at a banquet. Feeling that he should open the conversation, he said, "Pastor, tell me something about heaven." And the chaplain replied "Well, we don't know a great deal about it, but there is one thing for sure—you won't be a general there."

Let us be wise and live now in resurrection terms. What about being without money? Does it really matter? What about injustice? Reckon yourself to be indeed dead unto sin. Ignore those insults — you belong to God and you need not fear man. Don't worry about the prosperity of the wicked—leave them to God. And so I would say to you: we don't have to get ahead; we don't have to win the race. We have the Lord. Thank God. So let us today live in the reality of the resurrection in the very presence of God.

Heaven on Earth

Do you realize that the Christian gospel calls men to heaven now?

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples to pray, saying "Our Father, which art in heaven." Thinking of the future (I do not refer to the future here in this world) is one thing that makes life in this world bearable. Christians have always cherished the prospect of another world—being in heaven. We sing it in our songs: "There is a better land far, far away." We sing the Glory Song,

When all my labors and trials are o'er
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore
Will through the ages be glory for me.

What a joyous sound when we sing, "When we all get to heaven what a day of rejoicing that will be." It will be centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. We sing, "Face to face shall I behold Him."

Believers are sure there is "a land that is fairer than day and by faith we can see it afar." That became clear to Jacob in the Old Testament story when, in the vision that night, he saw a stairway linking earth and heaven and he saw heaven and earth in the same picture. What a source of strength this was to Moses when, for forty days on Mt. Sinai, he was dealing with the invisible God in heaven. Joshua and Caleb counted on this God when they told the people in their day, "Our God shall fight for us." Gideon found out that this Almighty God would be on his side when he put out the fleece to learn whether God was actually going to be with him and give him the victory. Samuel knew even as a child and we hear the boy saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." David knew when word had come to him of what God intended to do for him. David said, "There is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee." Elijah knew that in his great contest with Ahab and we hear him praying, "Show that thou art God and that I am thy servant." Daniel knew it and he prayed to God several times a day, calling him "the God of heaven." Jesus of Nazareth knew it. You will remember how many times while here in this world "he lifted up his eyes and spoke."

On one occasion it is recorded that He said, "I know that thou hearest me always." It is only when we see this world in the context of heaven that this world can be acceptable at all. Living in this world is for many people an experience of grief and trouble. We have sorrow and suffering and wrongs will be done. There are people who suffer injustice and others who are cheated. "In the world you shall have tribulation." When our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples He could say, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Right now, while we are in this world, we are in the very presence of God.

Some years ago while in my office early one morning the door opened and my daughter-in-law stepped into the office. I could tell from the look on her face that she had something very sober on her mind. The thought came that this was not the time of day she would ordinarily come to my office. She said, "Poppa, I don't know how to say it to you." I said, "Just tell me." Then, very simply, she said, "Al died this morning." Al was our son-in-law. This is what came into my heart and what I said to her, "It is not far from here to there, is it?" How many, many times I have thought of that. One short step.

For you, how far is it from you to the presence of God? Do you remember how Jacob found that out? When he saw that stairway, the ladder between earth and heaven, he said, "Woe is me, I am undone. I have seen the glory of God." Then he made this comment, "This is the very house of God and I knew it not." Can you realize this in your home? Right where you are is the very house of God. Remember how it was with Moses when he turned aside to look at the strange sight of the bush that was burning and was not consumed and the Voice that said, "Take off thy shoes. The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." What makes a place holy? The presence of God.

Think again of Jesus of Nazareth, lifting His eyes up to heaven and speaking, "I know that thou hearest me always." I ask my heart, "Do I know that?" I want to emphasize that heaven is possible. It is all round about us. Not that this world is good; not that the ground I am standing on is holy in itself, but the presence of God makes it holy. Think of Paul on the road to Damascus and the light suddenly shining there before him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Later Paul could write "The angel of the Lord stood by me this night." Will He do that with you? God is no respecter of persons. It is to the glory of God that He will deal with anybody, and He will deal with you. Hear again the word of the Lord Jesus, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto

myself that where I am there you may be also." This is the word and the promise of Almighty God in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Yes, heaven is possible now.