

Once again the chronology is incorrect. I have crossed out the day indications in this Chapter but I have left the incidents recorded because they are biblical. Dr. VBK

LESSON TWENTY-EIGHT

CHAPTER LV.

THE LAST SUPPER.

ON the ~~Tuesday~~ evening in Passion week Jesus had spoken of the Passover as the season of His death. If the customs enjoined by the Law had been capable of rigid and exact fulfilment, the Paschal lamb for the use of Himself and His disciples would have been set apart on the previous ~~Sunday~~ evening; but although, since the days of the exile, the Passover had been observed, it is probable that the changed circumstances of the nation had introduced many natural and perfectly justifiable changes in the old regulations. It would have been a simple impossibility for the myriads of pilgrims to provide themselves beforehand with a Paschal lamb.

It was on the morning of ~~Thursday~~—Green Thursday, as it used to be called during the Middle Ages—that some conversation took place between Jesus and His disciples about the Paschal feast. They asked Him where He wished the preparation for it to be made. As He had now withdrawn from all public teaching, and was spending this ~~Thursday~~, as He had spent the previous day, in complete seclusion, they probably expected that He would eat the Passover at Bethany, which for such purposes had been decided by rabbinical authority to be within the limits of Jerusalem. But His plans were otherwise. He, the true Paschal Lamb, was to be sacrificed once and for ever in the Holy City, where it is probable that in that very Passover, and on the very same day, some 260,000 of those lambs of which He was the antitype were destined to be slain.

Accordingly, He sent Peter and John to Jerusalem, and appointing for them a sign both mysterious and secret, told them that on entering the gate they would meet a servant carrying a pitcher of water from one of the fountains for evening use; following him they would reach a house, to the owner of which they were to intimate the intention of the Master to eat the Passover there with His disciples; and this householder—conjectured by some to have been Joseph of Arimathæa, by others John Mark—would at once place at their disposal a furnished upper room, ready provided with the requisite table and couches. They found all as Jesus had said, and there “made ready the Passover.” There are ample reasons for believing that this was not the ordinary Jewish Passover, but a meal eaten by our Lord and His Apostles on the previous evening, ~~Thursday~~, Nisan 13, to which a quasi-Paschal character was given, but which was intended to supersede the Jewish festival by one of far deeper and diviner significance.

It was towards the evening, probably when the gathering dusk would prevent all needless observation, that Jesus and His disciples walked from Bethany, by that old familiar road over the Mount of Olives, which His sacred feet were never again destined to traverse until after death. How far they attracted attention, or how it was that He whose person was known to so many—and who, as the great central figure of such great counter agitations, had, four days before, been accompanied with shouts of triumph, as He would be, on the following day, with yells of insult—could now enter Jerusalem unnoticed with His followers, we cannot tell. We catch no glimpse of the little company till we find them assembled in that “large upper room”—perhaps the very room where three days afterwards the

sorrow-stricken Apostles first saw their risen Saviour—perhaps the very room where, amid the sound of a rushing mighty wind, each meek brow was first mitred with Pentecostal flame.

When they arrived, the meal was ready, the table spread, the *triclinia* laid with cushions for the guests. Imagination loves to reproduce all the probable details of that deeply moving and eternally sacred scene; and if we compare the notices of ancient Jewish custom, with the immemorial fashions still existing in the changeless East, we can feel but little doubt as to the general nature of the arrangements. They were totally unlike those with which the genius of Leonardo da Vinci, and other great painters, has made us so familiar. The room probably had white walls, and was bare of all except the most necessary furniture and adornment. The couches or cushions, each large enough to hold three persons, were placed around three sides of one or more low tables of gaily painted wood, each scarcely higher than stools. The seat of honour was the central one of the central *triclinium*, or mat. This was, of course, occupied by the Lord. Each guest reclined at full length, leaning on his left elbow, that his right hand might be free. At the right hand of Jesus reclined the beloved disciple, whose head, therefore could, at any moment, be placed upon the breast of his friend and Lord.

It may be that the very act of taking their seats at the table had, once more, stirred up in the minds of the Apostles those disputes about precedence which, on previous occasions, our Lord had so tenderly and beautifully rebuked. The mere question of a place at table might seem a matter too infinitesimal and unimportant to ruffle the feelings of good and self-denying men at an hour so supreme and solemn; but that love for “the chief seats” at feasts and elsewhere, which Jesus had denounced in the Pharisees, is not only innate in the human heart, but is even so powerful that it has at times caused the most terrific tragedies. But at this moment when the soul of Jesus was full of such sublime purpose—when He was breathing the pure unmingled air of Eternity, and the Eternal was to Him, in spite of His mortal investiture, not only the Present but the Seen—a strife of this kind must have been more than ever painful. It showed how little, as yet, even these His chosen followers had entered into the meaning of His life. It showed that the evil spirits of pride and selfishness were not yet exorcised from their struggling souls. It showed that, even now, they had wholly failed to understand His many and earnest warnings as to the nature of His kingdom, and the certainty of His fate. That

some great crisis was at hand—that their Master was to suffer and be slain—they *must* have partially realised: but they seem to have regarded this as a mere temporary obscuration, to be followed by an immediate divulgence of His splendour, and the setting up on earth of His Messianic throne.

In pained silence Jesus had heard their murmured jealousies, while they were arranging their places at the feast. Not by mere verbal reproof, but by act more profoundly significant and touching, He determined to teach to them, and to all who love Him, a nobler lesson.

Every Eastern room, if it belongs to any but the very poorest, has the central part of the floor covered with mats, and as a person enters, he lays aside his sandals at the door of the room, mainly in order not to defile the clean white mats with the dust and dirt of the road or streets, and also (at any rate among Mohammedans) because the mat is hallowed by being knelt upon in prayer. Before they reclined at the table, the disciples had doubtless conformed to this cleanly and reasonable custom; but another customary and pleasant habit, which we know that Jesus appreciated, had been neglected. Their feet must have been covered with dust from their walk along the hot and much frequented road from Bethany to Jerusalem, and under such circumstances they would have been refreshed for the festival by washing their feet after putting off their sandals. But to wash the feet was the work of slaves; and since no one had offered to perform the kindly office, Jesus Himself, in His eternal humility and self-denial, rose from His place at the meal to do the menial service which none of His disciples had offered to do for Him. Well may the amazement of the beloved disciple show itself in his narrative, as he dwells on every particular of that solemn scene. “Though He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God and was going to God, He arose from the supper and laid aside His garments, and taking a towel, girded Himself.” It is probable that in the utterness of self-abnegation, He entirely stripped His upper limbs, laying aside both the *simchah* and the *ketôneth*, as though He had been the meanest slave, and wrapping the towel round His waist. Then pouring water into the large copper bason with which an Oriental house is always provided, He began without a word to wash His disciples' feet, and wipe them dry with the towel which served Him as a girdle. Awe and shame kept them silent until He came to Peter, whose irrepressible emotions found vent in the surprised, half-indignant question,

“Lord, dost *Thou* seek to wash *my* feet?” Thou, the Son of God, the King of Israel who hast the words of eternal life—Thou, whose feet Oriental kings should anoint with their costliest spikenard, and penitents bathe in precious tears—dost thou wash Peter’s feet? It was the old dread and self-depreciation which, more than three years before, had prompted the cry of the rude fisherman of Galilee, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;” it was the old self-will which, a year before, had expressed itself in the self-confident dissuasion of the elated Man of Rock—“That be far from Thee, Lord; this shall not happen unto Thee.” Gently recognising what was good in His impetuous follower’s ejaculation, Jesus calmly tells him that as yet he is too immature to understand the meaning of His actions, though the day should come when their significance should dawn upon him. But Peter, obstinate and rash—as though he felt, even more than his Lord, the greatness of Him that ministered, and the meanness of him to whom the service would be done—persisted in His opposition: “Never, never, till the end of time,” he impetuously exclaims; “shalt Thou wash my feet?” But then Jesus revealed to him the dangerous self-assertion which lurked in this false humility. “If I wash thee not, thou hast no share with me.” Alike, thy self-conceit and thy self-disgust must be laid aside if thou wouldst be mine. My follower must accept my will, even when he least can comprehend it, even when it seems to violate his own conceptions of what I am. That calm word changed the whole current of thought and feeling in the warm-hearted passionate disciple. “No share with Thee? oh, forbid it, Heaven! Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!” But no: once more he must accept what Christ wills, not in his own way, but in Christ’s way. This total washing was not needed. The baptism of his initiation was over; in that laver of regeneration he had been already dipped. Nothing more was needed than the daily cleansing from minor and freshly-contracted stains. The feet soiled with the clinging dust of daily sins, these must be washed in daily renovation; but the heart and being of the man, these were already washed, were cleansed, were sanctified. “Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed (*λελουμένος*) hath no need save to wash (*νίψασθαι*) his feet, but is clean every whit. And ye are clean;” and then He was forced to add with a deep sigh, “but not all.” The last words were an allusion to His consciousness of one traitorous presence; for *He* knew, what as yet *they* knew not, that the hands of the Lord of Life had just washed the traitor’s feet. Oh,

strange unfathomable depth of human infatuation and ingratitude ; that traitor, with all the black and accursed treachery in his false heart, had seen, had known, had suffered it ; had felt the touch of those kind and gentle hands, had been refreshed by the cleansing water, had seen that sacred head bent over his feet, stained as they yet were with the hurried secret walk which had taken him into the throng of sanctimonious murderers over the shoulder of Olivet. But for him there had been no purification in that lustral water ; neither was the devil within him exorcised by that gentle voice, nor the leprosy of his heart healed by that miracle-producing touch.

The other Apostles did not at the moment notice that grievous exception—“but not all.” It may be that their consciences gave to all, even to the most faithful, too sad a cause to echo the words, with something of misgiving, to his own soul. Then Jesus, after having washed their feet, resumed His garments, and once more reclined at the meal. As he leaned there on His left elbow, John lay at His right, with His head quite close to Jesus’ breast. Next to John, and at the top of the next mat or cushion, would probably be his brother James ; and—as we infer from the few details of the meal—at the left of Jesus lay the Man of Kerioth, who may either have thrust himself into that position, or who, as the holder of the common purse, occupied a place of some prominence among the little band. It seems probable that Peter’s place was at the top of the next mat, and at the left of Judas. And as the meal began, Jesus taught them what His act had meant. Rightly, and with proper respect, they called him “Master” and “Lord,” for so he was ; yet, though the Lord is greater than the slave, the Sender greater than His Apostle, He their Lord and Master had washed their feet. It was a kind and gracious task, and such ought to be the nature of all their dealings with each other. He had done it to teach them humility, to teach them self-denial, to teach them love : blessed they if they learnt the lesson ! blessed if they learnt that the struggles for precedence, the assertions of claims, the standings upon dignity, the fondness for the mere exercise of authority, marked the tyrannies and immaturities of heathendom, and that the greatest Christian is ever the humblest. He should be chief among them who, for the sake of others, gladly laid on himself the lowliest burdens, and sought for himself the humblest services. Again and again He warned them that they were not to look for earthly reward or earthly prosperity ; the throne, and the table, and the kingdom, and the many mansions were not of earth.

And then again the trouble of His spirit broke forth. He was speaking of those whom He had chosen; He was not speaking of them all. Among the blessed company sat one who even then was drawing on his own head a curse. It had been so with David, whose nearest friend had become his bitterest foe; it was foreordained that it should be so likewise with David's Son. Soon should they know with what full foreknowledge He had gone to all that awaited Him; soon should they be able to judge that, just as the man who receives in Christ's name His humblest servant receiveth Him, so the rejection of Him is the rejection of his Father, and that this rejection of the Living God was the crime which at this moment was being committed, and committed in their very midst.

There, next but one to Him, hearing all these words unmoved, full of spite and hatred, utterly hardening his heart, and leaning the whole weight of his demoniac possession against that door of mercy which even now and even here His Saviour would have opened to him, sat Judas, the false smile of hypocrisy on his face, but rage, and shame, and greed, and anguish, and treachery in his heart. The near presence of that black iniquity, the failure of even his pathetic lowliness to move or touch the man's hideous purpose, troubled the human heart of Jesus to its inmost depths—wrung from Him His agony of yet plainer prediction, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that *one of you* shall betray me!" That night *all*, even the best beloved, were to forsake Him, but it was not *that*; that night even the boldest-hearted was to deny Him with oaths, but it was not *that*; nay, but one of them was to *betray* Him. Their hearts misgave them as they listened. Already a deep unspeakable sadness had fallen over the sacred meal. Like the sombre and threatening crimson that intermingles with the colours of sunset, a dark omen seemed to be overshadowing them—a shapeless presentiment of evil—an unspoken sense of dread. If all their hopes were to be thus blighted—if at this very Passover, He for whom they had given up all, and who had been to them all in all, was indeed to be betrayed by one of themselves to an unpitied and ignominious end—if *this* were possible, *anything* seemed possible. Their hearts were troubled. All their want of nobility, all their failure in love, all the depth of their selfishness, all the weakness of their faith—

"Every evil thought they ever thought,
And every evil word they ever said,
And every evil thing they ever did."

all crowded upon their memories, and made their consciences afraid. *None* of them seemed safe from *anything*, and each read his own self-distrust in his brother-disciple's eye. And hence, at that moment of supreme sadness and almost despair, it was with lips that faltered and cheeks that paled, that each asked the humble question, “ Lord, is it I ? ” Better always that question than “ Is it *he* ? ”—better the penitent watchfulness of a self-condemning humility than the haughty Pharisaism of censorious pride. The very horror that breathed through their question, the very trustfulness which prompted it, involved their acquittal. Jesus only remained silent, in order that even then, if it were possible, there might be time for Judas to repent. But Peter was unable to restrain his sorrow and his impatience. Eager to know and to prevent the treachery—unseen by Jesus, whose back was turned to him as He reclined at the meal—he made a signal to John to ask “ who it was. ” The head of John was close to Jesus, and laying it with affectionate trustfulness on his Master's breast, he said, in a whisper, “ Lord, who is it ? ” The reply, given in a tone equally low, was heard by St. John alone, and confirmed the suspicion with which it is evident that the repellent nature of Judas had already inspired him. At Eastern meals all the guests eat with their fingers out of a common dish, and it is common for one at times to dip into the dish a piece of the thin flexible cake of bread which is placed by each, and taking up with it a portion of the meat or rice in the dish, to hand it to another guest. So ordinary an incident of any daily meal would attract no notice whatever. Jesus handed to the traitor Apostle a “ sop ” of this kind, and this, as He told St. John, was the sign which should indicate to him, and possibly through him to St. Peter, which was the guilty member of the little band. And then He added aloud, in words which can have but one significance, in words the most awful and crushing that ever passed His lips, “ The Son of Man goeth indeed, as it is written of Him : but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed ! It were good for that man if he had not been born ? ” “ Words,” it has been well said, “ of immeasurable ruin, words of immeasurable woe ”—and the more terrible because uttered by the lips of immeasurable Love : words capable, if any were capable, of revealing to the lost soul of the traitor all the black gulf of horror that was yawning before his feet. He must have known something of what had passed ; he may well have overheard some fragment of the conversation, or at least have had a dim consciousness that in some way it referred to him. He may even have been

aware that when his hand met the hand of Jesus over the dish there was some meaning in the action. When the others were questioning among themselves "which was the traitor?" he had remained silent in the defiant hardness of contempt or the sullen gloom of guilt; but now—stung, it may be, by some sense of the shuddering horror with which the mere possibility of his guilt was regarded—he nerved himself for the shameful and shameless question. After all the rest had sunk into silence, there grated upon the Saviour's ear that hoarse untimely whisper, in all the bitterness of its defiant mockery—not asking, as the rest had asked, in loving reverence, "*Lord*, is it I?" but with the cold formal title, "*Rabbi*, is it I?" Then that low unreproachful answer, "Thou hast said," sealed his guilt. The rest did not hear it; it was probably caught by Peter and John alone; and Judas ate the sop which Jesus had given him, and after the sop Satan entered into him. As all the winds, on some night of storm, riot and howl through the rent walls of some desecrated shrine, so through the ruined life of Judas envy and avarice, and hatred and ingratitude, were rushing all at once. In that bewildering chaos of a soul spotted with mortal guilt, the Satanic had triumphed over the human; in that dark heart earth and hell were thenceforth at one; in that lost soul sin had conceived and brought forth death. "What thou art doing, do more quickly," said Jesus to him aloud. He knew what the words implied, he knew that they meant, "Thy fell purpose is matured, carry it out with no more of these futile hypocrisies and meaningless delays." Judas rose from the feast. The innocent-hearted Apostles thought that Jesus had bidden him go out and make purchases for to-morrow's Passover, or give something out of the common store which should enable the poor to buy their Paschal lamb. And so from the lighted room, from the holy banquet, from the blessed company, from the presence of his Lord, he went immediately out, and—as the beloved disciple adds, with a shudder of dread significance letting the curtain of darkness fall for ever on that appalling figure—"and it was night."

We cannot tell with any certainty whether this took place before or after the institution of the Lord's Supper—whether Judas partook or not of those hallowed symbols. Nor can we tell whether at all, or, if at all, to what extent, our Lord conformed the minor details of His last supper to the half-joyous, half-mournful customs of the Paschal feast; nor, again, can we tell how far the customs of the Passover in

that day resembled those detailed to us in the Rabbinic writings. Nothing could have been simpler than the ancient method of their commemorating their deliverance from Egypt and from the destroying angel. The central custom of the feast was the hasty eating of the Paschal lamb, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, in a standing attitude, with loins girt and shoes upon the feet, as they had eaten hastily on the night of their deliverance. In this way the Passover is still yearly eaten by the Samaritans at the summit of Gerizim, and there to this day they will hand to the stranger the little olive-shaped morsel of unleavened bread, enclosing a green fragment of wild endive or some other bitter herb, which may perhaps resemble, except that it is not dipped in the dish, the very "sop" which Judas received at the hands of Christ. But even if the Last Supper was a Passover, we are told that the Jews had long ceased to eat it standing, or to observe the rule which forbade any guest to leave the house till morning. They made, in fact, many radical distinctions between the Egyptian (Pesach Mizraim) and the permanent Passover (Pesach doroth) which was subsequently observed. The latter meal began by filling each guest a cup of wine, over which the head of the family pronounced a benediction. After this the hands were washed in a bason of water, and a table was brought in, on which were placed the bitter herbs, the unleavened bread, the *charoseth* (a dish made of dates, raisins, and vinegar), the Paschal lamb, and the flesh of the *chagigah*. The father dipped a piece of herb in the *charoseth*, ate it, with a benediction, and distributed a similar morsel to all. A second cup of wine was then poured out; the youngest present inquired the meaning of the Paschal night; the father replied with a full account of the observance; the first part of the Hallel (Ps. cvii.—cxiv.) was then sung, a blessing repeated, a third cup of wine was drunk, grace was said, a fourth cup poured out, the rest of the Hallel (Ps. cxv.—cxviii.) sung, and the ceremony ended by the blessing of the song. Some, no doubt, of the facts mentioned at the Last Supper may be brought into comparison with parts of this ceremony. It appears, for instance, that the supper began with a benediction, and the passing of a cup of wine, which Jesus bade them divide among themselves, saying that he would not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God should come. The other cup—passed round after supper—has been identified by some with the third cup, the *Côs ha-berâchah* or "cup of blessing" of the Jewish ceremonial (1 Cor. x. 16); and the hymn which was sung before the

departure of the little company to Gethsemane has, with much probability, been supposed to be the second part of the great Hallel.

The relation of these incidents of the meal to the various Paschal observances which we have detailed is, however, doubtful. What is not doubtful, and what has the deepest interest for all Christians, is the establishment at this last supper ^{*} ~~of the Sacrament of the Eucharist~~. Of this we have no fewer than four accounts—the brief description of St. Paul agreeing in almost verbal exactness with those of the Synoptists. In each account we clearly recognise the main facts which St. Paul expressly tells us that “he had received of the Lord”—viz., “that the Lord Jesus, on the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. xi. 23—25). Never since that memorable evening has the Church ceased to observe the commandment of her Lord; ever since that day, from age to age, has this blessed and holy ~~sacrament~~ been a memorial of the death of Christ, and a strengthening and refreshing of the soul by the body and blood, as the body is refreshed and strengthened by the bread and wine.

*** The word here should be “ordinance” and not “Sacrament”. Sacrament infers a saving quality to the act and there is no salvatory effect to the Lord’s Supper. It is, according to the words of Jesus himself, a “remembrance” that is to be observed by the participants. From the next few sentences it is obvious that the author believes that it is a memorial, still, his use of the word “Sacrament” smacks of the Catholic and Protestant heresy that the observance of the Lord’s Supper confers some Salvatory effect upon the observers. And this, we know, is an unbiblical belief concerning the ordinance. Dr. VBK**

CHAPTER LVI

THE LAST DISCOURSE

No sooner had Judas left the room, than, as though they had been relieved of some ghastly incubus, the spirits of the little company revived. The presence of that haunted soul lay with a weight of horror on the heart of his master, and no sooner had he departed than the sadness of the feast seems to have been sensibly relieved. The solemn exultation which dilated the soul of their Lord—that joy like the sense of a boundless sunlight behind the earth-born mists—communicated itself to the spirits of His followers. The dull clouds caught the sunset colouring. In sweet and tender communion, per-

haps two hours glided away at that quiet banquet. Now it was that, conscious of the impending separation, and fixed unalterably in His sublime resolve, He opened His heart to the little band of those who loved Him, and spoke among them those farewell discourses preserved for us by St. John alone, so "rarely mixed of sadness and joys, and studded with mysteries as with emeralds." "Now," He said, as though with a sigh of relief, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." The hour of that glorification—the glorification which was to be won through the path of humility and agony—was at hand. The time which remained for Him to be with them was short, as He had said to the Jews, so now He said to them, that whither he was going they could not come. And in telling them this, for the first and last time, He calls them "little children." In that company were Peter and John, men whose words and deeds should thenceforth influence the whole world of man until the end—men who should become the patron saints of nations—in whose honour cathedrals should be built, and from whom cities should be named; but their greatness was but a dim faint reflection from His risen glory, and a gleam caught from that spirit which He would send. Apart from Him they were nothing, and less than nothing—ignorant Galilæan fishermen, unknown and unheard of beyond their native village—having no intellect and no knowledge save that He had thus regarded them as His "little children." And though they could not follow Him whither He went, yet He did not say to them, as He had said to the Jews (John vii. 34; viii. 21), that they should seek Him and not find Him. Nay, more, He gave them a new commandment, by which, walking in His steps, and being known by all men as His disciples, they should find Him soon. That new commandment was that they should love one another. In one sense, indeed, it was not new. Even in the law of Moses (Lev. xix. 18), not only had there been room for the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," but that precept had even been regarded by wise Jewish teachers as cardinal and inclusive—as "the royal law according to the Scripture," as "the message from the beginning" (James ii. 8; 1 John iii. 11). And yet, as St. John points out in his Epistle, though in one sense old, it was, in another, wholly new—new in the new prominence given to it—new in the new motives by which it was enforced—new because of the new example by which it was recommended—new from the new influence which it was henceforth destined to exercise. It was Love, as the test and

condition of discipleship, Love as greater than even Faith and Hope, Love as the fulfilling of the Law.

At this point St. Peter interposed a question. Before Jesus entered on a new topic, he wished for an explanation of something which he had not understood. Why was this farewell aspect about the Lord's discourse? "Lord, whither goest thou?"

"Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

Peter now understood that *death* was meant, but why could he not also die? was he not as ready as Thomas to say (John xi. 16), "Let us also go that we may die with Him?" "Lord, *why* cannot I follow thee now! I will lay down my life for thy sake."

Why! Our Lord *might* have answered, Because the heart is deceitful above all things; because thy want of deep humility deceives thee, because it is hidden, even from thyself, how much there still is of cowardice and self-seeking in thy motives. But He would not deal thus with the noble-hearted but weak and impetuous Apostle, whose love was perfectly sincere, though it did not stand the test. He spares him all reproach; only very gently He repeats the question, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice!" Already it was night; ere the dawn of that fatal morning shuddered in the eastern sky—before the cock crow, uttered in the deep darkness, prophesied that the dawn was near—Jesus would have begun to lay down His life for Peter and for all who sin; but already by that time Peter, unmindful even of this warning, should have thrice repudiated his Lord and Saviour, thrice have rejected as a calumny and an insult, the mere imputation that he even knew Him. All that Jesus could do to save him from the agony of this moral humiliation—by admonition, by tenderness, by prayer to His Heavenly Father—He had done. He had prayed for him that his faith, and that of the others, might not finally fail. Satan indeed had obtained permission to sift them all as wheat, and in spite of his self-confidence, in spite of his protested devotion, in spite of his imaginary sincerity, he should be but as the chaff. It is remarkable that in the parallel passage of St. Luke occurs the only instance recorded in the Gospel of our Lord having addressed Simon by that name of Peter which he had Himself bestowed. It is as though He meant to remind the Man of Rock that his strength lay, not in himself, but in that good confession which he once had uttered. And yet Christ held out to him a gracious hope. He should

repent and return to the Lord whom he should deny, and, when that day should come, Jesus bade him show that truest and most acceptable proof of penitence—the strengthening of others. And if his fall gave only too terrible a significance to his Saviour’s warnings, yet his repentance nobly fulfilled those consolatory prophecies. It is most interesting to find that the very word which Jesus had used to him recurs in his Epistle in a connection which shows how deeply it had sunk into his soul.

But Jesus wished His Apostles to feel that the time was come when all was to be very different from the old spring-tide of their happy mission days in Galilee. Then He had sent them forth without purse or scrip or sandals, and yet they had lacked nothing. But the purse and the scrip were needful now—even the sword might become a fatal necessity—and therefore “he that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one.” The very tone of the expression showed that it was not to be taken in strict literalness. It was our Lord’s custom—because His words, which were spoken for all time, were intended to be fixed as goads and as nails in a sure place—to clothe His moral teachings in the form of vivid metaphor and searching paradox. It was His object now to warn them of a changed condition, in which they must expect hatred, neglect, opposition, and in which even self-defence might become a paramount duty; but, as though to warn them clearly that He did *not* mean any immediate effort—as though beforehand to discourage any blow struck in defence of that life which He willingly resigned—He added that the end was near, and that in accordance with olden prophecy He should be numbered with the transgressors. But, as usual, the Apostles carelessly and ignorantly mistook His words, seeing in them no spiritual lesson, but only the barest and baldest literal meaning. “Lord, behold here are two swords,” was their almost childish comment on His words. Two swords!—as though that were enough to defend from physical violence His sacred life! as though that were an adequate provision for Him, who, at a word, might have commanded more than twelve legions of angels! as though such feeble might, wielded by such feeble hands, could save Him from the banded hate of a nation of His enemies! “It is enough,” He sadly said. It was not needful to pursue the subject; the subsequent lesson in Gethsemane would unteach them their weak misapprehensions of His words. He dropped the subject, and waiving aside their proffered swords, proceeded to that tenderer task of consolation, about which He had so many things to say.

He bade them not be troubled; they believed, and their faith should find its fruition. He was but leaving them to prepare for them a home in the many mansions of His Father's house. They knew whither He was going, and they knew the way.

“Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?” is the perplexed answer of the melancholy Thomas.

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” answered Jesus; “no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.”

Again came one of those naïve interruptions—so faithfully and vividly recorded by the Evangelist—which yet reveal such a depth of incapacity to understand, so profound a spiritual ignorance after so long a course of divine training. And we may well be thankful that the simplicity and ignorance of these Apostles is thus frankly and humbly recorded; for nothing can more powerfully tend to prove the utter change which must have passed over their spirits, before men so timid, so carnal, so Judaic, so unenlightened, could be transformed into the Apostles whose worth we know, and who—inspired by the facts which they had seen, and by the Holy Spirit who gave them wisdom and utterance—became, before their short lives were ended by violence, the mightiest teachers of the world.

“Lord, show us the Father,” said Philip of Bethsaida, “and it sufficeth us!”

Show us the Father! what then did Philip expect? Some earth-shaking-epiphany? Some blinding splendour in the heavens? Had he not yet learnt that He who is invisible cannot be seen by mortal eyes; that the finite cannot attain to the vision of the Infinite; that they who would see God must see no manner of similitude; that His awful silence can only be broken to us through the medium of human voices, His being only comprehended by means of the things that He hath made? And had he wholly failed to discover that for these three years he had been walking with God? that neither he, nor any other mortal man could ever know more of God in this world than that which should be revealed of Him by “the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father?”

Again there was no touch of anger, only a slight accent of pained surprise in the quiet answer, “Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?”

And then appealing to His words and to His works as only possible by the indwelling of His Father, He proceeded to unfold to them the coming of the Holy Ghost, and how that Comforter dwelling in them should make them one with the Father and with Him.

But at this point Judas Lebbæus had a difficulty. He had not understood that the eye can only see that which it possesses the inherent power of seeing. He could not grasp the fact that God can become visible to those alone the eyes of whose understanding are open so that they can discern spiritual things. "Lord, how is it," he asked, "that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not to the world?"

The difficulty was exactly of the same kind as Philip's had been—the total inability to distinguish between a physical and a spiritual manifestation; and without formally removing it, Jesus gave them all, once more, the true clue to the comprehension of His words—that God lives with them that love Him, and that the proof of love is obedience. For all further teaching He referred them to the Comforter whom He was about to send, who should bring all things to their remembrance. And now He breathes upon them His blessing of peace, meaning to add but little more, because His conflict with the prince of this world should now begin.

At this point of the discourse there was a movement among the little company. "Arise," said Jesus, "let us go hence."

They rose from the table, and united their voices in a hymn which may well have been a portion of the great Hallel, and not improbably the 116th, 117th, and 118th Psalms. What an imperishable interest do these Psalms derive from such an association, and how full of meaning must many of the verses have been to some of them! With what intensity of feeling must they have joined in singing such words as these—"The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul;" or again, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord;" or once again, "Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

Before they started for their moonlight walk to the Garden of

Gethsemane, perhaps while yet they stood around their Lord when the Hallel was over, He once more spoke to them. First He told them of the need of closest union with Him, if they would bring forth fruit, and be saved from destruction. He clothed this lesson in the allegory of "the Vine and the Branches." There is no need to find any immediate circumstance which suggested the metaphor, beyond the "fruit of the vine" of which they had been partaking: but if any were required, we might suppose that, as He looked out into the night, He saw the moonlight silvering the leaves of a vine which clustered round the latticed window, or falling on the colossal golden vine which wreathed one of the Temple gates. But after impressing this truth in the vivid form of parable, He showed them how deep a source of joy it would be to them in the persecutions which awaited them from an angry world; and then in fuller, plainer, deeper language than He had ever used before, He told them that, in spite of all the anguish with which they contemplated the coming separation from Him, it was actually *better* for them that His personal presence should be withdrawn in order that His spiritual presence might be yet nearer to them than it ever had been before. This would be effected by the coming of the Holy Ghost, when He who was now *with* them should be ever *in* them. The mission of that Comforter should be to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and He should guide *them* into all truth, and show them things to come. "He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you." And now He was going to His Father; a little while, and they should not see Him; and again a little while, and they should see Him.

The uncertainty as to what He meant carried the disciples once more to questions among themselves during one of the solemn pauses of His discourse. They would gladly have asked Him, but a deep awe was upon their spirits, and they did not dare. Already they had several times broken the current of His thoughts by questions which, though He did not reprove them, had evidently grieved Him by their emptiness, and by the misapprehension which they showed of all that He sought to impress upon them. So their whispered questioning died away into silence, but their Master kindly came to their relief. This, He told them, was to be their brief hour of anguish, but it was to be followed by a joy of which man could not rob them; and to that joy there need be no limit, for whatever might be their need they had but to ask the Father, and it should be fulfilled. To that Father who

Himself loved them, for their belief in Him—to that Father, from whom He came, He was now about to return.

The disciples were deeply grateful for these plain and most consoling words. Once more they were unanimous in expressing their belief that He came forth from God. But Jesus sadly checked their enthusiasm. His words had been meant to give them peace in the present, and courage and hope for the future; yet He knew and told them that, in spite of all that they said, the hour was now close at hand when they should all be scattered in selfish terror, and leave Him alone—yet not alone, because the Father was with Him.

And after these words He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and uttered His great High-Priestly prayer: first, that His Father would invest His voluntary humanity with the eternal glory of which He had emptied Himself when He took the form of a servant; next, that He would keep through His own name these His loved ones who had walked with Him in the world; and then that He would sanctify and make perfect not these alone, but all the myriads, all the long generations, which should hereafter believe through their word.

And when the tones of this divine prayer were hushed, they left the guest-chamber and stepped into the moonlit silence of the Oriental night.

**STOP HERE and take
LESSON TWENTY-EIGHT TEST**

CHAPTER LVII.

GETHSEMANE—THE AGONY AND THE ARREST.

THEIR way led them through one of the city gates—probably that which then corresponded to the present gate of St. Stephen—down the steep sides of the ravine, across the wady of the Kidron, which lay a hundred feet below, and up the green and quiet slope beyond it. To one who has visited the scene at that very season of the year and at that very hour of the night—who has felt the solemn hush of the silence even at this short distance from the city wall—who has seen the deep shadows flung by the great boles of the ancient olive-trees, and the chequering of light that falls on the sward through their moonlight-silvered leaves, it is more easy to realise the awe which crept over those few Galilæans, as