

fighting madly for grass and nettles, and the refuse of the drains?—to see the bloody zealots “gaping for want, and stumbling and staggering along like mad dogs?”—to hear the horrid tale of the miserable mother who, in the pangs of famine, had devoured her own child?—to be sold for slaves in such multitudes that at last none would buy them?—to see the streets running with blood, and the “fire of burning houses quenched in the blood of their defenders?”—to have their young sons sold in hundreds, or exposed in the amphitheatre to the sword of the gladiator or the fury of the lion, until at last, “since the people were now slain, the Holy House burnt down, and the city in flames, there was nothing farther left for the enemy to do?” In that awful siege it is believed that there perished 1,100,000 men, beside the 97,000 who were carried captive, and most of whom perished subsequently in the arena or the mine; and it was an awful thing to feel, as some of the survivors and eye-witnesses—and they not Christians—*did* feel—that “the city had deserved its overthrow by producing a generation of men who were the causes of its misfortunes;” and that “neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor *did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, since the beginning of the world.*”

---

### LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN

## CHAPTER LIII.

### FAREWELL TO THE TEMPLE.

IT must have been clear to all that the Great Denunciation recorded in the last chapter involved a final and hopeless rupture. After language such as this there could be no possibility of reconciliation. It was “too late.” The door was shut. When Jesus left the Temple His disciples must have been aware that He was leaving it for ever.

But apparently as He was leaving it—perhaps while He was sitting with sad heart and downcast eyes in the Court of the Women to rest His soul, troubled by the unwonted intensity of moral indignation, and His mind wearied with these incessant assaults—another and less painful incident happened, which enabled Him to leave the actual

precincts of the House of His Father with words, not of anger, but of approval. In this Court of the Women were thirteen chests called *shopherôth*, each shaped like a trumpet, broadening downwards from the aperture, and each adorned with various inscriptions. Into these were cast those religious and benevolent contributions which helped to furnish the Temple with its splendid wealth. While Jesus was sitting there the multitude were dropping their gifts, and the wealthier donors were conspicuous among them as they ostentatiously offered their gold and silver. Raising His eyes, perhaps from a reverie of sorrow, Jesus at a glance took in the whole significance of the scene. At that moment a poor widow timidly dropped in her little contribution. The lips of the rich contributors may have curled with scorn at a presentation which was the very lowest legal minimum. She had given two *prutahs*, the very smallest of current coins; for it was not lawful, even for the poorest, to offer only *one*. A *lepton*, or *prutah*, was the eighth part of an *as*, and was worth a little less than half a farthing, so that her whole gift was of the value of less than a farthing; and with the shame of poverty she may well have shrunk from giving so trivial a gift when the rich men around her were lavishing their gold. But Jesus was pleased with the faithfulness and the self-sacrificing spirit of the gift. It was like the "cup of cold water" given for love's sake, which in His kingdom should not go unrewarded. He wished to teach for ever the great lesson that the essence of charity is self-denial; and the self-denial of this widow in her pauper condition was far greater than that of the wealthiest Pharisee who had contributed his gold. "For they all flung in of their abundance, but she of her penury cast in all she had, her whole means of subsistence." "One coin out of a little," says St. Ambrose, "is better than a treasure out of much; for it is not considered how much is given, but how much remains behind." "If there be a willing mind," says St. Paul, "it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

And now Jesus left the Temple for the last time; but the feelings of the Apostles still clung with the loving pride of their nationality to that sacred and memorable spot. They stopped to cast upon it one last lingering gaze, and one of them was eager to call His attention to its goodly stones and splendid offerings—those nine gates overlaid with gold and silver, and the one of solid Corinthian brass yet more precious; those graceful and towering porches; those bevelled blocks

of marble forty cubits long and ten cubits high, testifying to the toil and munificence of so many generations; those double cloisters and stately pillars; that lavish adornment of sculpture and arabesque; those alternate blocks of red and white marble, recalling the crest and hollow of the sea waves; those vast clusters of golden grapes, each cluster as large as a man, which twined their splendid luxuriance over the golden doors. They would have Him gaze with them on the rising terraces of courts—the Court of the Gentiles with its monolithic columns and rich mosaic; above this the flight of fourteen steps which led to the Court of the Women; then the flight of fifteen steps which led up to the Court of the Priests; then, once more, the twelve steps which led to the final platform crowned by the actual Holy, and Holy of Holies, which the Rabbis fondly compared for its shape to a couchant lion, and which, with its marble whiteness and gilded roofs, looked like a glorious mountain whose snowy summit was gilded by the sun. It is as though they thought that the loveliness and splendour of this scene would intercede with Him, touching His heart with mute appeal. But the heart of Jesus was sad. To Him the sole beauty of a Temple was the sincerity of its worshippers, and no gold or marble, no brilliant vermilion or curiously-carven cedar-wood, no delicate sculpturing or votive gems, could change for Him a den of robbers into a House of Prayer. The builders were still busily at work, as they had been for nearly fifty years, but their work, unblessed of God, was destined—like the earthquake-shaken forum of guilty Pompeii—to be destroyed before it was finished. Briefly and almost sternly Jesus answered, as He turned away from the glittering spectacle, “Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down.” It was the final *ἐκχωρῶμεν*—the “Let us depart hence” of retiring Deity. Tacitus and Josephus tell us how at the siege of Jerusalem was heard that great utterance of departing gods; but now it was uttered in reality, though no earthquake accompanied it, nor any miracle to show that this was the close of another great epoch in the world’s history. It took place quietly, and God “was content to show all things in the slow history of their ripening.” Thirty-five years afterwards that Temple sank into the ashes of its destruction; neither Hadrian, nor Julian, nor any other, were able to build upon its site; and now that very site is a matter of uncertainty.

Sadly and silently, with such thoughts in their hearts, the little

band turned their backs on the sacred building, which stood there as an epitome of Jewish history from the days of Solomon onwards. They crossed the valley of Kidron, and climbed the steep footpath that leads over the Mount of Olives to Bethany. At the summit of the hill they paused, and Jesus sat down to rest—perhaps under the green boughs of those two stately cedar-trees which then adorned the summit of the hill. It was a scene well adapted to inspire most solemn thoughts. Deep on the one side beneath Him lay the Holy City, which had long become a harlot, and which now, on this day—the last great day of His public ministry—had shown finally that she knew not the time of her visitation. At His feet were the slopes of Olivet and the Garden of Gethsemane. On the opposite slope rose the city walls, and the broad plateau crowned with the marble colonnades and gilded roofs of the Temple. Turning in the eastward direction He would look across the bare, desolate hills of the wilderness of Judæa to the purpling line of the mountains of Moab, which glow like a chain of jewels in the sunset light. In the deep, scorched hollows of the Ghôr, visible in patches of sullen cobalt, lay the mysterious waters of the Sea of Lot. And thus, as He gazed from the brow of the hill, on either side of Him there were visible tokens of God's anger and man's sin. On the one side gloomed the dull lake, whose ghastly and bituminous waves are a perpetual testimony to God's vengeance upon sensual crime; at His feet was the glorious guilty city which had shed the blood of all the prophets, and was doomed to sink through yet deadlier wickedness to yet more awful retribution. And the setting sun of His earthly life flung deeper and more sombre colourings across the whole scene of His earthly pilgrimage.

It may be that the shadows of His thought gave a strange solemnity to His attitude and features as He sat there silent among the silent and saddened band of His few faithful followers. Not without a touch of awe His nearest and most favoured Apostles—Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew—came near to Him, and as they saw His eye fixed upon the Temple, asked Him privately, “When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Their “*when?*” remained for the present unanswered. It was the way of Jesus, when some ignorant or irrelevant or inadmissible question was put to Him, to rebuke it not directly, but by passing it over, and by substituting for its answer some great moral lesson which was connected with it, and could alone

make it valuable. Accordingly, this question of the Apostles drew from Him the great Eschatological Discourse, or Discourse of the Last Things, of which the four moral key-notes are "Beware?" and "Watch!" and "Endure!" and "Pray."

Immense difficulties have been found in this discourse, and long treatises have been written to remove them. And, indeed, the metaphorical language in which it is clothed, and the intentional obscurity in which the will of God has involved all those details of the future which would only minister to an idle curiosity or a paralysing dread, must ever make parts of it difficult to understand. But if we compare together the reports of the three Synoptists, and see how they mutually throw light upon each other; if we remember that, in all three, the actual words of Jesus are necessarily condensed, and are only reported in their substance, and in a manner which admits of verbal divergences; if we bear in mind that they are in all probability a rendering into Greek from the Aramaic vernacular in which they were spoken; if we keep hold of the certainty that the object of Prophecy in all ages has been moral warning infinitely more than even the vaguest chronological indication, since to the voice of Prophecy as to the eye of God all Time is but one eternal Present, "one day as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;" if, finally, we accept with quiet reverence, and without any idle theological phraseology about the interchange of the two natures, the distinct assertion of the Lord Himself, that to Him, in His human capacity, were not known the day and the hour, which belonged to "the times and the seasons which the Father hath kept in His own power;" if, I say, we read these chapters with such principles kept steadily in view, then to every earnest and serious reader I feel sure that most of the difficulties will vanish of themselves.

It is evident, from comparing St. Luke with the other Synoptists, that Jesus turned the thoughts of the disciples to two horizons, one near and one far off, as He suffered them to see one brief glimpse of the landscape of the future. The boundary line of either horizon marked the winding-up of an *æon*, the *συντέλεια αἰῶνος*; each was a great *τέλος*, or ending; of each it was true that the then existing *γενεά*—first in its literal sense of "generation," then in its wider sense of "race"—should not pass away until all had been fulfilled. And the one was the type of the other; the judgment upon Jerusalem, followed by the establishment of the visible Church on

The chronology here is in error. The visible Church was already established; done so by Christ himself previous to this current incident.

earth, foreshadowed the judgment of the world, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom at His second coming. And if the vague prophetic language and imagery of St. Matthew, and to a less degree that of St. Mark, might lead to the impression that these two events were continuous, or at least nearly conterminous with each other, on the other hand we see clearly from St. Luke that our Lord *expressly warned* the inquiring Apostles that, though many of the signs which He predicted would be followed by the immediate close of one great epoch in the world's history, on the other hand the great consummation, the final Palingenesia, *would not follow at once*, nor were they to be alarmed by the troubles and commotions of the world into any instant or feverish expectancy. In fact, when once we have grasped the principle that Jesus was speaking partly and primarily of the fall of the Jewish polity and dispensation, partly and secondarily of the end of the world—but that, since He spoke of them with that varying interchange of thought and speech which was natural for one whose whole Being moved in the sphere of eternity and not of time, the Evangelists have not clearly distinguished between the passages in which He is referring more prominently to the one than to the other—we shall then avoid being misled by any superficial and erroneous impressions, and shall bear in mind that before the final end Jesus placed two great events. The first of these was a long treading under foot of Jerusalem, until the times of the Gentiles (the *καιροὶ ἐθνῶν*, *i.e.*, their whole opportunities under the Christian dispensation) should be fulfilled; the second was a preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations in all the world. Nor can we deny all probability to the supposition that while the inspired narrators of the Gospel history reported with perfect wisdom and faithfulness everything that was essential to the life and salvation of mankind, their abbreviations of what Jesus uttered, and the sequence which they gave to the order of His utterances, were to a certain extent tinged by their own subjectivity—possibly even by their own natural supposition—that the second horizon lay nearer to the first than it actually did in the designs of Heaven.

In this discourse, then, Jesus first warned them of false Messiahs and false prophets; He told them that the wild struggling of nations and those physical commotions and calamities which have so often seemed to synchronise with the great crises of History, were not to trouble them, as they would be but the throes of the Palingenesia, the first birth-pang of the coming time. He prophesied of dreadful per-

This is one interpretation of this passage. However, the more acceptable one is that it is referring to the time of the end.

secutions, of abounding iniquity, of decaying faith, of wide evangelisation as the signs of a coming end. And as we learn from many other passages of Scripture, these signs, as they ushered in the destruction of Jerusalem, so shall reappear on a larger scale before the end of all things is at hand.

The next great paragraph of this speech dwelt mainly on the *immediate* future. He had foretold distinctly the destruction of the Holy City, and he now gives them indications which should forewarn them of its approach; and lead them to secure their safety. When they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies—when the abomination which should cause desolation should stand in the Holy Place—then even from the fields, even from the housetops, they were to fly out of Judæa to the shelter of the Trans-Jordanic hills, from the unspeakable horrors that should follow. Nor even then were they to be carried away by any deceivableness of unrighteousness, caused by the yearning intensity of Messianic hopes. Many should cry, “Lo here! and lo there!” but let them pay no heed; for when He came, His presence, like lightning shining from the east even to the west, should be visible and unmistakable to all the world, and like eagles gathering to the carcase should the destined ministers of His vengeance wing their flight. By such warnings the Christians were preserved. Before John of Giscala had shut the gates of Jerusalem, and Simon of Gerasa had begun to murder the fugitives, so that “he who escaped the tyrant within the wall was destroyed by the other that lay before the gates”—before the Roman eagle flapped her wing over the doomed city, or the infamies of lust and murder had driven every worshipper in horror from the Temple Courts—the Christians had taken timely warning, and in the little Peræan town of Pella, were beyond the reach of all the robbery, and murder, and famine, and cannibalism, and extermination which made the siege of Jerusalem a scene of greater tribulation than any that has been since the beginning of the world.

Then Jesus passed to the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars, and the shaking of the powers of heaven—signs which may have a meaning both literal and metaphorical—which should precede the appearing of the Son of Man in heaven, and the gathering of the elect from the four winds by the trumpet blast of the angels. That day of the Lord should have its signs no less than the other, and He bade His disciples in all ages to mark those signs and interpret them aright, even as they interpreted the signs of the coming

summer in the fig-tree's budding leaves. But that day should come to the world suddenly, unexpectedly, overwhelmingly; and, as it should be a day of reward to all faithful servants, so should it be a day of vengeance and destruction to the glutton and the drunkard, to the hypocrite and the oppressor. Therefore, to impress yet more indelibly upon their minds the lessons of watchfulness and faithfulness, and to warn them yet more emphatically against the peril of the drowsy life and the smouldering lamp, He spoke the exquisite Parables—so beautiful, so simple, yet so rich in instruction—of the Ten Virgins and of the Talents; and drew for them a picture of that Great Day of Judgment on which the King should separate all nations from one another as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. On that day those who had shown the least kindness to the least of these His brethren should be accounted to have done it unto Him. But then, lest these grand eschatological utterances should lead them to any of their old mistaken Messianic notions, He ended them with the sad and now half-familiar refrain, that His death and anguish must precede all else. The occasion, the manner, the very day are now revealed to them with the utmost plainness and simplicity: "Ye know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified."

So ended that great discourse upon the Mount of Olives, and the sun set, and He arose and walked with His Apostles the short remaining road to Bethany. It was the last time that He would ever walk it upon earth; and after the trials, the weariness, the awful teachings, the terrible agitations of that eventful day, how delicious to Him must have been that hour of twilight loveliness and evening calm; how refreshing the peace and affection which surrounded Him in the quiet village and the holy home. As we have already noticed, Jesus did not love cities, and scarcely ever slept within their precincts. He shrank from their congregated wickednesses, from their glaring publicity, from their feverish excitement, from their featureless monotony, with all the natural and instinctive dislike of delicate minds. An Oriental city is always dirty; the refuse is flung into the streets; there is no pavement; the pariah dog is the sole scavenger; beast and man jostle each other promiscuously in the crowded thoroughfares. And though the necessities of His work compelled Him to visit Jerusalem, and to preach to the vast throngs from every climate and country who were congregated at its yearly festivals, yet He seems to have retired on every possible occasion



beyond its gates, partly it may be for safety—partly from poverty—partly because He loved that sweet home at Bethany—and partly too, perhaps, because He felt the peaceful joy of treading the grass that groweth on the mountains rather than the city stones, and could hold *gladder communion with His Father in heaven* under the shadow of the olive-trees, where, far from all disturbing sights and sounds, He could watch the splendour of the sunset and the falling of the dew.

And surely that last evening walk to Bethany on that ~~Tuesday~~ evening in Passion week must have breathed deep calm into His soul. The thought, indeed, of the bitter cup which He was so soon to drink was doubtless present to Him, but present only in its aspect of exalted sacrifice, and the highest purpose of love fulfilled. Not the pangs which He would suffer, but the pangs from which He would save; not the power of darkness which would seem to win a short-lived triumph, but the redeeming victory—the full, perfect, and sufficient atonement—these we may well, though reverently, believe to have been the subjects which dominated in His thoughts. The exquisite beauty of the Syrian evening, the tender colours of the spring grass and flowers, the wadys around Him paling into solemn grey, the distant hills bathed in the primrose light of sunset, the coolness and balm of the breeze after the burning glare—what must these have been to Him to whose eye the world of Nature was an open book, on every page of which He read His Father's name! And this was His native land. Bethany was almost to Him a second Nazareth; those whom He loved were around Him, and He was going to those whom He loved. Can we not imagine Him walking on in silence too deep for words—His disciples around Him or following Him—the gibbous moon beginning to rise and gild the twinkling foliage of the olive-trees with richer silver, and moonlight and twilight blending at each step insensibly with the garish hues of day, like that solemn twilight-purple of coming agony into which the noon-day of His happier ministry had long since begun to fade?

The Chronology of this segment is incorrect. Therefore, I have placed a mark through the day indications. I have left the accounts of the events intact because they have biblical corroboration. Only the days have been marked out because they are in error.

## CHAPTER LIV. .

### THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

It was inevitable that the burning words of indignation which Jesus had uttered on this last great day of His ministry should exasperate beyond all control the hatred and fury of the priestly party among the Jews. Not only had they been defeated and abashed in open encounter in the very scene of their highest dignity, and in the presence of their most devoted adherents; not only had they been forced to confess their ignorance of that very Scripture exegesis which was their recognised domain, and their incapacity to pronounce an opinion on a subject respecting which it was their professed duty to decide; but, after all this humiliation, He whom they despised as the young and ignorant Rabbi of Nazareth—He who neglected their customs and discountenanced their traditions—He on whose words, to them so pernicious, the people hung in rapt attention—had suddenly turned upon them, within hearing of the very Hall of Meeting, and had pronounced upon them—upon *them* in the odour of their sanctity—upon *them* who were accustomed to breathe all their lives the incense of unbounded adulation—a woe so searching, so scathing, so memorably intense, that none who heard it could forget it for evermore. It was time that this should end. Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Priests, Scribes, Elders, Annas the astute and tyrannous, Caiaphas the abject and servile, were all now aroused; and, dreading they knew not what outburst of religious anarchy, which would shake the very foundations of their system, they met together probably on that very evening in the Palace of Caiaphas, sinking all their own differences in a common inspiration of hatred against that long-promised Messiah in whom they only recognised a common enemy. It was an alliance for His destruction, of fanaticism, unbelief, and worldliness; the rage of the bigoted, the contempt of the atheist, and the dislike of the utilitarian; and it seemed but too clear that from the revengeful hate of such a combination no earthly power was adequate to save.

Of the particulars of the meeting we know nothing; but the Evangelists record the two conclusions at which the high conspirators arrived—the one a yet more decisive and emphatic renewal of the vote that He must, at all hazards, be put to death without delay; the

other. that it must be done by subtilty, and not by violence, for fear of the multitude; and that, for the same reason—*not* because of the sacredness of the Feast—the murder must be postponed until the conclusion of the Passover had caused the dispersion of the countless pilgrims to their own homes.

This meeting was held, in all probability, on the evening of ~~Tuesday~~, while the passions which the events of that day had kindled were still raging with volcanic energy. So that, at the very moment while they were deciding that during that Easter-tide our Passover should *not* be slain—at that very moment, seated on the slopes of Olivet, Jesus was foretelling to His disciples, with the calmest certainty, that He *should* be sacrificed on the very day on which, at evening, the lamb was sacrificed, and the Paschal feast began.

Accordingly, before the meeting was over, an event occurred which at once altered the conclusions of the council, and rendered possible the immediate capture of Jesus without the tumult which they dreaded. The eight days' respite from the bitter sentence of death, which their terror, not their mercy, had accorded him, was to be withdrawn, and the secret blow was to be struck at once.

For before they separated a message reached them which shot a gleam of fierce joy into their hearts, while we may well imagine that it also filled them with something of surprise and awe. Conscious as they must have been in their inmost hearts how deep was the crime which they intended to commit, it must have almost startled them thus to find "the tempting opportunity at once meeting the guilty disposition," and the Evil Spirit making their way straight before their face. They were informed that the man who knew Jesus, who had been with Him, who had been His disciple—nay, more, one of the Twelve—was ready to put an immediate end to their perplexities, and to re-open with them the communication which he had already made.

The house of Caiaphas was probably in or near the Temple precincts. The gates both of the city and of the Temple were usually closed at sundown, but at the time of this vast yearly gathering it was natural that the rules should have been a little relaxed for the general convenience; and when Judas slunk away from his brethren on that fatal evening he would rely on being admitted without difficulty within the city precincts, and into the presence of the assembled elders. He applied accordingly to the "captains" of the Temple, the members of the Levitical guard who had the care of the sacred build-

ings, and they at once announced his message, and brought him in person before the priests and rulers of the Jews.

Some of the priests had already seen him at their previous meeting; others would doubtless recognise him. If Judas resembled the conception of him which tradition has handed down—

“That furtive mien, that scowling eye,  
Of hair that red and tufted fell”—

they could have hardly failed to notice the man of Kerioth as one of those who followed Jesus—perhaps to despise and to detest him as almost the only Jew among the Galilean Apostles. And now they were to be leagued with him in wickedness. The fact that one who had lived with Jesus, who had heard all He had said, and seen all He had done—was yet ready to betray Him—strengthened *them* in their purpose; the fact that they, the hierarchs and nobles, were ready not only to praise, but even to reward Judas for what he proposed to do, strengthened *him* in his dark and desperate design. As in water face answereth to face, so did the heart of Judas and of the Jews become assimilated by the reflection of mutual sympathy. As iron sharpeneth iron, so did the blunt weapon of his brutal anger give fresh edge to their polished hate.

Whether the hideous demand for blood-money had come from him, or had been suggested by them; whether it was paid immediately, or only after the arrest; whether the wretched and paltry sum given—thirty shekels, the price of the meanest slave—was the total reward, or only the earnest of a further and larger sum—these are questions which would throw a strong light on the character and motives of Judas, but to which the general language of the Evangelists enables us to give no certain answer. The details of the transaction were probably but little known. Neither Judas nor his venerable abettors had any cause to dwell on them with satisfaction. The Evangelists and the early Christians generally, when they speak of Judas, seem to be filled with a spirit of shuddering abhorrence too deep for words. Only one dark fact stood out before their imagination in all its horror, and that was that Judas was a traitor; that Judas had been one of the Twelve, and yet had sold his Lord. Probably he received the money, such as it was, at once. With the gloating eyes of that avarice which was his besetting sin, he might gaze on the silver coins, stamped (oh, strange irony of history!) on one side with an olive-branch, the symbol of peace, on the other with a censor, the type

of prayer, and bearing on them the superscription, "Jerusalem *the Holy.*" And probably if those elders chattered with him after the fashion of their race, as the narrative seems to imply, they might have represented that, after all, his agency was unessential; that he might do them a service which would be regarded as a small convenience, but they could carry out their purpose, if they chose, without his aid. One thing, however, is certain: he left them a pledged traitor, and henceforth only sought the opportunity to betray his Master when no part of the friendly multitude was near.

What were the motives of this man? Who can attempt to fathom the unutterable abyss, to find his way amid the weltering chaos, of a heart agitated by unresisted and besetting sins? The Evangelists can say nothing but that Satan entered into him. The guilt of the man seemed to them too abnormal for any natural or human explanation. The narratives of the Synoptists point distinctly to avarice as the cause of his ruin. They place his first overtures to the Sanhedrin in close and pointed connection with the qualm of disgust he felt at being unable to secure any pilferings from the "three hundred pence," of which, since they *might* have come into his possession, he regarded himself as having been robbed; and St. John, who can never speak of him without a shudder of disgust, says in so many words that he was an habitual thief (John xii. 6). How little insight can *they* have into the fatal bondage and diffusiveness of a besetting sin, into the dense spiritual blindness and awful infatuation with which it confounds the guilty, who cannot believe in so apparently inadequate a motive! Yet the commonest observance of daily facts which come before our notice in the moral world, might serve to show that the commission of crime results as frequently from a motive that seems miserably small and inadequate, as from some vast and abnormal temptation. Do we not read in the Old Testament of those that pollute God among the people "for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread;" of those who sell "the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes?" The sudden crisis of temptation might seem frightful, but its issue was decided by the entire tenor of his previous life; the sudden blaze of lurid light was but the outcome of that which had long burnt and smouldered deep within his heart.

Doubtless other motives mingled with, strengthened—perhaps to the self-deceiving and blinded soul substituted themselves for—the predominant one. "Will not this measure," he may have thought, "force Him to declare His Messianic kingdom? At the worst, can

He not easily save Himself by miracle? If not, has He not told us repeatedly that He will die; and if so, why may I not reap a little advantage from that which is in any case inevitable? Or will it not, perhaps, be meritorious to do that of which all the chief priests approve?” A thousand such devilish suggestions may have formulated themselves in the traitor’s heart, and mingled with them was the revulsion of feeling which he suffered from finding that his self-denial in following Jesus would, after all, be apparently in vain; that he would gain from it not rank and wealth, but only poverty and persecution. Perhaps, too, there was something of rancour at being rebuked; perhaps something of bitter jealousy at being less loved by Christ than his fellows; perhaps something of frenzied disappointment at the prospect of failure; perhaps something of despairing hatred at the consciousness that he was suspected. Alas! sins grow and multiply with fatal diffusiveness, and blend insensibly with hosts of their evil kindred. “The whole moral nature is clouded by them; the intellect darkened; the spirit stained.” Probably by this time a turbid confused chaos of sins was weltering in the soul of Judas—malice, worldly ambition, theft, hatred of all that was good and pure, base ingratitude, frantic anger, all culminating in this foul and frightful act of treachery—all rushing with blind, bewildering fury through this gloomy soul.

“Satan entered into him.” That, after all, whether a literal or a metaphorical expression, best describes his awful state. It was a madness of disenchantment from selfish hopes. Having persuaded himself that the New Kingdom was a mere empty fraud, he is suffered to become the victim of a delusion, which led him into a terrible conviction that he had flung away the substance for a shadow. It had not been always thus with him. He had not been always bad. The day had been when he was an innocent boy—a youth sufficiently earnest to be singled out from other disciples as one of the Twelve—a herald of the New Kingdom not without high hopes. The poverty and the wanderings of the early period of the ministry may have protected him from temptation. The special temptation—trebly dangerous, because it appealed to his besetting sin—may have begun at that period when our Lord’s work assumed a slightly more settled and organised character. Even then it did not master him at once. He had received warnings of fearful solemnity (John vi. 70); for some time there may have been hope for him; he may have experienced relapses into dishonesty after recoveries of nobleness. But as he did not master his sin, his sin mastered

him, and led him on, as a slave, to his retribution and ruin. Did he slink back to Bethany that night with the blood-money in his bag? Did he sleep among his fellow-apostles?—All that we know is that henceforth he was ever anxiously, eagerly, suspiciously upon the watch.

And the next day—the ~~Wednesday~~ in Passion week—must have baffled him. Each day Jesus had left Bethany in the morning and had gone to Jerusalem. Why did He not go on that day? Did He suspect treachery? That day in the Temple Courts the multitude listened for His voice in vain. Doubtless the people waited for Him with intense expectation; doubtless the priests and Pharisees looked out for Him with sinister hope; but He did not come. The day was spent by Him in deep seclusion, so far as we know, in perfect rest and silence. He prepared Himself in peace and prayer for the awfulness of His coming struggle. It may be that He wandered alone to the hilly uplands above and around the quiet village, and there, under the vernal sunshine, held high communing with His Father in heaven. But how the day was passed by Him we do not know. A veil of holy silence falls over it. He was surrounded by the few who loved Him and believed in Him. To them He may have spoken, but His work as a teacher on earth was done.

And on that night He lay down for the last time on earth. On the ~~Thursday~~ morning He woke never to sleep again.

Once again the chronology is incorrect. The more likely biblical chronology is that this is Wednesday morning, not Thursday morning. Otherwise He could not have spent three days and nights in the tomb before His resurrection.

Stop and take lesson test.