

# **The Life of JESUS CHRIST**

By James Stalker, M.A., D.D.

Author of "*Men and Morals*," "*Life of St. Paul*," "*Imago Christi*," etc., etc.  
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144. At length the third year of His ministry verged towards its close and the revolving seasons brought round the great annual feast of the Passover. It is said that as many as two or three millions of strangers were gathered in Jerusalem on such an occasion. They not only flocked from every part of Palestine, but came over sea and land from all the countries in which the seed of Abraham were dispersed, in order to celebrate the event in which their national history began. They were brought together by very various motives. Some came with the solemn thoughts and deep religious joy of minds responsive to the memories of the venerable occasion. Some looked forward chiefly to reunion with relatives and friends who had been long parted from them by residence in distant places. Not a few of the baser sort brought with them the darling passions of their race, and were chiefly intent on achieving in so great a concourse some important stroke of business. But this year the minds of tens of thousands were full of an unusual excitement, and they came up to the capital expecting to see something more remarkable than they had ever witnessed there before. They hoped to see JESUS at the feast, and entertained many vague forebodings as to what might happen in connection with Him. His name was the word oftenest passing from mouth to mouth among the pilgrim bands that crowded along the highways, and among the Jewish groups that talked together on the decks of the ships coming from Asia Minor

and Egypt. Nearly [109] all His own disciples no doubt were there, and were ardently cherishing the hope that at last in this concourse of the nation He would throw off the guise of humility which concealed His glory, and in some irresistible way demonstrate His Messiahship. There must have been thousands from the southern portions of the country, in which He had recently been spending His time, who came full of the same enthusiastic views about Him as were entertained in Galilee at the close of His first year there; and no doubt there were multitudes of the Galileans themselves who were favorably disposed toward Him and ready to take the deepest interest in any new development of His affairs. Tens of thousands from more distant parts, who had heard of Him, but never seen Him, arrived in the capital in the hope that He might be there, and that they might enjoy the opportunity of seeing a miracle or listening to the words of the new prophet. The authorities in Jerusalem, too, awaited His coming with very mingled feelings. They hoped that some turn of events might give them the chance of at last suppressing Him; but they could not help fearing that He might appear at the head of a provincial following which would place them at His mercy.

145. **The Final Breach with the Nation** - Six days before the Passover began, He arrived in Bethany, the village of His friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus, which lay half-an-hour from the city on the other side of the summit of the Mount of Olives. It was a convenient place to lodge during the feast, and He took up His quarters with His friends. The solemnities were to begin on a Thursday, so that it was on the previous Friday He arrived there. He had been accompanied the last twenty miles of His journey by an immense multitude of the pilgrims, to whom He was the center of interest. They had seen Him healing blind Bartimaeus at Jericho, and the miracle had produced among [110] them extraordinary excitement. When they reached Bethany, the village was ringing with the recent resurrection of Lazarus, and they carried on the news to the crowds who had already arrived from all quarters in Jerusalem, that JESUS had come.

146. Accordingly, when, after resting over the Sabbath in Bethany, He came forth on the Sunday morning to proceed to the city, He found the streets of the village and the neighboring roads thronged with a vast crowd, consisting partly of those who had accompanied Him on the Friday, partly of other companies who had come up behind Him from Jericho and heard of the miracles as they came along, and partly of those who, having heard that He was at hand, had flocked out from Jerusalem to see Him. They welcomed Him with enthusiasm, and began to shout "**Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!**" It was a Messianic demonstration such as He had formerly avoided. But now He yielded to it. Probably He was satisfied with the sincerity of the homage paid to Him; and the hour had come when no considerations could permit Him any longer to conceal from the nation the character in which He presented Himself and the claim He made on its faith. But, in yielding to the desires of the multitude that He should assume the style of a king, He made it unmistakable in what sense He accepted the honor. He sent for an ass-colt, and, His disciples having spread their garments on it, rode at the head of the crowd. Not armed to the teeth or bestriding a war-horse did He come, but as the King of simplicity and peace. The procession swept over the brow of Olivet and down the mountain-side; it crossed the Kedron, and, mounting the slope which led to the gate of the city, passed on through the streets to the temple. It swelled as it went, great numbers hurrying from every quarter to join it; the shouts rang louder and more loud; the processionists broke off twigs from the [111] palms and olives, as they passed, and waved them in triumph. The citizens of Jerusalem ran to their doors and bent over their balconies to look, and asked, "Who is this?" to which the processionists replied with provincial pride,

"This is JESUS, the prophet of Nazareth." It was, in fact, an entirely provincial demonstration. The Jerusalemites took no part in it, but held coldly aloof. The authorities knew only too well what it meant, and beheld it with rage and dread. They came to JESUS, and ordered Him to bid His followers hold their peace, hinting no doubt that, if He did not do so, the Roman garrison, which was stationed in the immediate vicinity, would pounce on Him and them, and punish the city for an act of treason to Caesar.

147. There is no point in the life of JESUS at which we are more urged to ask, What would have happened if His claim had been conceded - if the citizens of Jerusalem had been carried away with the enthusiasm of the provincials, and the prejudices of priests and scribes had been borne down before the torrent of public approval? Would JESUS have put Himself at the head of the nation and inaugurated an era of the world's history totally different from that which followed? These questions very soon carry us beyond our depth, yet no intelligent reader of the Gospels can help asking them.

148. JESUS had formally made offer of Himself to the capital and the authorities of the nation, but met with no response. The provincial recognition of His claims was insufficient to carry a national assent. He accepted the decision as final. The multitude expected a signal from Him, and in their excited mood would have obeyed it, whatever it might have been. But He gave them none, and, after looking round about Him for a little in the temple, left them and returned to Bethany.

149. Doubtless the disappointment of the multitude was extreme, and an opportunity was offered to the authorities [112] which they did not fail to make use of. The Pharisees needed no stimulus; but even the Sadducees, those cold and haughty friends of order, espied danger to the public peace in the state of the popular mind, and leagued themselves with their bitter enemies in the resolution to suppress Him.

150. On Monday and Tuesday He appeared again in the city and engaged in His old work of healing and teaching. But on the second of these days the authorities interposed. Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, high priests, priests, and scribes were for once combined in a common cause. They came to Him, as He taught in the temple, and demanded by what authority He did such things. In all the pomp of official costume, of social pride and popular renown, they set themselves against the simple Galilean, while the multitudes looked on. They entered into a keen and prolonged controversy with Him on points selected beforehand, putting forward their champions of debate to entangle Him in His talk, their distinct object being, either to discredit Him with the audience or to elicit something from His lips in the heat of argument which might form a ground of accusation against Him before the civil authority. Thus, for example, they asked Him if it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar. If He answered Yes, they knew that His popularity would perish on the instant, for it would be a complete contradiction of the popular Messianic ideas. If, on the contrary, He answered No, they would accuse Him of treason before the Roman governor. But JESUS was far more than a match for them. Hour by hour He steadfastly met the attack. His straightforwardness put their duplicity to shame, and His skill in argument turned every spear which they directed at Him round to their own breasts. At last He carried the war into their own territory, and convicted them of such ignorance or lack of candor as completely put them to shame before the onlookers. Then, when He had silenced them, He let loose the storm of His indignation, [113] and delivered against them the philippic which is recorded in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. Giving unrestrained expression to the pent-up

criticism of a lifetime, He exposed their hypocritical practices in sentences that fell like strokes of lightning and made them a scorn and laughing-stock, not only to the hearers then, but to all the world since.

151. It was the final breach between Him and them. They had been utterly humiliated before the whole people, over whom they were set in authority and honor. They felt it to be intolerable, and resolved not to lose an hour in seeking their revenge. That very evening the Sanhedrim met in passionate mood to devise a plan for making away with Him. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea may have raised a solitary protest against their precipitate proceedings; but they indignantly silenced them, and were unanimously of opinion that He should forthwith be put to death. But circumstances checked their cruel haste. At least the forms of justice would have to be gone through; and besides, JESUS evidently enjoyed an immense popularity among the strangers who filled the city. What might not the idle crowd do if He were arrested before their eyes? It was necessary to wait till the mass of the pilgrims had left the city. They had just, with great reluctance, arrived at this conclusion, when they received a most unexpected and gratifying surprise. One of His own disciples appeared, and offered to betray Him for a price.

152. Judas Iscariot is the byword of the human race. In his *Vision of Hell*, Dante has placed him in the lowest of the circles of the damned, as the sole sharer with Satan himself of the very uttermost punishment; and the poet's verdict is that of mankind. Yet he was not such a monster of iniquity as to be utterly beyond comprehension or even sympathy. The history of his base and appalling lapse is perfectly intelligible. He had joined the discipleship of JESUS, as the other apostles did, in the hope of taking part [114] in a political revolution and occupying a distinguished place in an earthly kingdom. It is inconceivable that JESUS would have made him an apostle if there had not at one time been some noble enthusiasm in him, and some attachment to Himself. That he was a man of superior energy and administrative ability may be inferred, from the fact that he was made the purse-bearer of the apostolic company. But there was a canker at the root of his character, which gradually absorbed all that was excellent in him and became a tyrannical passion. This was the love of money. He fed it by the petty peculations which he practiced on the small sums which JESUS received from His friends for the necessities of His company and for distribution among the poor with whom He was daily mingling. He hoped to give it unrestrained gratification when He became chancellor of the exchequer in the new kingdom. The views of the other apostles were perhaps as worldly to begin with as his. But the history of their intercourse with their Master was totally different. They became ever more spiritual, he ever more worldly. They never, indeed, as long as JESUS lived, rose to the idea of a spiritual kingdom apart from an earthly one; but the spiritual elements which their Master had taught them to add to their material conception grew more and more prominent, till the earthly heart was eaten out of it, and merely the empty shell was left, to be in due time crushed and blown away. But Judas' earthly views became more and more engrossing, and were more and more divested of every spiritual adjunct. He grew impatient for their realization. Preaching and healing seemed to him waste of time; the purity and unworldliness of JESUS irritated him; why did He not bring on the kingdom at once, and then preach as much as He chose afterwards! At last he began to suspect that there was to be no kingdom such as he had hoped for at all. He felt that he had been deceived, and began not only to despise but even [115] hate his Master. The failure of JESUS to take advantage of the disposition of the people on Palm Sunday finally convinced him that it was useless to hold on to the cause any longer. He saw that the ship was sinking and resolved to get out of it. He carried out his resolution in such a way as both to gratify his master-passion and secure the favor of the authorities. His offer came to them just at the right

moment. They closed with it greedily, and, having arranged the price with the miserable man, sent him away to find a convenient opportunity for the betrayal. He found it sooner than they expected - on the next night but one after the dastardly bargain had been concluded.

153. **JESUS in the Prospect of Death** - Christianity has no more precious possession than the memory of JESUS during the week when He stood face to face with death. Unspeakably great as He always was, it may be reverently said that He was never so great as during those days of direst calamity. All that was grandest and all that was most tender, the most human and the most divine aspects of His character, were brought out as they had never been before.

154. He came to Jerusalem well aware that He was about to die. For a whole year the fact had been staring Him constantly in the face, and the long-looked-for had come at last. He knew it was His Father's will, and, when the hour arrived, He bent His steps with sublime fortitude to the fatal spot. It was not, however, without a terrible conflict of feelings; the ebb and flow of the most diverse emotions - anguish and ecstasy, the most prolonged and crushing depression, the most triumphant joy and the most majestic peace-swayed hither and thither within Him like the moods of a vast ocean.

155. Some have hesitated to attribute to Him aught of that shrinking from death which is natural to man; but [116] surely without good reason. It is an instinct perfectly innocent; and perhaps the very fact that His bodily organism was pure and perfect may have made it stronger in Him than it is in us. Remember how young He was only three-and-thirty - the currents of life were powerful in Him; He was full of the instincts of action. To have these strong currents rolled back and the light and warmth of life quenched in the cold waters of death must have been utterly repugnant to Him. An incident which happened on the Monday caused Him a great shock of this instinctive pain. Some Greeks who had come to the feast expressed through two of the apostles their desire for an interview with Him. There were many heathens in different parts of the Greek-speaking world who at this period had found refuge from the atheism and disgusting immorality of the times in the religion of the Jews settled in their midst, and had accordingly become proselytes of the worship of Jehovah. To this class these inquirers belonged. But their application shook Him with thoughts which they little dreamt of. Only two or three times in the course of His ministry does He seem to have been brought into contact with representatives of the world lying outside the limits of His own people, His mission being exclusively to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But on every such occasion He met with a faith, a courtesy and nobility, which He Himself contrasted with the unbelief, rudeness, and pettiness of the Jews. How could He help longing to pass beyond the narrow bounds of Palestine and visit nations of such simple and generous disposition? He must often have seen visions of a career like that afterwards achieved by Paul, when he bore the glad tidings from land to land, and evangelized Athens, Rome, and the other great centers of the West. What joy such a career would have been to JESUS, who felt within Himself the energy and overflowing benevolence which it would have exactly suited! But death was at hand to extinguish all. The [117] visit of the Greeks caused a great wave of such thoughts to break over Him. Instead of responding to their request, He became abstracted, His face darkened, and His frame was shaken with the tremor of an inward conflict. But He soon recovered Himself, and gave expression to the thoughts on which in those days He was steadying up His soul: **"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."** **"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."** He could see beyond death, terrible and absorbing as the prospect of it was, and

assure Himself that the effect of His self-sacrifice would be infinitely grander and more extensive than that of a personal mission to the heathen world could ever have been. Besides, death was what His Father had appointed for Him. This was the last and deepest consolation with which He soothed His humble and trustful soul on this as on every similar occasion. **"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thyself."**

156. Death approached Him with every terrible accompaniment. He was to fall a victim to the treachery of a follower of His own, whom He had chosen and loved. His life was to be taken by the hands of His own nation, in the city of His heart. He had come to exalt His nation to Heaven, and had loved her with a devotion nourished by the most intelligent and sympathetic acquaintance with her past history and with the great men who had loved her before Him, as well as by the sense of all which He Himself was able to do for her. But His death would bring down the blight of a thousand curses on Palestine and Jerusalem. How clearly He foresaw what was coming was shown by the memorable prophetic discourse of the twenty-fourth of Matthew, which He spoke on Tuesday afternoon to His disciples, sitting on the side of Mount [118] Olivet, with the doomed city at His feet. How bitter was the anguish it caused Him was shown on the Sunday, when, even in His hour of triumph, as the joyful multitude bore Him down the mountain road, He stopped at the point where the city burst upon the view, and with tears and lamentations predicted its fate. It ought to have been the fair city's bridal day, when she should have been married to the Son of GOD; but the pallor of death was on her face. He who would have taken her to His heart, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, saw the eagles already in the air, flying fast to rend her in pieces.

157. In the evenings of this week He went out to Bethany; but in all probability He spent most of the nights alone in the open air. He wandered about in the solitude of the hill-top and among the olive-groves and gardens with which the sides of the mount were covered; many a time, perhaps, going along the same road down which the procession had passed, and, as He looked across the valley from the point where He had stopped before, at the city sleeping in the moonlight, startling the night with cries more bitter than the lamentation which overawed the multitude; many a time repeating to His lonely heart the great truths He had uttered in the presence of the Greeks.

158. He was terribly alone. The whole world was against Him - Jerusalem panting for His life with passionate hate, the tens of thousands from the provinces turned from Him in disappointment. Not one even of His apostles, not even John, was in the least aware of the real situation or able to be the confidant of His thoughts. This was one of the bitterest drops in His cup. He felt, as no other person has ever felt, the necessity of living on in the world after death. The cause He had inaugurated must not die. It was for the whole world, and was to endure through all generations and visit every part of the globe. But after His departure it would be left in the hands of His apostles, who were now showing themselves so [119] weak, unsympathetic and ignorant. Were they fit for the task? Had not one of them turned out a traitor? Would not the cause, when He was gone, -so perhaps the tempter whispered, -go to wreck, and all His far-reaching plans for the regeneration of the world vanish like the baseless fabric of a vision?

159. Yet He was not alone. Among the deep shadows of the gardens and upon the summits of Olivet, He sought the unfailing resource of other and less troubled days, and found it still in His

dire need. His Father was with Him; and, pouring out supplications with strong crying and tears, He was heard in that He feared. He hushed His spirit with the sense that His Father's perfect love and wisdom were appointing all that was happening to Him, and that He was glorifying His Father and fulfilling the work given Him to do. This could banish every fear, and fill Him with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

160. At last the end drew very near. The Thursday evening arrived, when in every house in Jerusalem the Passover was eaten. JESUS also with the Twelve sat down to eat it. He knew that it was His last night on earth, and that this was His farewell meeting with His own. Happily there has been preserved to us a full account of it, with which every Christian mind is familiar. It was the greatest evening in His life. His soul overflowed in indescribable tenderness and grandeur. Some shadows indeed fell across His spirit in the earlier hours of the evening; but they soon passed; and throughout the scenes of the washing of the disciples' feet, the eating of the Passover, the institution of the Lord's Supper, the farewell address, and the great high-priestly prayer, the whole glory of His character shone out. He completely resigned Himself to the genial impulses of friendship, His love to His own flowing forth without limit; and, as if He had forgotten all their imperfections, He rejoiced in the anticipation of their future successes and the triumph of [120] His cause. Not a shadow intercepted His view of the face of His Father or dimmed the satisfaction with which He looked on His own work just about to be completed. It was as if the Passion were already past, and the glory of His Exaltation were already breaking around Him.

161. But the reaction came very soon. Rising from the table at midnight, they passed through the streets and out of the town by the eastern gate of the city, and, crossing the Kedron, reached a well-known haunt of His at the foot of Olivet, the garden of Gethsemane. Here ensued the awful and memorable Agony. It was the final access of the mood of depression which had been struggling all the week with the mood of joy and trust whose culmination had been reached at the supper table. It was the final onset of temptation, from which His life had never been free. But we fear to analyze the elements of the scene. We know that any conception of ours must be utterly unable to exhaust its meaning. How, above all, can we estimate in the faintest degree the chief element in it - the crushing, scorching pressure of the sin of the world, which He was then expiating?

162. But the struggle ended in a complete victory. While the poor disciples were sleeping away the hours of preparation for the crisis which was at hand, He had thoroughly equipped Himself for it; He had fought down the last remnants of temptation; the bitterness of death was past; and He was able to go through the scenes which followed with a calmness which nothing could ruffle, and a majesty which converted His trial and crucifixion into the pride and glory of humanity.

163. **The Trial** - He had just overcome in this struggle when through the branches of the olives He saw, moving in the moonlight down the opposite slope, the mass of His enemies coming to arrest Him. The traitor was at their head. He was well acquainted with his Master's haunt [121] and probably hoped to find Him there asleep. For this reason he had chosen the midnight hour for his dark deed. It suited his employers well too, for they were afraid to lay hands on JESUS in the day-time, dreading the temper of the Galilean strangers who filled the city. But they knew how it would overawe His friends, if, getting His trial over during the night, they could show

Him in the morning, when the populace awoke, already a condemned criminal in the hands of the executors of the law. They had brought lanterns and torches with them, thinking they might find their victim crouching in some cave, or that they might have to pursue Him through the wood. But He came forth to meet them at the entrance to the garden, and they quailed like cravens before His majestic looks and withering words. He freely surrendered Himself into their hands, and they led Him back to the city. It was probably about midnight; and the remaining hours of the night and the early hours of the morning were occupied with the legal proceedings which had to be gone through, before they could gratify their thirst for His life.

164. There were two trials, an ecclesiastical one and a civil one, in each of which there were three stages. The former took place, first before Annas, then before Caiaphas and an informal committee of the Sanhedrim, and, lastly, before a regular meeting of this Court; the latter took place, first before Pilate, then before Herod, and, lastly, before Pilate again.

165. The reason for this double legal process was the political situation of the country. Judaea, as has been already explained, was directly subject to the Roman Empire, forming a part of the province of Syria, and being governed by a Roman officer, who resided at Caesarea. But it was not the practice of Rome to strip those countries which she had subdued of all the forms of native government. Though she ruled with an iron hand, collecting her taxes with severity, suppressing every sign of rebellion [122] with promptitude, and asserting her paramount authority on great occasions, yet she conceded to the conquered as many of the insignia as possible of their ancient power. She was especially tolerant in matters of religion. Thus the Sanhedrim, the supreme ecclesiastical court of the Jews, was still permitted to try all religious causes. Only, if the sentence passed was a capital one, its execution could not take place without the case being tried over again before the governor. So that, when a prisoner was convicted by the Jewish ecclesiastical tribunal of a capital crime, he had to be sent down to Caesarea and prosecuted before the civil court, unless the governor happened to be at the time in Jerusalem. The crime of which JESUS was accused was one which naturally came before the ecclesiastical court. This court passed on Him a death sentence. But it had not the power to carry it out. It had to hand Him on to the tribunal of the governor, who happened at the time to be in the capital, which he generally visited at the Passover.

166. JESUS was conducted first to the palace of Annas. He was an old man of seventy, who had been high priest a score of years before, and still retained the title, as did also five of his sons who had succeeded him, though his son-in-law Caiaphas was the actual high priest. His age, ability and family influence gave him immense social weight, and he was the virtual, though not formal, head of the Sanhedrim. He did not try JESUS, but merely wished to see Him and ask a few questions; so that He was very soon led away from the palace of Annas to that of Caiaphas, which probably formed part of the same group of official buildings.

167. Caiaphas, as ruling high priest, was president of the Sanhedrim, before which JESUS was tried. A legal meeting of this court could not be held before sunrise, perhaps about six o'clock. But there were many of its [123] members already on the spot, who had been drawn together by their interest in the case. They were eager to get to work, both to gratify their own dislike to Him and to prevent the interference of the populace with their proceedings. Accordingly they resolved to hold an informal meeting at once, at which the accusation, evidence, and so forth might be put into shape, so that, when the legal hour for opening their doors arrived, there might be nothing to do but to repeat the necessary formalities and carry Him off to the governor. This was done; and,

while Jerusalem slept, these eager judges hurried forward their dark designs.

168. They did not begin, as might have been expected, with a clear statement of the crime with which He was charged. Indeed, it would have been difficult for them to do so, for they were divided among themselves. Many things in His life which the Pharisees regarded as criminal were treated by the Sadducees with indifference; and other acts of His, like the cleansing of the temple, which had enraged the Sadducees, afforded gratification to the Pharisees.

169. The high priest began with questioning Him as to His disciples and doctrine, evidently with the view of discovering whether He had taught any revolutionary tenets, which might form a ground of accusation before the governor. But JESUS repelled the insinuation, indignantly asserting that He had ever spoken openly before the world, and demanded a statement and proof of any evil He had done. This unusual reply induced one of the minions of the court to smite Him on the mouth with His fist - an act which the court apparently did not rebuke, and which showed what amount of justice He had to expect at the hands of His judges. An attempt was then made to bring proof against Him, a number of witnesses repeating various statements they had heard Him make, out of which it was hoped an accusation might be constructed. But it turned [124] out a total failure. The witnesses could not agree among themselves; and when at last two were got to unite in a distorted report or a saying of His early ministry, which appeared to have some color of criminality, it turned out to be a thing so paltry that it would have been absurd to appear with it before the governor as the ground of a serious charge.

170. They were resolved on His death, but the prey seemed slipping out of their hands. JESUS looked on in absolute silence, while contradictory testimonies of the witnesses demolished each other. He quietly took His natural position far above His judges. They felt it; and at last the president, in a transport of rage and irritation, started up and commanded Him to speak. Why was He so loud and shrill? The humiliating spectacle going on in the witness-box and the silent dignity of JESUS were beginning to trouble even these consciences, assembled in the dead of night.

171. The case had completely broken down, when Caiaphas rose from his seat, and, with theatrical solemnity, asked the question. "**I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ the Son or God.**" It was a question asked merely in order to induce JESUS to criminate Himself. Yet He who had kept silence when He might have spoken now spoke when He might have been silent. With great solemnity He answered in the affirmative, that He was the Messiah and the Son of GOD. Nothing more was needed by His judges. They unanimously pronounced Him guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death.

172. The whole trial had been conducted with precipitancy and total disregard of the formalities proper to a court of law. Everything was dictated by the desire to arrive at guilt, not justice. The same persons were both prosecutors and judges. No witnesses for the defense were thought of. Though the judges were doubtless perfectly [125] conscientious in their sentence, it was the decision of minds long ago shut against the truth and possessed with the most bitter and revengeful passions.

173. The trial was now looked upon as past, the legal proceedings after sunrise being a mere formality, which would be got over in a few minutes. Accordingly, JESUS was given up as a

condemned man to the cruelty of the jailers and the mob. Then ensued a scene over which one would gladly draw a veil. There broke forth on Him an Oriental brutality of abuse which makes the blood run cold. Apparently the Sanhedrists themselves took part in it. This Man, who had baffled them, impaired their authority and exposed their hypocrisy, was very hateful to them. Sadducean coldness could boil up into heat enough when it was really roused. Pharisaic fanaticism was inventive in its cruelty. They smote Him with their fists, they spat on Him, they blindfolded Him, and, in derision of His prophetic claims, bade Him prophesy who struck Him, as they took their turn of smiting Him. But we will not dwell on a scene so disgraceful to human nature.

174. It was probably between six and seven in the morning when they conducted JESUS, bound with chains, to the residence of the governor. What a spectacle that was! The priests, teachers and judges of the Jewish nation leading their Messiah to ask the Gentile to put Him to death! It was the hour of the nation's suicide. This was all that had come of GOD's choosing them, bearing them on eagles' wings and carrying them all the days of old, sending them His prophets and deliverers, redeeming them from Egypt and Babylon, and causing His glory for so many centuries to pass before their eyes! Surely it was the very mockery of Providence. Yet GOD will not be mocked. His designs march down through history with resistless tread, waiting not on the will of man; and even this tragic hour, when the Jewish nation was turning His dealings [126] into derision, was destined to demonstrate the depths of His wisdom and love.

175. The man before whose judgment-seat JESUS was about to appear was Pontius Pilate, who had been governor of Judaea for six years. He was a typical Roman, not of the antique, simple stamp, but of the imperial period; a man not without some remains of the ancient Roman justice in his soul, yet pleasure-loving, imperious and corrupt. He hated the Jews whom he ruled, and, in times of irritation, freely shed their blood. They returned his hatred with cordiality, and accused him of every crime, maladministration, cruelty, and robbery. He visited Jerusalem as seldom as possible; for, indeed, to one accustomed to the pleasures of Rome, with its theaters, baths, games, and gay society, Jerusalem, with its religiousness and ever-smoldering revolt, was a dreary residence. When he did visit it, he stayed in the magnificent palace of Herod the Great; it being common for the officers sent by Rome into conquered countries to occupy the palaces of the displaced sovereigns.

176. Up the broad avenue, which led through a fine park, laid out with walks, ponds and trees of various kinds, to the front of the building, the Sanhedrists and the crowd which had joined the procession, as it moved on through the streets, conducted JESUS. The court was held in the open air, on a mosaic pavement in front of that portion of the palace which united its two colossal wings.

177. The Jewish authorities had hoped that Pilate would accept their decision as his own, and without going into the merits of the case, pass the sentence they desired. This was frequently done by provincial governors, especially in matters of religion, which, as foreigners, they could not be expected to understand. Accordingly, when he asked what the crime of JESUS was, they replied, "**If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee.**" But he was not in the mood of concession, [127] and told them that, if he was not to try the culprit, they must be content with such a punishment as the law permitted them to inflict. He seems to have known something of JESUS. "**He knew that for envy they had delivered Him.**" The

triumphal procession of Sunday was sure to be reported to him; and the neglect of JESUS to make use of that demonstration for any political end may have convinced him that He was politically harmless. His wife's dream implied that JESUS had been the subject of conversation in the palace; and perhaps the polite man of the world and his lady had felt the ennui of their visit to Jerusalem relieved by the story of the young peasant enthusiast who was bearding the fanatic priests.

178. Forced against their hopes to bring forward formal charges, the Jewish authorities poured out a volley of accusations, out of which these three clearly emerged - that He had perverted the nation, that He forbade to pay the Roman tribute, and that He set Himself up as a king. In the Sanhedrim they had condemned Him for blasphemy; but such a charge would have been treated by Pilate, as they well knew, in the same way as it was afterwards treated by the Roman governor Gallio, when preferred against Paul by the Jews of Corinth. They had therefore to invent new charges, which might represent JESUS as formidable to the government. It is humiliating to think that, in doing so, they resorted not only to gross hypocrisy, but even to deliberate falsehood; for how else can we characterize the second charge, when we remember the answer He gave to their question on the same subject on the previous Tuesday?

179. Pilate understood their pretended zeal for the Roman authority. He knew the value of this vehement anxiety that Rome's tribute should be paid. Rising from his seat to escape the fanatical cries of the mob, he took JESUS inside the palace to examine Him. It was a solemn moment for himself, though he knew it not. What a [128] terrible fate it was which brought him to this spot at this time! There were hundreds of Roman officials scattered over the empire, conducting their lives on the same principles as his was guided by; why did it fall to him to bring them to bear on this case? He had no idea of the issues he was deciding. The culprit may have seemed to him a little more interesting and perplexing than others; but He was only one of hundreds constantly passing through his hands. It could not occur to him that, though he appeared to be the judge, yet both he and the system he represented were on their trial before One whose perfection judged and exposed every man and every system which approached Him. He questioned Him in regard to the accusations brought against Him, asking especially if He pretended to be a king. JESUS replied that He made no such claim in the political sense, but only in a spiritual sense, as King of the Truth. This reply would have arrested any of the nobler spirits of heathendom, who spent their lives in the search for truth, and was perhaps framed in order to find out whether there was any response in Pilate's mind to such a suggestion. But he had no such cravings and dismissed it with a laugh. However, he was convinced that, as he had supposed, there lurked nothing of the demagogue or Messianic revolutionist behind this pure, peaceful and melancholy face; and, returning to the tribunal, he announced to His accusers that he had acquitted Him.

180. The announcement was received with shrieks of disappointed rage and the loud reiteration of the charges against Him. It was a thoroughly Jewish spectacle. Many a time had this fanatical mob overcome the wishes and decisions of their foreign masters by the sheer force of clamor and pertinacity. Pilate sought at once to have released and protected Him. But he was a true son of the system in which he had been brought up - the statecraft of compromise and maneuver. Amidst the cries with [129] which they assailed his ears he was glad to hear one which offered him an excuse for getting rid of the whole business. They were shouting that JESUS had excited the populace "**throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee unto this place.**" It occurred to him that Herod, the ruler of Galilee, was in town, and that he might get rid of the troublesome

affair by handing it over to him; for it was a common procedure in Roman law to transfer a culprit from the tribunal of the territory in which he was arrested to that of the territory in which he was domiciled. Accordingly, he sent Him away in the hands of his bodyguard, and accompanied by His indefatigable accusers, to the palace of Herod.

181. They found this princeling, who had come to Jerusalem to attend the feast, in the midst of his petty court of flatterers and boon companions, and surrounded by the bodyguard which he maintained in imitation of his foreign masters. He was delighted to see JESUS, whose fame had so long been ringing through the territory over which he ruled. He was a typical Oriental prince, who had only one thought in life - His own pleasure and amusement. He came up to the Passover merely for the sake of the excitement. The appearance of JESUS seemed to promise a new sensation, of which he and his court were often sorely in want; for he hoped to see Him work a miracle. He was a man utterly incapable of taking a serious view of anything, and even overlooked the business about which the Jews were so eager, for he began to pour out a flood of rambling questions and remarks, without pausing for any reply. At last, however, he exhausted himself, and waited for the response of JESUS. But he waited in vain, for JESUS did not vouchsafe him one word of any kind.. Herod had forgotten the murder of the Baptist, every impression being written as if on water in his characterless mind; but JESUS had not forgotten it. He felt that Herod should have been ashamed to look the [130] Baptist's friend in the face; He would not stoop even to speak to a man who could treat Him as a mere wonderworker, who might purchase his judge's favor by exhibiting his skill; He looked with sad shame on one who had abused himself till there was no conscience or manliness left in him. But Herod was utterly incapable of feeling the annihilating force of such silent disdain. He and his men of war set JESUS at naught, and, throwing over His shoulders a white robe, in imitation of that worn at Rome by candidates who were canvassing for office, to indicate that He was a candidate for the Jewish throne, but one so ridiculous that it would be useless to treat Him with anything but contempt, sent Him back to Pilate. In this guise JESUS retraced His weary steps to the tribunal of the Roman.

182. Then ensued a course of procedure on the part of Pilate by which he made himself an image of the timeserver, to be exhibited to the centuries in the light falling on him from CHRIST. It was evidently his duty, when JESUS returned from Herod, to pronounce at once the sentence of acquittal. But, instead of doing so, he resorted to expediency, and, being hurried on from one false step to another, was finally hurled down the slope of complete treachery to principle. He proposed to the Jews that, as both he and Herod had found Him innocent, he should scourge and then release Him; the scourging being a sop to their rage, and the release a tribute to justice.

183. The carrying out of this monstrous proposal was, however, interrupted by an incident which seemed to offer to Pilate once more a way of escape from his difficulty. It was the custom of the Roman governor on the Passover morning to release to the people any single prisoner they might desire. It was a privilege highly prized by the populace of Jerusalem, for there were always in jail plenty of prisoners who, by rebellion against the detested foreign yoke, had made themselves the heroes of the multitude. [131] At this stage of the trial of JESUS, the mob of the city, pouring from street and alley in the excited Oriental fashion, came streaming up the avenue to the front of the palace, shouting for this annual gift. The cry was for once welcome to Pilate, for he saw in it a loophole of escape from his disagreeable position. It turned out, however, to be a noose through which he was slipping his neck. He offered the life of JESUS to the mob. For a moment they hesitated. But they had a favorite of their own, a noted leader of revolt against the Roman

domination; and besides, voices instantly began to whisper busily in their ears, putting every art of persuasion into exercise in order to induce them not to accept JESUS. The Sanhedrists, in spite of the zeal they had manifested the hour before for law and order, did not scruple thus to take the side of the champion of sedition; and they succeeded only too well in poisoning the minds of the populace, who began to shout for their own hero, Barabbas. **"What, then, shall I do with Jesus?"** asked Pilate, expecting them to answer, "Give us Him too." But he was mistaken; the authorities had done their work successfully; the cry came from ten thousand throats, **"Let Him be crucified!"** Like priests, like people; it was the ratification by the nation of the decision of its heads. Pilate, completely baffled, angrily asked, **"Why, what evil hath He done?"** But he had put the decision into their power; they were now thoroughly fanaticized, and yelled forth, **"A way with Him; crucify Him, crucify Him!"**

184. Pilate did not yet mean to sacrifice justice utterly. He had still a move in reserve; but in the meantime he sent away JESUS to be scourged - the usual preliminary to crucifixion. The soldiers took Him to a room in their barracks, and feasted their cruel instincts on His sufferings. We will not describe the shame and pain of this revolting punishment. What must it have been to Him, with His honor and love for human nature, to be handled by these [132] coarse men, and to look so closely at human nature's uttermost brutality! The soldiers enjoyed their work and heaped insult upon cruelty. When the scourging was over, they set Him down on a seat, and, fetching an old cast-off cloak, flung it, in derisive imitation of the royal purple, on His shoulders; they thrust a reed into His hands for a scepter; they stripped some thorn-twigs from a neighboring bush, and, twining them into the rough semblance of a crown, crushed down their rending spikes upon His brow. Then, passing in front of Him, each of them in turn bent the knee, while, at the same time, he spat in His face, and plucking the reed from His hand, smote Him with it over the head and face.

185. At last, having glutted their cruelty, they led Him back to the tribunal, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. The crowds raised shouts of mad laughter at the soldiers' joke; and, with a sneer on his face, Pilate thrust Him forward, so as to meet the gaze of all, and cried, **"Behold the man!"** He meant that surely there was no use of doing any more to Him; He was not worth their while; could one so broken and wretched do any harm? How little he understood his own words! That "Ecce Homo" of his sounds over the world and draws the eyes of all generations to that marred visage. And lo, as we look, the shame is gone; it has lifted off Him and fallen on Pilate himself, on the soldiery, the priests, and the mob. His outflashing glory has scorched away every speck of disgrace and tipped the crown of thorns with a hundred points of flaming brightness. But just as little did Pilate understand the temper of the people he ruled, when he supposed that the sight of the misery and helplessness of JESUS would satisfy their thirst for vengeance. Their objection to Him all along had been that one so poor and unambitious should claim to be their Messiah; and the sight of Him now, scourged and scorned by the alien soldiery, yet still claiming to be their King, raised their [133] hate to madness, so that they cried louder than ever, **"Crucify Him, crucify Him."**

186. Now at last, too, they gave vent to the real charge against Him, which had all along been burning at the bottom of their hearts, and which they could no longer suppress: **"We have a law,"** they cried, **"and by that law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."** But these words struck a chord in Pilate's mind which they had not thought of. In the ancient traditions of his native land there were many legends of sons of the gods, who in the days

of old had walked the earth in humble guise, so that they were indistinguishable from common men. It was dangerous to meet them, for an injury done them might bring down on the offender the wrath of the gods, their sires. Faith in these antique myths had long died out, because no men were seen on earth so different from their neighbors as to require such an explanation. But in JESUS Pilate had discerned an inexplicable something which affected him with a vague terror. And now the words of the mob, "**He made Himself the Son of God,**" came like a flash of lightning. They brought back out of the recesses of his memory the old, forgotten stories of his childhood, and revived the heathen terror, which forms the theme of some of the greatest Greek dramas, of committing unawares a crime which might evoke the dire vengeance of Heaven. Might not JESUS be the Son of the Hebrew Jehovah - so his heathen mind reasoned - as Castor and Pollux were the sons of Jupiter? He hastily took Him inside the palace again, and, looking at Him with new awe and curiosity, asked, "**Whence art Thou?**" But JESUS answered him not one word. Pilate had not listened to Him when He wished to explain everything to him; he had outraged his own sense of justice by scourging Him; and if a man turns his back on CHRIST when He speaks, the hour will come when he will ask and receive no answer. The proud governor [134] was both surprised and irritated, and demanded, "**Speakest Thou not to me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?**" to which JESUS answered with the indescribable dignity of which the brutal shame of His torture had in no way robbed Him, "**Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above.**"

187. Pilate had boasted of his power to do what he chose with the prisoner; but he was in reality very weak. He came forth from his private interview determined at once to release Him. The Jews saw it in his face; and it made them bring out their last weapon, which they had all along been keeping in reserve: they threatened to complain against him to the emperor. This was the meaning or the cry with which they interrupted his first word, "**If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend!**" This had been in both their minds and his all through the trial. It was this which made him so irresolute. There was nothing a Roman governor dreaded so much as a complaint against him sent by his subjects to the emperor. At this time it was specially perilous; for the imperial throne was occupied by a morbid and suspicious tyrant, who delighted in disgracing his own servants, and would kindle in a moment at the whisper of any of his subordinates favoring a pretender to royal power. Pilate knew too well that his administration could not bear inspection, for it had been cruel and corrupt in the extreme. Nothing is able so peremptorily to forbid a man to do the good he would do as the evil of his past life. This was the blast of temptation which finally swept Pilate off his feet, just when he had made up his mind to obey his conscience. He was no hero, who would obey his convictions at any cost. He was a thorough man of the world, and saw at once that he must surrender JESUS to their will.

188. However, he was full not only of rage at being so completely foiled, but also of an overpowering religious [135] dread. Calling for water, he washed his hands in the presence of the multitude, and cried, "**I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.**" He washed his hands when he should have exerted them. Blood is not so easily washed off. But the mob, now completely triumphant, derided his scruples, rending the air with the cry, "**His blood be upon us and on our children!**"

189. Pilate felt the insult keenly, and, turning on them in his anger, determined that he, too, should have his triumph. Thrusting JESUS forward more prominently into view, he began to

mock them by pretending to regard Him as really their king, and asking, "**Shall I crucify your king?**" It was now their turn to feel the sting of mockery; and they cried out, "**We have no king but Caesar.**" What a confession from Jewish lips! It was the surrender of the freedom and the history of the nation. Pilate took them at their word, and forthwith handed JESUS over to be crucified.

190. **The Crucifixion** - They had succeeded in wresting their victim from Pilate's unwilling hands, "**and they took Jesus and led Him away.**" At length they were able to gratify their hatred to the uttermost, and they hurried Him off to the place of execution with every demonstration of inhuman triumph. The actual executioners were the soldiers of the governor's guard; but in moral significance the deed belonged entirely to the Jewish authorities. They could not leave it in charge of the minions of the law to whom it belonged, but with undignified eagerness headed the procession themselves, in order to feast their vindictiveness on the sight of His sufferings.

191. It must by this time have been about ten o'clock in the morning. The crowd at the palace had been gradually swelling. As the fatal procession, headed by the Sanhedrists, passed on through the streets, it attracted great multitudes. It happened to be a Passover holiday, [136] so that there were thousands of idlers, prepared for any excitement. All those especially who had been inoculated with the fanaticism of the authorities poured forth to witness the execution. It was, therefore, through the midst of myriads of cruel and unsympathizing onlookers that JESUS went to His death.

192. The spot where He suffered can not now be identified. It was outside the gates of the city, and was doubtless the common place of execution. It is usually called Mount Calvary, but there is nothing in the Gospels to justify such a name, nor does there seem to be any hill in the neighborhood on which it could have taken place. The name Golgotha, "**place of a skull,**" may signify a skull-like knoll, but more probably refers to the ghastly relics of the tragedies happening there that might be lying about. It was probably a wide, open space, in which a multitude of spectators might assemble; and it appears to have been on the side of a much frequented thoroughfare, for, besides the stationary spectators, there were others passing to and fro who joined in mocking the Sufferer.

193. Crucifixion was an unspeakably horrible death. As Cicero, who was well acquainted with it, says, it was the most cruel and shameful of all punishments. "Let it never," he adds, "come near the body of a Roman citizen; nay, not even near his thoughts, or eyes, or ears." It was reserved for slaves and revolutionaries whose end was meant to be marked with special infamy. Nothing could be more unnatural and revolting than to suspend a living man in such a position. The idea of it seems to have been suggested by the practice of nailing up vermin in a kind of revengeful merriment on some exposed place. Had the end come with the first strokes in the wounds, it would still have been an awful death; but the victim usually lingered two or three days, with the burning pain of the nails in his hands and feet, the torture of overcharged veins, and, worst of all, his intolerable thirst, constantly [137] increasing. It was impossible to help moving the body so as to get relief from each new attitude of pain; yet every movement brought new and excruciating agony.

194. But we gladly turn away from the awful sight, to think how by His strength of soul, His

resignation, and His love, JESUS triumphed over the shame, the cruelty, and horror of it; and how, as the sunset with its crimson glory makes even the putrid pool burn like a shield of gold and drenches with brilliance the vilest object held up against its beams, He converted the symbol of slavery and wickedness into a symbol for whatever is most pure and glorious in the world. The head hung free in crucifixion, so that He was able not only to see what was going on beneath Him, but also to speak. He uttered seven sentences at intervals, which have been preserved to us. They are seven windows by which we can still look into His very mind and heart, and learn the impressions made on Him by what was happening. They show that He retained unimpaired the serenity and majesty which had characterized Him throughout His trial and exhibited in their fullest exercise all the qualities which had already made His character illustrious. He triumphed over His sufferings not by the cold severity of a Stoic, but by self-forgetting love. When He was fainting beneath the burden of the cross in the Via Dolorosa, He forgot His fatigue in His anxiety for the daughters of Jerusalem and their children. When they were nailing Him to the tree, He was absorbed in a prayer for His murderers. He quenched the pain of the first hours of crucifixion by His interest in the penitent thief and His care to provide a new home for His mother. He never was more completely Himself the absolutely unselfish Worker for others.

195. It was, indeed, only through His love that He could be deeply wounded. His physical sufferings, though intense and prolonged, were not greater than have been borne by many other sufferers, unless the exquisiteness of His bodily [138] organism may have heightened them to a degree which to other men is inconceivable. He did not linger more than five hours - a space of time so much briefer than usual, that the soldiers, who were about to break His legs, were surprised to find Him already dead. His worst sufferings were those of the mind. He whose very life was love, who thirsted for love as the hart pants for the water-brooks, was encircled with a sea of hatred and of dark, bitter, hellish passion, that surged round Him and flung up its waves about His cross. His soul was spotlessly pure; holiness was its very life; but sin pressed itself against it, endeavoring to force upon it its loathsome contact, from which it shrank through every fiber. The members of the Sanhedrim took the lead in venting on Him every possible expression of contempt and malicious hate, and the populace faithfully followed their example. These were the men He had loved and still loved with an unquenchable passion; and they insulted, crushed, and trampled on His love. Through their lips the Evil One reiterated again and again the temptation by which He had been all His life assaulted, to save Himself and win the faith of the nation by some display of supernatural power made for His own advantage. That seething mass of human beings, whose faces, distorted with passion, glared upon Him, was an epitome of the wickedness of the human race. His eyes had to look down on it, and its coarseness, its sadness, its dishonor of GOD, its exhibition of the shame of human nature were like a sheaf of spears gathered in His breast.

196. There was a still more mysterious woe. Not only did the world's sin thus press itself on His loving and holy soul in those near Him; it came from afar-from the past, the distant, and the future - and met on Him. He was bearing the sin of the world; and the consuming fire of GOD's nature, which is the reverse side of the light of His holiness and love, flamed forth against Him, to scorch [139] it away. So it pleased the Lord to put Him to grief, when He who knew no sin was made sin for us.

197. These were the sufferings which made the cross appalling. After some two hours, He withdrew Himself completely from the outer world and turned His face towards the eternal world. At the same time a strange darkness overspread the land, and Jerusalem trembled beneath

a cloud whose murky shadows looked like a gathering doom. Golgotha was well-nigh deserted. He hung long silent amidst the darkness without and the darkness within, till at length, out of the depths of an anguish which human thought will never fathom, there issued the cry, "**My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?**" It was the moment when the soul of the Sufferer touched the very bottom of His misery.

198. But the darkness passed from the landscape and the sun shone forth again. The spirit of CHRIST, too, emerged from its eclipse. With the strength of victory won in the final struggle, He cried, "**It is finished!**" and then, with perfect serenity, breathed out His life on a verse of a favorite psalm: "**Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.**"

199. **The Resurrection and Ascension** - There never was an enterprise in the world which seemed more completely at an end than did that of JESUS on the last Old Testament Sabbath. Christianity died with CHRIST, and was laid with Him in the sepulcher. It is true that when, looking back at this distance, we see the stone rolled to the mouth of the tomb, we experience little emotion; for we are in the secret of Providence and know what is going to happen. But, when He was buried, there was not a single human being that believed He would ever rise again before the day of the world's doom.

200. The Jewish authorities were thoroughly satisfied of this. Death ends all controversies, and it had settled the [140] one between Him and them triumphantly in their favor. He had put Himself forward as their Messiah, but had scarcely any of the marks which they looked for in one with such claims. He had never received any important national recognition. His followers were few and unimportant. His career had been short. He was in the grave. Nothing more was to be thought of Him.

201. The breakdown of the disciples had been complete. When He was arrested, "**they all forsook Him and fled.**" Peter, indeed, followed Him to the high priest's palace, but only to fall more ignominiously than the rest. John followed even to Golgotha, and may have hoped against hope that at the very last moment, He would descend from the cross to ascend the Messianic throne. But even the last moment went by with nothing done. What remained for them but to return to their homes and their fishing as disappointed men, who would be twitted during the rest of their lives with the folly of following a pretender, and asked where the thrones were on which He had promised to seat them?

202. JESUS had, indeed, foretold His sufferings, death and resurrection. But they never understood these sayings; they forgot them or gave them an allegorical turn; and, when He was actually dead, these yielded them no comfort whatever. The women came to the sepulcher on the first Christian Sabbath, not to see it empty, but to embalm His body for its long sleep. Mary ran to tell the disciples, not that He was risen, but that the body had been taken away and laid she knew not where. When the women told the other disciples how He had met them, "**their words seemed to them as idle tales and they believed them not.**" Peter and John, as John himself informs us, "**knew not the Scripture, that He should rise from the dead.**" Could anything be more pathetic than the words of the two travelers to Emmaus, "**We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel**"? When the [141] disciples were met together, "**they mourned and wept.**" There never were men more utterly disappointed and dispirited.

203. But we can now be glad that they were so sad. They doubted that we might believe. For how is it to be accounted for, that in a few days afterwards these very men were full of confidence and joy, their faith in JESUS had revived, and the enterprise of Christianity was again in motion with a far vaster vitality than it had ever before possessed? They say the reason of this was that JESUS had risen, and they had seen Him. They tell us about their visits to the empty tomb, and how He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the other women, to Peter, to the two on the way to Emmaus, to ten of them at once, to eleven of them at once, to James, to the five hundred, and so forth. Are these stories credible? They might not be, if they stood alone. But the alleged resurrection of CHRIST was accompanied by the indisputable resurrection of Christianity. And how is the latter to be accounted for except by the former? It might, indeed, be said that JESUS had filled their minds with imperial dreams, which He failed to realize; and that, having once caught sight of so magnificent a career, they were unable to return to their fishing-nets, and so invented this story, in order to carry on the scheme on their own account. Or it might be said that they only fancied they saw what they tell about the Risen One. But the remarkable thing is that, when they resumed their faith in Him, they were found to be no longer pursuing worldly ends, but intensely spiritual ones; they were no longer expecting thrones, but persecution and death; yet they addressed themselves to their new work with a breadth of intelligence, an ardor of devotion, and a faith in results which they had never shown before. As CHRIST rose from the dead in a transfigured body, so did Christianity. It had put off its carnality. What effected this change? They say it was the resurrection and the sight [142] of the risen CHRIST. But their testimony is not the proof! that He rose. The incontestable proof is the change itself - the fact that suddenly they had become courageous, hopeful, believing, wise, possessed with noble and reasonable views of the world's future, and equipped with resources sufficient to found the Church, convert the world, and establish Christianity in its purity among men. Between the last Old Testament Sabbath and the time, a few weeks afterwards, when this stupendous change had undeniably taken place, some event must have intervened which can be regarded as a sufficient cause for so great an effect. The resurrection alone answers the exigencies of the problem, and is therefore proved by a demonstration far more cogent than perhaps any testimony could be. It is a happy thing that this event is capable of such a proof; for, if Christ be not risen, our faith is vain; but if He be risen, then the whole of His miraculous life becomes credible, for this was the greatest of all the miracles'; His divine mission is demonstrated, for it must have been GOD who raised Him up; and the most assuring glance which history affords is given into the realities of the eternal

204. The risen CHRIST lingered on earth long enough fully to satisfy His adherents of the truth of His resurrection. They were not easily convinced. The apostles treated the reports of the holy women with scornful incredulity; Thomas doubted the testimony of the other apostles; and some of the five hundred to whom He appeared on a Galilean mountain doubted their own eyesight, and only believed when they heard His voice. The loving patience with which He treated these doubters showed that, though His bodily appearance was somewhat changed, He was still the same in heart as ever. This was pathetically shown too by the places which He visited in His glorified form. They were the old haunts where He had prayed and preached, labored and suffered - the Galilean mountain, [143] the well-beloved lake, the Mount of Olives, the village of Bethany, and, above all, Jerusalem, the fatal city which had murdered her own Son, but which He could not cease to love.

205. Yet there were obvious indications that He belonged no more to this lower world. There was a new reserve about His risen humanity. He forbade Mary to touch Him, when she would

have kissed His feet. He appeared in the midst of His own with mysterious suddenness, and just as suddenly vanished out of sight. He was only now and then in their company, no longer according them the constant and familiar intercourse of former days. At length, at the end of forty days, when the purpose for which He had lingered on earth was fully accomplished and the apostles were ready in the power of their new joy to bear to all nations the tidings of His life and work, His glorified humanity was received up into that world to which it rightfully belonged. [144]

## CONCLUSION

206. No life ends even for this world when the body by which it has for a little been made visible disappears from the face of the earth. It enters into the stream of the ever-swelling life of mankind, and continues to act there with its whole force for evermore. Indeed, the true magnitude of a human being can often only be measured by what this after-life shows him to have been. So it was with CHRIST. The modest narrative of the Gospels scarcely prepares us for the outburst of creative force which issued from His life when it appeared to have ended. His influence on the modern world is the evidence of how great He was; for there must have been in the cause as much as there is in the effect. It has overspread the life of man and caused it to blossom with the vigor of a spiritual spring. It has absorbed into itself all other influences, as a mighty river, pouring along the center of a continent, receives tributaries from a hundred hills. And its quality has been even more exceptional than its quantity.

207. But the most important evidence of what He was, is to be found neither in the general history of modern civilization nor in the public history of the visible Church, but in the experiences of the succession of genuine believers, who with linked hands stretch back to touch Him through the Christian generations. The experience of myriads of souls, redeemed by Him from themselves and from the world, proves that history was cut in twain by the appearance of a Regenerator, who was not a mere link in the chain of common men, but One whom the race could not from its own resources have produced - the perfect Type, [145] the Man of men. The experience of myriads of consciences, the most sensitive to both the holiness of the Divine Being and their own sinfulness that the world has ever seen yet able to rejoice in a peace with GOD which has been found the most potent motive of a holy life, proves that in the midst of the ages there was wrought out an act of reconciliation by which sinful men may be made one with a holy GOD. The experience of myriads of minds, rendered blessed by the vision of a GOD who to the eye purified by the Word of CHRIST is so completely Light that in Him there is no darkness at all, proves that the final Revelation of the Eternal to the world has been made by One who knew Him so well that He could not Himself have been less than Divine.

208. The life of CHRIST in history cannot cease. His influence waxes more and more; the dead nations are waiting till it reach them, and it is the hope of the earnest spirits that are bringing in the new earth. All discoveries of the modern world, every development of juster ideas, of higher powers, of more exquisite feelings in mankind, are only new helps to interpret Him; and the lifting-up of life to the level of His ideas and character is the program of the human race. [146]

~ end of chapter 7 ~