

phrases and must be interpreted as such. Nothing is to be gained by looking at them one by one in a literal, prosaic way, as if they fixed any definite time or occasion with precision. The new wine and the true passover which should fulfil the Jewish feast are simply symbols of the New Kingdom which He would set up on the earth when He should come again. All the various forms of statement alike involve the promise of His return and of the inauguration of a perpetual festival of truth and righteousness for the world when the Kingdom of God should be finally established on the earth.

The origin of the peculiar phraseology in which this is expressed is easily explained. Strange and even somewhat sensual as the figure may seem to us, the idea of the perfected Kingdom of God as a great festival or supper at Messiah's coming is one that was quite familiar to the Jewish mind in the time of Christ. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," said a Jew that sat at meat with Him one day in the house of a Pharisee, as if this was the feature of the Kingdom that most appealed to his imagination. (Luke xiv., 15.) Nor was it without some justification in the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah, predicting the blessed future of Jerusalem in the Messianic time, can find no better figure whereby to set it forth to the popular mind. "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined." (Is. xxv., 6.) Ezekiel uses much the same comparison, but gives it a different turn by making it a grim banquet of his slain enemies for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the field. (Ezek. xxxix., 17-20.) The Apocalypse of John uses both forms of the figure in almost the same connection. (Rev. xix., 7-9, 17-18.) It appears in at least two of the parables of Jesus illustrative of the Kingdom. (Matt. xxii., 2-14, Luke xiv., 15-24.) And on this very evening of the passover during the feet-washing, He says to His disciples, "I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom." (Luke xxii., 30.) This same feast would in some sense be the fulfilment of the passover. Whatever, therefore, may have been the exact form of words used by Christ, all three forms of stating the anticipated time of reunion would give precisely the same sense to the mind of a Jew. There would be no consciousness of any difference in meaning. All alike point to His coming again for the establishment of His Kingdom. It is needless to show how appropriate such an idea was under the circumstances. It was the very assurance the disciples needed to relieve the gloom of the previous announcement of His death.

But if this much be regarded as made good, we are now prepared to go a step further.