

No. 28. TESTIMONY TO CHRIST.

To read—*St. Matthew xvi. 13; xvii. 13.*

I. CHRIST ACKNOWLEDGED. (xvi. 13-20.) *The place.* Cæsarea Philippi at the extreme north of Palestine. Christ retired there for prayer (*St. Luke ix. 18*), as before His baptism, so now before His Transfiguration. *The question.* What is the current opinion about Me? Phrase, "Son of Man," only used of Christ by Himself. *The answer.* Some, as Herod, think Him John the Baptist risen from the dead. Some think Him Elijah foretold by Malachi (*Mal. iv. 5*); others, the prophet foretold by Moses (*Deut. xviii. 15*). What does St. Peter say? Christ, *i.e.*, anointed Messiah—sent from God.

Son, *i.e.*, the only begotten son of the Father.

St. Peter's reward for this confession—

(a) *New blessedness* as taught by God Himself.

(b) *New name*—Peter or "stone" part of a rock—as defender of the faith.

(c) *New honour*—as preaching and helping on the Church of Christ. Christ Himself is the rock (*Eph. ii. 20*), the corner-stone (*1 St. Pet. ii. 6*), the foundation (*Isa. xxviii. 16*); as such should prevail against His enemies, should build His Church.

II. CHRIST DENIED. (21-28.) Christ, having just spoken of His Kingdom now foretells His sufferings, etc.—pain, death, resurrection. Peter, foremost to confess Him, now foremost to rebuke Him. How is he answered? Same words said to him as to Satan in the wilderness. Why? Because tempting Christ to give up the pain He must suffer. Peter, just now a

rock of strength, has become an "offence," *i.e.*, rock of stumbling, because was thinking as man thinks, not the things of God.

As Christ, so shall His followers be. They must—

(a) *Deny* themselves, as did Jesus. (*Acts iv. 37.*)

(b) *Lose* life if need be, as St. Stephen.

(c) *Receive* future reward. (*Heb. xii. 2.*)

The soul worth more than all in this life. Why? Because it is undying, capable of infinite happiness in Christ's kingdom.

III. CHRIST TRANSFIGURED. (xvii. 1-13.) Three chosen disciples catch glimpse of glories of Christ's Kingdom. The *time*, evening. The *place*, thought to be Mount Tabor, north of Palestine. The *vision*, bright cloud coming down, Christ's face lighted up like the sun, His raiment shining, His companions Moses and Elias. The *conversation*, not about His Kingdom and glory, but about His death. (*See St. Luke ix. 31.*) Three persons spoke.

(a) St. Peter wanted to make tents and stay in glory of the vision.

(b) Moses and Elias spoke of the glory of His death.

(c) God the Father glorified Christ, and bade all listen to Him.

Disciples fall asleep—Christ remains communing with the Father—Moses and Elias return to heaven—Christ wakes disciples, cheers them with His voice, and all descend mountain.

LESSONS. 1. The blessing of communion with God.

2. The duty of listening to His voice.

3. The glory of self-denial, suffering for Christ.

4. The eternal glory of heaven.