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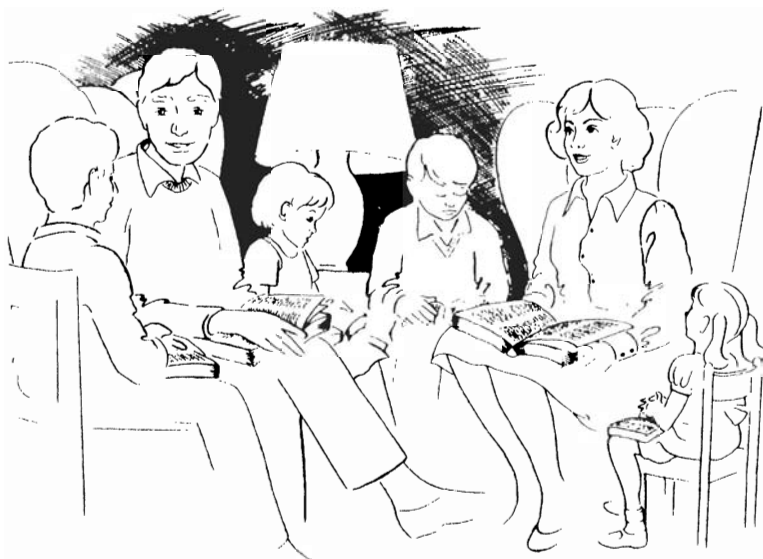
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# The Story of the Bible



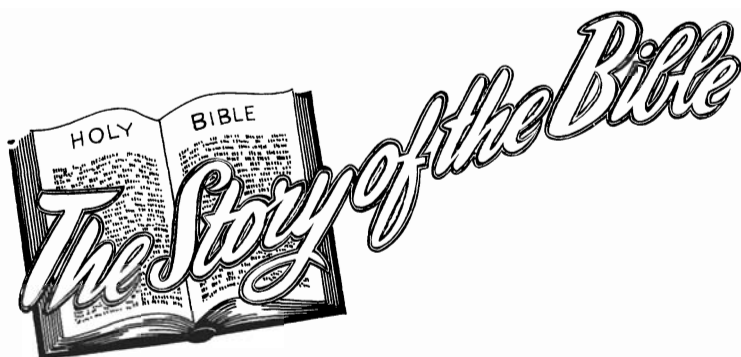
*A detailed exposition of the Bible  
discussed within the family circle  
by H. P. Mansfield*

*Edited by Graeham E. Mansfield*



The children of the Phillips family gather with their parents for a daily reading of the Bible — an important part of their lives. Then they discuss together the remarkable events recorded in the greatest Book in all the world.





## *From the Teachings of the Master to Him Setting His Face to Go to Jerusalem*

**T**HIS sixth volume of our *Story of the Bible* continues the dramatic narrative of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes us into some of the challenges he received from friends and foes, whilst through it all, he maintained a wonderful example of dedication and singleness of mind. Upon him all the pictures and types of the Old Testament Scriptures focus; he is the fulfilment of the precepts, prophecies, parables, and principles of the books of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets. He was the fulness of the Father, as he ministered amongst men, showing the wonderful character of Yahweh to those who had ears to hear and eyes to see.

His life is not merely a remarkable and dramatic narrative, but a very profound insight into the work of Yahweh in flesh. It reveals that “God was in Christ

reconciling the world unto Himself” (2Cor. 5:19), and in all that the Master did, said and expounded, he was the embodiment of the Deity amongst mankind.

Yet, there were many who rejected his claim, and set themselves to pervert his teaching. The Scribes and Pharisees led the perverse spirit, and attempted to destroy the Lord and his work. Though, for a time, they seemed to be successful, in the end, he was the Victor, for he lives!

The power of his life continues to draw disciples to his fearless, uncompromising teaching; the strength of his character convinces the unrighteous to seek to imitate him in his determination to follow after righteousness; the wonder of his obedience is the most compelling force of example to emulate. But the loveliness of his deportment, selfless kindness, forbearance toward the weak and erring, graciousness in word and deed, are the most powerful, transforming influences available to mankind. By this means the human heart can recoil from its inherent ugliness, and aspire to the divine beauty. Let us read of the Master, and find in this record the way in which we should “walk in his steps,” awaiting the time when he will return in power and great glory, to complete the work commenced 2,000 years ago.

With this desire we place this volume alongside the preceding five, and continue *The Story of the Bible* in the ministry of the Master, taking us to the great moment when he “set his face to go to Jerusalem” there to place his personal offering on the throne of grace, and to become the minister of redemption for all his people.

— Graeham E. Mansfield.

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## Foreword by Mr. Phillips...

The family gathered around to read about the life of the Master, and to listen to their father expound concerning this wonderful part of the Inspired Scriptures. He pointed out that Christ's life on earth can be divided into five main periods, as set out in the following diagram.



Birth	THIRTY YEARS	FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	Death	Resurrection Forty Days
	Quiet period of Preparation	Period of Introductory Preaching	Period of Popularity	Period of Opposition		Period of Triumph

These periods are roughly divided by the various Passovers which the Lord attended. As a faithful Jew, he kept these festivals as required by the Law, and the Gospels mention these occasions. The first passover in his public ministry is recorded in John 2:13, and was the occasion when he dramatically entered the temple to drive from its precincts those who were desecrating that holy place. The second (though we are not specifically told it was a Passover) is referred to in John 5:1, as the time when the Lord cured the impotent man who was despondently lying helpless and hopeless by the Pool of Bethesda. The third Passover was preceded by the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand hungry people, outlined in John 6:4. The fourth Passover, of course, saw the Lord peacefully sleeping in the tomb, awaiting the joy of resurrection morn.

Each of these Passovers witnessed a significant development in the ministry of Jesus. The first one was followed by a preaching tour which resulted in enthusiastic crowds following him through Galilee. The people, already prepared by the fiery eloquence of John Baptist, listened with delight to the powerful preaching of the prophet from Nazareth, and beheld with wonder and admiration the miracles he did. They found his teaching a great contrast to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, for he spoke with the greatest and most convincing authority, and not as they did by destroying the power of Scripture with the traditions of men. The leaders of the nation, however, moved by jealousy, looked upon him with suspicion. When they found that they could not use him to further their plans, they vigorously opposed him. With Nicodemus, they knew that he was a man "sent from God," but they could not tolerate the unceremonious way he swept their teaching and authority aside, and therefore viewed him with increasing hatred.

The second Passover saw the remarkable miracle by the Pool of Bethesda which aroused the admiration of the people, but hardened the attitude of the leaders against him. They realised Jesus could not be ignored; that both in power and teaching he had the means to overthrow their influence; that he was a man to be watched and feared. The ensuing year saw a succession of similar incidents, with the result that the Lord reached the apex of popularity as far as the people were concerned. They saw in him a leader they desired, and towards the end of that period, they wanted "to take him by force, to make him a king" (John 6:15).

But then his popularity sharply waned. In an uncompromising manner, he bluntly set the truths of God before the multitude in a way that aroused the resentment of the people. Even "many disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). But the Lord was unmoved by this reversal of attitude. He warned his followers that they must free themselves from slavery to sin by which they were bound, if they really wanted salvation; and they, who thought they were already free men, were incensed with the implication that they were no better than the Gentiles in concept and attitude (see John 8:33). Angry words followed, and the incident closed with some of his own followers taking up stones to maim him! It commenced the period of bitter opposition, an opposition that climaxed in the tragedy of the cross.

It was followed by the epoch of triumph. Even the twelve disciples thought the death of the Lord meant the end of all their hopes, for they did not then fully understand the purpose of God, and the triumph of the resurrection. "*We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel,*" was their despondent comment upon the drama of his death (Luke 24:21). But the black mood of depression that had then settled on them was dispelled by the triumph of his resurrection, and when, for forty wonderful days he continued with them, teaching the things prophetically set forth in the Old Testament concerning himself, showing how it was necessary for the "*Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory*" (Luke 24:26), they were moved by an inexpressible joy that completely changed their outlook and lives.

They became different men. Not only did they understand the purpose of God better, not only did they perceive wonderful truths and meanings in the sayings and doings of their Lord that were previously hidden from them, but their earlier timidity was replaced by a confidence, a boldness, and a wisdom that demonstrated to others the transforming influence of Christ upon them. The record states, "*when the people saw the boldness of Peter and John, and*



*perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled! and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13).

Considered in broad outline, the life of the Lord reveals three great principles: [1] That long years of preparation went into a short ministry of three and a half years; [2] That fleshly popularity ended in bitter opposition and hatred; [3] That out of the disgrace of a criminal's death, God raised Jesus to a glorious triumph.

There are lessons in these principles that we need to apply in our lives. [1] Proper preparation is necessary for success in the things of God. Sunday-school work, the daily reading of the Bible, painstaking care with the study of the Word of God are aids to that end. They will help us serve God better, and enable us to testify to others by our conduct, that "we have been with Jesus and have learned of him." [2] Fleshly popularity avails little. Consider the experiences of Jesus. The people swarmed around him, praised him for his words, benefited by his ministry and miracles, but then permitted him to be ignominiously executed as a criminal, perhaps joined in the maniacal shout, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" There is nothing of lasting value that this life can offer. To youth, the world may seem so full of hope — a wonderful adventure — but soon the glory fades, the adventure loses its excitement, pleasure gives way to disappointment and disillusionment, then age begins to take over, and the darkness and inevitability of the grave begins to cast its grim shadow.

What then?

The third principle set forth above provides a means of hope. In Christ, "*out of weakness we can be made strong*" (Heb. 11). Paul taught: "*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death (through baptism and obedience — Gal. 5:24), we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection*" (Rom. 6:5). Thus, if we apply the lessons derived from Christ's life, out of all the frustrations, the trials, the defeats of the present, there can come a glorious triumph (Phil. 4:13).

These three lessons illustrate the value of the study we are undertaking in our *Story of the Bible*.

But perhaps the most powerful lesson of all is the personal impact of Christ upon one's life. I wonder if your experience as you read this volume of *Story*, was anything like mine as I wrote it for my children? In preparation, I had first to study up the sections of the Bible dealing with the life of the Lord, and as I did so, I took the trouble of marking up the margin of my wide-margin Bible with explanatory notes, and then carefully thinking over the things I had discovered through my study.

It impressed upon me an important fact: how far removed my character is from that of the Lord Jesus!

I read about a man who was always kind and patient, who showed anger, it is true, but only because of a righteous cause. How different to the example I often set! That was the kind of lesson brought home to me! Imagine the Lord, constantly wearing himself out in service to the people; bearing with the sniping criticism of some of the leaders; observing that his own disciples were failing to grasp the principles he was setting forth, and yet, in spite of all this, rendering perfect obedience to Yahweh! From whence did he derive the power to do so? The answer to that question is the greatest lesson of his life. He derived it from God. He was the Son of God by birth, and doubtless inherited an aptitude toward spiritual matters that was quite unusual, but he also had to co-operate with God. He had to draw into his life the power of God by study of His Word and by prayer. He could not have succeeded without God, for flesh is weak, and he came in human flesh. Jesus succeeded because God was with him, and God was with him, because he willingly submitted to what God required of him.

Let us try to do likewise.

We can succeed if we use the means that God has made available to us. Paul wrote: "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 4:13). Through Christ, by baptism, we have access to God, and to a power that will enable us to rise above ourselves; and the example that Jesus set is that we should constantly turn to the Father for that help.

How often he sought the wilderness that he might commune with God! How frequently he gave himself to prayer! How intense must have been his study of God's Word that he might know exactly what was required of him!

These are some of the thoughts that flowed through my mind as I studied this section of the Bible to describe these events in *The Story of the Bible*. Each day saw failure as far as I was concerned when I measured my life against his, but each day I was able to thank God that He has provided a means of forgiveness of my shortcomings in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and so, with the example of the Lord himself before me, to try and do a little better.

Let us study his wonderful life from that aspect, and by applying the lessons personally, so build up some resemblance to the Lord, that at his coming he will acknowledge in us a relationship that will ensure for us a place in the Kingdom he will then set up on earth.

**The Editor.**

# *Drama and Activities in Galilee*



**I***T is sometimes inferred that the Bible is silent concerning the family of the Lord Jesus. He was brought up in Nazareth, in the house of the local carpenter, Joseph. He had step-brothers and sisters, and would have enjoyed a warm and loving family environment. Yet, in two dramatic actions he revealed a different outlook from the rest of the siblings. When twelve years of age, as the family visited Jerusalem for Passover, he declared: "I must be about the things of my Father," thereby revealing his remarkable understanding of his appointed mission. Later, about thirty years of age, he journeyed to the area in which John the Baptist was calling the nation to repentance, and submitted to the baptism of righteousness, as the appointed Son of Yahweh.*

*In this he revealed a mind different from the other members of his family. And, as he set himself upon a course of ministry, with a zealousness they could not understand, they became disenchanted with him, and sought to interrupt the course to which he had committed himself.*

*Thus the Master found himself not only challenged by the hierarchy of Judea, but by those of his own natural family. It must have been a very distressing time for the Lord, but he continued to maintain his commitment to his appointed ministry.*

## Chapter 1

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### JESUS' RELATIONS AGAIN TRY TO REBUKE HIM

**A**S Jesus had been teaching his disciples, the house at Capernaum in which they were gathered had gradually filled with people anxious to hear and see him. The large open reception court, which was a feature of houses in those days, and where the Lord most likely was conversing with his disciples, had filled to overflowing until there was no more room.

His relations also heard that he had returned, and though they had been rebuffed before, they decided to make another attempt to talk with him in order to restrain his intense activities.\*

But when they arrived there, they found the house crowded as on their previous attempt, and again they could not get to speak with him. Once more they tried to get a message through to him. "Your mother, and your brethren, stand without, desiring to see you," somebody told him.

But the Lord returned a similar answer as before: "*My mother and my brethren are these which hear the Word of God, and do it!*"

How discouraging it must have been for Jesus to have to put up with such unwarranted interference by members of his own family in the vital work in which he was engaged.

It must have added deeply to his distress. It had been a most tiring day for him, as he had taught the people from the boat in the heat of the sun, and had had them swarming around him even when he tried to obtain the refuge of the house. Now, this ill-judged attempt of his brethren to assert a claim on him that they could not rightly make, must have added to his weariness. The Lord felt an urgent need for some relief from the pressing demands of the crowd, that he might experience sweet, strengthening communion with his Father. But isolation and quietude were necessary for that, and these he could not obtain in Capernaum. He therefore instructed his disciples to make ready to take ship across the lake (Mat. 8:18).

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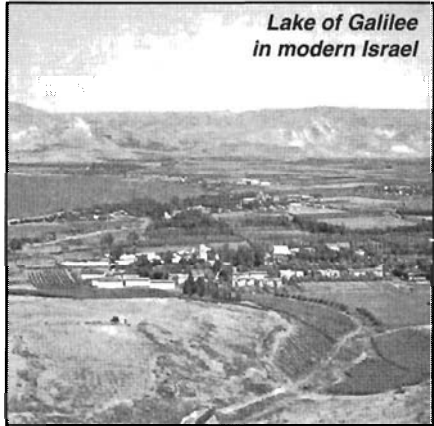
\* That there were two such attempts is evident from the following considerations: Matthew's account (Mat. 12:46-50) clearly states that this visit took place during the discussion recorded in that chapter (see v. 46); Luke, whose account, unlike Matthew's, is set in chronological sequence (Lk. 1:3), by the use of the word "then" shows that Christ's brethren tried to contact him whilst he was delivering the parables to his disciples (Lk. 8:19-21). It would be quite natural for them to make a second attempt, but at the same time, their complete lack of understanding must have added to the weariness and distress of the Lord which was a factor in driving him again from the house to seek relief in isolation from the crowds on the other side of the lake, where he could enjoy refreshing communion with his Father in heaven.

## Chapter 2

---

### THE REQUIREMENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

**W**ORN out with the long exertions of the day, the Lord bent weary steps toward the lake, looking forward to the protection that isolation would give him. Some of the crowd which had gathered at the house, went with him, reluctant to let him go. But if ever Jesus felt his humanity, he did at that moment. The discouraging disbelief and opposition of his own family, as well as the insistent demands of the crowds, had drained him of energy, and left him tired beyond all description.



So the saddened, drooping Saviour made his weary way to the seashore.\*

**“I Will Follow You...”** Among those following him was a certain scribe. He had carefully listened to the teaching of the Lord and having been impressed, had decided, at last, to honour Jesus by becoming a disciple. He could appreciate the value that such a decision would be to Jesus! After all, was he not well-known for his knowledge? \*\* Would not his official title of *scribe* stamp the following of Jesus with a degree of respectability? He was sure that his public declaration of discipleship would be eagerly received and publicly welcomed by the Prophet of Nazareth!

His flaring enthusiasm, his personal egotism, was a great contrast to the meek and lowly Lord, particularly at that moment when he was drooping from very weariness, and eagerly seeking the isolation of the wilderness and personal, intimate communion with his Father.

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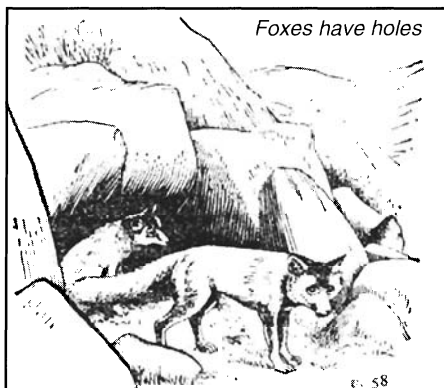
\* The intense weariness of the Lord at this time is indicated by the statement of Mark: “They took him even as he was in the ship” (Mk. 4:36), and by the fact that he instantly fell into such a deep slumber that even the wild storm could not awaken him.

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\*\* This is suggested by the description: “a certain scribe” (Mat. 8:19) as pointing him out as an outstanding scholar, well-known to his contemporaries.

The cavalcade of people stopped as the scribe accosted the Saviour. "Master," he exclaimed boastfully, "I will follow you whithersoever you go!"

Sadly the Lord looked at him. He could see that the scribe before him had been caught up in the prevailing zeal of the people who had eagerly crowded around him all day long. But what did that enthusiastic young scribe know of the real demands of discipleship, the personal sacrifice that it required! With penetrating eyes he could see through the effervescence of his abounding optimism and zeal, to the dark cloud of his egotistical conceit. How tired he felt at that moment! The very boast of the scribe emphasised his own utter weariness. Quietly he replied: "The



foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head!"

His call was not one to wealth, honour, glory, and the plaudits of the crowd, but to a discipleship of self-sacrifice, even in those things considered essential by most. At that very moment he was seeking a place to rest, he had no place of shelter where he could quietly recuperate his strength.

And so he proceeded on his way to the lake.

But the scribe did not follow him. His enthusiasm had evaporated by such a reception. It was not what he expected. He had thought that the Lord would have felt honoured to have him in his company!

He returned to the comfort of his home as the Lord made his way to the desolate wilderness.

### **"Let the Dead Bury Their Dead"**

But now another disciple approached Jesus desiring to follow him. There was none of the pompous optimism of the scribe about this man, although he had first a request to make. Catching the attention of Jesus he said: "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father."

It seemed a natural and reasonable request, but actually it indicated that he did not properly comprehend what the call of Christ demands. It requires dedication of self to the things of God as exacting as that demanded of the priests of Israel who were taught that when they were engaged in Yahweh's work they must not

become “defiled for the dead” whether it be father or mother (Lev. 21:11). Their dedication to the work was to be above natural emotions and feelings. As the representative of his Father, Christ likewise expects undivided loyalty, transcending that paid even to father, mother, wife, husband or children (Lk. 14:26). If we give that loyalty to him in faith, God will see that our families do not suffer in consequence; for we serve them best by serving Him first.

In its right place, the attitude of this disciple would have been both proper and desirable, but in publicly announcing his request in such a fashion, he was really indicating that service to Christ came after service to the dead!

Not only is this wrong, but the fact that the Lord had only just come away from the members of his own family whom he rebuked, having denied them in order that he might serve God, made the request quite out of place. The disciple deserved the rebuke he now received, for the Lord replied: “Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead!”

By “the dead,” the Lord meant those who are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), people of the world, who rejected the mercy of Yahweh. When discipleship calls, no other consideration should be allowed to delay instant obedience, no matter how desirable it might be under normal circumstances.

Thus Christ taught these two men the requirements of true discipleship. The first learned the need of humility in service to God; the second was told that he must place first things first in His worship.

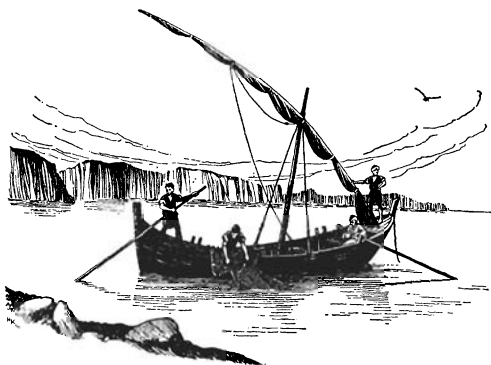
Leaving them to chew over his words, the Lord, at the head of the cavalcade of his disciples, turned his weary steps toward the lake, and the refuge that beckoned from the other side.



## Chapter 3

### FACING THE STORM

**I**T was eventide when the Lord reached the shore. He was completely exhausted by the heavy and continuous labours of the day, and ardently desired a rest from the exacting work of preaching and teaching. The isolation of the other side of the



lake promised this, and immediately stepping into one of the boats owned by one of the disciples, he instructed them to take him across the still waters of the lake. And so, as the sun began to sink in the west, they started off, the small ship dancing over the darkening waves.

It was accompanied by other little ships (Mk. 4:36), for some of the people, loathe to let him go, followed him, hoping to hear him preach, or, perhaps, to witness a miracle when he arrived at his destination.

Jesus, however, felt an urgent need for rest; he was completely tired out. The disciples could discern this, and, directing him to the stern of the ship where steersmen sat, provided him with a cushion, which was probably the ballast bag used by fishermen to balance the boat, (Mk. 4:38). Here he instantly fell into deep slumber.

Gradually the sun set in the west and darkness stole over the quiet waters of the Sea of Galilee. The noise of busy Capernaum was left far behind; the shore receded in the distance; the silence of the Lake surrounded the disciples as they busied themselves with the work of sailing. In the stern of the ship the Lord slept heavily.

**The Storm**  
**Lk. 8:22-25;**  
**Mat. 8:23-27;**  
**Mk. 4:35-41**

But all of a sudden the silence was shattered. A terrific hurricane swept down upon the lake, churning its quiet waters into angry waves. First the disciples could hear the roar of the wind in the distance, next they felt the

lurching lift of the boat as it was caught in a heavy swell, then the storm lashed about them, tossing the ship about wildly in angry waves that threatened to engulf it. For a while they fought the storm, but it seemed a losing battle. Experienced sailors though they were, they

could not control the heaving vessel. It began to ship water, and was in danger of swamping.

And now the roaring wind, the angry waves, the pitching boat, put the disciples in deadly fear. The night, fraught with the greatest danger, hemmed them in on every side like an ominous black wall. All hands were needed to control the boat, to bale out the water, to try and balance the boat, and to assist in the difficult work of keeping it afloat in such a storm.

But the exhausted Lord still slept despite the roaring wind and tossing boat, so worn out was he in tending the needs of suffering humanity.

**“Carest Thou Not  
That We Perish?”**

Panic-stricken with terror, the disciples at last turned to the recumbent figure of the Lord. Irritably they awoke him from his rest, and reproached him for sleeping so soundly while they struggled with the boat. As the mind of the exhausted Lord struggled from the unconsciousness of sleep to face the roaring tornado around him, he heard above the shrieking wind, the despairing shouts of his disciples as they gathered around him in a frightened group.

“Master, Master, we perish!” (Lk. 8:24).

“Lord save us: we perish!” (Mat. 8:25).

“Master, carest thou not that we perish?” (Mk. 4:38).

Now thoroughly awakened, the Lord took in the scene: the roaring wind, the heaving ship, the panic-stricken disciples. What lack of faith they were showing! How thoughtless to ask, “*Carest thou not*



*that we perish?"* Why did they not realise that, as long as they had him with them in the ship, they would not perish! If they were to be so easily deterred by a storm of wind and wave so as to become forgetful that they had access to the One who controls all things, including the waves of the turbulent sea, how would they fare in the storms of life that would inevitably come upon them?

In the gloom of the night, Jesus looked pityingly at the half-circle of frightened faces gathered about him. And before he stilled the shrieking wind and stormy sea, he first rebuked the raging of his disciples!

***"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"*** he asked them.

Arising from his seat, and facing the storm, he rebuked the wind and raging water. Instantly the wind ceased and the waves began to subside; soon there was a complete calm — all brought about by a simple command! At one moment the boat seemed about to founder as it was caught in the trough of mighty waves; the next moment it was riding peacefully upon the still waters!

The disciples were amazed, and in this startling experience, learned a most important lesson: that they need never fear as long as they keep close to their Lord. He who had invited humanity to come unto him and obtain rest (Mat. 11:28-30) is competent to help us in every emergency, so that we need not fear. He will not permit any of his own to be overwhelmed, but will, ultimately, quell the raging storm. On that dark night he pressed home the lesson:

*"Where is your faith?"* he asked, *"Why are you so fearful?"*

The disciples felt uncomfortable before his gaze. They now realised how faithless they had been. They were filled with awe at the circumstances.

"What manner of man is this!" they exclaimed one to another, "for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him!"

Only Yahweh can do this (see Psa. 89:8-9; 107:25-27), and, of course, it was by His power that Christ performed the miracle. The disciples should not have been afraid with him in the ship; they should have kept in mind the wonderfully encouraging words of Psa. 46:1-3:

*God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore will not we fear,  
Though the earth be removed,  
And though the mountains slip into the midst of the sea;  
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,  
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.  
Selah!*

How important it was for the disciples to learn this lesson; how important it is for us to do so also. We do not have to be in a storm-

tossed ship, nor in jeopardy through the elements of nature, to learn the meaning of trouble, for the experiences of life will teach us that lesson, they will present many circumstances when we shall be in danger of spiritually sinking, and when it will seem that we must surely perish. In such times let us show courageous faith; let us remember the calm voice that came out of the storm to still the raging waters and to hush the shrieking wind; let us recall that Yahweh has declared: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). The literal Greek is even more emphatic: "*No, I will not leave thee; no, no, I will not forsake thee!*" By remembering this, and drawing on His strength in time of need, we will be enabled to show the faith that saves (1Jn. 5:4).



## Chapter 4

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### THE MANIACS OF GERASA

**T**HE stormy night had mercifully driven away the other ships that had been seeking to follow the Lord, and it now seemed as though he might be able to enjoy the isolation that he was seeking.

It was not to be however.

The disciples beached the boat on the eastern side of the lake in the country of the Gerasenes.\* It is a rugged, lonely, mountainous place. Steep cliffs rise precipitously out of the water, and in the sides of these cliffs are caves which were then used as places of burying.

**The Lunatic “Legion” Meets Jesus**      The disciples had no sooner landed than they were faced with a monster-like creature that looked half-man and half-beast. He came running toward them, in wild excitement, obviously distraught, his naked body showing the marks of horrible cuts over which the

blood had congealed. Bulging muscles on his body indicated his strength, and it was obvious that he was capable of doing the disciples an injury should he decide to molest them.

But instead of harming them, he humbled himself before the Lord, beseeching Jesus not to hurt him!

Who was this man? And what did this new adventure teach the disciples?

He was known as the maniac of Gerasa. This lonely part of Judea had become notorious through the actions of this dangerous madman who, with a companion similarly afflicted, roamed the district day and night, frightening people with their maniacal shrieks and cries. They were fierce and terrifying creatures, who lurked naked in the mountains, and among the tombs of the dead to the terror of normal folk. The one who ran to meet Jesus was a most grotesque monster of

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\* Matthew calls this “the country of the Gergesenes,” and Mark and Luke the “country of the Gadarenes,” with the result that critics of the Bible have claimed a discrepancy. However textual criticism has established that in the latter places the word should be rendered “*Gerasenes*” (see RV., Diaglott, etc.), and archaeologists have discovered the ruins of an ancient village on the eastern shore of the lake with the name *Khesa* (Gerasa), whilst some distance away was one of the ten cities of the Decapolis, a region of Greek culture, ruled over by Herod Philip, and its ruins are still in existence today. The so-called discrepancy in the two names as given by the three Gospel records is thus reconciled, for Matthew speaks of the district, and Mark and Luke of the local village or town in that district.

frightening appearance, so powerful that he could not be bound with chains, nor kept imprisoned. This had been attempted on several occasions, but invariably he had snapped the chains asunder with the greatest ease. In his mental anguish, he was in the habit of gashing himself with stones so that blood flowed freely from self-imposed wounds, congealing upon his body, making his appearance even more horrifying. This awful creature terrorised the neighbourhood, and nobody could pacify him.

In some way, however, he had heard of Jesus. Perhaps he had listened to some people discussing the Lord, speaking of his power and wisdom, and his claim to be the Messiah. But if so, his distorted, confused mind was unable to take it all in, and knowing nothing of the love of Jesus, he felt only fear.

From the heights above, this fierce creature had seen the disciples' boat pull into the shore. Quickly he clambered down the side of the cliff, and hastened to where the Lord was standing with his apostles. The madman came running unto Jesus, and threw himself down at his feet in an excess of fear.

The compassionate Lord looked pityingly upon the poor, naked, demented creature before him, grovelling in the dust. He was so fierce in his physical strength, so unruly in his disordered mind, so revolting with the dark ugly gashes on his body, so pathetic in his mental weakness, so obviously in need of the help that he alone could give, that Jesus decided to heal him of his affliction.

"Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit," the Lord commanded.\*

The man replied with a maniacal shout, and grovelling on the ground before Jesus, screamed out:

"What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not!"

This was the demented raving of a lunatic: a man completely muddled and mixed up in his mind. The Lord humoured him.

"What is your name?" he enquired.

"My name is Legion," answered the lunatic, "for we are many."

The poor fellow evidently had seen the cohorts of Roman soldiers, whose companies were called *legions*, marching through the district. He knew them to be fierce and unscrupulous men who did not hesitate to oppress the peoples of the countries they conquered, and in the confusion of his madness, he imagined that he was possessed by similar diverse and fierce spirits! He commenced to rave, beseeching the Master that he would not force the evil spirits, which he imagined

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\* Jesus was using the language of the times to describe the healing of mental diseases, as we have shown previously in *The Story of the Bible* (see vol. 5, pp. 284-285). It is suggested that demons (demi-gods) could only survive in living bodies, and therefore the lunatic asked for them to go into swine.

“possessed” him, to leave the country, or drown in the sea!

“Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them!” he pleaded in his ravings.

He was referring to a great herd of some 2,000 swine which could be seen on the slopes above. They were there in defiance of the Law of God given through Moses, which forbade the use of these beasts; for they represent the flesh in its coarsest aspects. Swine are ravenous beasts that feed on carrion, husks, and refuse of all kinds. So greedy are they in their selfishness that they will even eat their own young if denied other food. Their gross-looking snouts are always turned toward the ground, digging in the earth, and they rejoice to wallow in the mire. They are very lazy and sleepy, but at the same time, very destructive, particularly to cultivated gardens and fields.

How like earthy, men of the flesh (2Pet. 2:22)!

The request of the madman also provided a ready means of teaching a powerful lesson to the God-defying and Law-breaking Jews of the district, for if the spirit of lunacy was transferred from the man to the beasts, it would illustrate the cause of the madness apparent in the world: indulgence of the flesh at the expense of God’s principles.

Jesus decided to act upon the plea of the man; but in a way different from what he had imagined, the Master gave command that the spirit of lunacy was to be transferred from him to the swine, and instantly it was done.

Meanwhile, the herdsmen were idly tending the swine unconscious of all that was passing below. But suddenly, they were amazed to observe a remarkable change in the large herd they were watching. One moment the swine were busy rooting up the ground with their long, ugly-looking snouts, greedily grunting as they did so; and the next moment they were acting as though berserk. Snouts were uneasily lifted from the ground, and with heads tossing and powerful bodies pushing their way, the whole herd began to make for the slopes as though chased by some invisible monster. The further they went the more madly they rushed, a squealing, struggling mass of swine’s

***The swine rush  
over the cliff***



flesh, violently pushing and driving its way down the steep slope to plunge headlong into the deep water below, and so be drowned.

### **The Fear of the Townsfolk**

The herdsmen had jumped up in consternation as the herd began to move, but had been unable to do anything. It was all over in a moment, and they could not understand what had caused the swine to act in such an unaccustomed way. They felt the influence of some unseen Power, and probably uneasily remembering that their duties were a violation of the Mosaic Law, rushed from the scene to tell people in the neighbouring town and surrounding country, of the strange behaviour of the animals.

The heavy loss occasioned by the death of such a large herd of swine, the unusual nature of the occurrence, together with the panic of the herdsmen, aroused the curiosity of many people; they left the city to view the place of the drowning, probably to see if they could discover some cause of such a strange incident.

Of the swine they saw no sign. All they saw was the previously wild madman, completely cured of his insanity, clothed and in his right mind and peacefully sitting at the feet of Jesus. His powerful body was now disciplined by a sanity induced by his Lord; his wild maniacal shrieks and cries had given place to sound conversation with Jesus; his once disordered mind now grasped the realities of life and of divine worship.

Such was the transforming impact of Christ's teaching and influence upon this person. No longer did he fear Jesus, but manifested a profound respect and love for him.

Amazed at the suicidal madness of the swine and the saving sanity of the once wild madman, the people began to question the meaning of it all. They had evidence of Christ's power in the cured maniac; but they were more concerned by the loss of their material possessions in the drowned swine, and this now dominated their actions.

In short, they preferred the swine to the Lord!

They were also moved with fear (Lk. 8:37), doubtless realising that the damage they had suffered from the loss of the pigs was punishment for their disobedience to the Law of Yahweh.

So they prayed Jesus that he might depart out of their country!

They rejected the Saviour of the world, preferring their grunting pigs!

They were not alone in doing so: such an attitude is common in the world about us!

Sorrowfully, the Lord turned from such hard-hearted people. The raging sea and maniacal fury of the lunatic had not been sufficient to deter him, but the hardness of the hearts shown by these thoughtless and lightheaded people was enough to do so.



## **Labour for the Cured Lunatic**

The cured lunatic listened to the demands of the townsfolk and watched the preparations of the Lord to leave with greatest dismay.

His previous fear, engendered by his disordered mind, had been replaced with by an ardent love, and he was anxious to follow and serve the Master in any way possible.

But Jesus did not permit it; he had other work for him to do.

“Go home to your friends,” he told him, “and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”

To tell one’s friends of these things is the first duty of discipleship, in contrast to the more official commission granted the apostles. The latter were sent forth to do the work of the Lord as his appointed ambassadors; but disciples proclaim the Truth as an individual privilege in their home towns and among their friends.

Thus Jesus gave this cured madman a wonderful task to perform in demonstrating the sober words of Truth to his friends and acquaintances. The Lord had received two requests; one he had granted and the other he had rejected. He granted the request of the townsfolk when they prayed him to leave their district; he refused the request of the once madman when he asked to follow him. But in so doing, he *punished* the townsfolk by granting their request, and he *rewarded* the cured man by refusing his.

How like the prayers we might utter before Yahweh! To have some of them granted may be indeed to punish us!

Further, does not this incident show that the townsfolk were more insane than the poor wretch who used to go shrieking around the tombs of the dead, cutting himself with stones? Doubtless they mocked at him, not recognising their own folly, and downright madness.

How like the world about us!

Meanwhile, the cured madman returned to his own city (Lk. 8:39) and began to teach about the love and compassion of God in Jesus, demonstrating by his own changed state the value and transforming influence of these wonders. Then he visited other towns throughout the surrounding district of Decapolis, arousing great interest in Jesus, so that when next the Lord visited this place, he found a great company of people ready to hear him (Mk. 7:31; 8:1).

## **What the Miracle Foreshadowed**

As we have seen before, all Christ’s miracles were designed to teach important lessons, and this one did also. Firstly, it demonstrated the only solution for the otherwise incurable, insane state of the world. It is only the Lord Jesus who is competent to cast out the spirit of madness apparent in the political and religious worlds of today (Rev. 16:14). But in addition, the miracle seems to foreshadow the sobering, healing influence of the Gospel on those who are insanely

caught up with the emotional ravings of an apostate religious system. In that regard, it is in the power of anybody, in possession of the Truth, to repeat, with Yahweh's help (see Acts 15:14; Jn. 6:44) the miracle performed on the maniac of Gerasa, turning men from the influence of fear to that of love, and stilling their insane religious ravings by bringing them under the influence of sound words of Truth. Paul experienced such a miracle, for his early, frightening ravings (Acts 9:1) ceased when Christ's power was felt in his life, and, as he told Timothy: "*God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*" (2Tim. 1:7).

Consider the following facts:

1. The man's insanity seems to have been religious in character, for in his ravings he mouthed the names of *Jesus* and of *God* (Mk. 5:7). The Apostasy does likewise.
2. By declaring his name to be *Legion* he identified himself with Rome — as does also the Apostasy.
3. His conception of religion was governed by fear and not by love — true also of the religion of Rome today.
4. He had a mad companion (Mat. 8:28) who, apparently, was not cured, showing that Christ exercised his Father's power with care and discrimination. We are told to do likewise (Mat. 7:6).
5. He dwelt among tombs (cf. Mat. 23:27), and in the wilderness (Rev. 17:3). Rome does likewise.
6. He was constantly gashing himself with stones, and crying out in the manner of the religious fury of the priests of Baal (1Kgs. 18:28), typical of the madness of the Apostasy.
7. Only Jesus could tame him — and only the Gospel of Jesus in the mouths of his servants today can tame the religious fury of Rome's adherents.
8. He came from the Gentile district of Decapolis which means *The Region of the Ten* — a number apocalyptically associated with Rome (Rev. 17:12).
9. The inhabitants of the district preferred the company of swine to the Lord, but the swine perished in the deep — which is to be the fate of that which Rome's adherents prefer rather than the company of the Lord (see Rev. 18:20-24).
10. The madman, once cured, was sent back to the inhabitants of the Gentile cities to testify of God's goodness to him — and this is the privilege of those converted now and in the future (Rev. 19:10).
11. Christ left the city of the townspeople to its fate, and according to Josephus, Gadara, the main city of the lunatic's district, was the first city in northern Palestine to be destroyed by Vespasian (Wars, 3.7.1). It was completely overwhelmed — and this is to

be the fate of spiritual Babylon in the Age to come (Rev. 16:19).

In this incident of the curing of the madman, therefore, there seems to be a foreshadowing of the power of the Gospel on those whom Yahweh might call out of spiritual Babylon, as well as the ultimate destruction of the system represented by it.

**Jesus Welcomed Back at Capernaum** Rejected by the people of Gadara, the Lord returned with his disciples by boat to Capernaum, no doubt enjoying the solitude, peace and relaxation of sailing the now quiet waters of the lake.

Landing at Capernaum, it was noised abroad that he had returned, and soon a crowd had gathered around to meet him. They gave him an enthusiastic welcome, for they were **very pleased to see him again** (Lk. 8:40).

**John's Disciples Question Jesus** Among the crowd was a small group of John Baptist's disciples. They had evidently been told of the answer that Jesus had given the people when they had asked him why it was that John's disciples fasted but the disciples of the Lord did not, and they decided to ask the same question for themselves (Mat. 9:14-17).

"Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" they demanded.

The Lord replied in exactly the same way as he had to the people (see Mk. 2:21-22).<sup>\*</sup> He taught the folly of imposing severe and unnecessary restrictions on new converts during their development as such; for human nature cannot suddenly be initiated into strict austerities without proper preparation to that end.

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<sup>\*</sup> See this discussed with the related parables explained in *The Story of the Bible*, vol. 5, p. 315-320. The answer given by the Lord to the disciples of John was the same as that given to the people recorded in Mk. 2:18-22 or Lk. 5:33-39, but obviously it was given at a different time, for Jesus' conversation with John's disciples was interrupted by the urgent plea of Jairus (Mat. 9:18), whereas Luke shows that much happened after the answer of the Lord to the people and the healing of Jairus' daughter. See note in vol. 5, p. 315.

To illustrate the point, he repeated his parables of the old garment patched with unwrought cloth and of the new wine put into old, stretched wine-skins. The unwrought cloth and the old wine-skins were not appropriate for the work in hand. The unwrought cloth had not been properly prepared, and the stretched wine-skins would be split by the expanding wine. So, he implied, his disciples were not then ready for the restrictions they would later have to endure; and, moreover, the disciples of John were making a mistake in assuming that Christ was setting forth in his teaching the old worn-out principles that were followed by many in Jewry at that time in the teachings of Judaism. The Law of Moses itself was soon to be replaced by the principles of the New Covenant, and there was a need for his disciples to develop in spiritual maturity before they would be ready for the completely dedicated service and the wholehearted sacrifices they would be called upon to ultimately render.

## Chapter 5

### THE NEEDS OF AN IMPORTANT RULER, AND A PITIFUL WOMAN

**J**ESUS' conversation with the disciples of John was suddenly interrupted by a man who pushed his way into the group surrounding the Lord, and, distraught with anxiety, tearfully besought his help. He was Jairus, ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum in which some of the Lord's miracles had been performed. His daughter, aged 12 (Lk. 8:42), was desperately sick, at death's door. Physicians had proved vain. She had responded to no remedy at all, and unless something was done immediately, she would undoubtedly die. Even as Jairus had hurried off to find Jesus, his daughter was sinking fast.

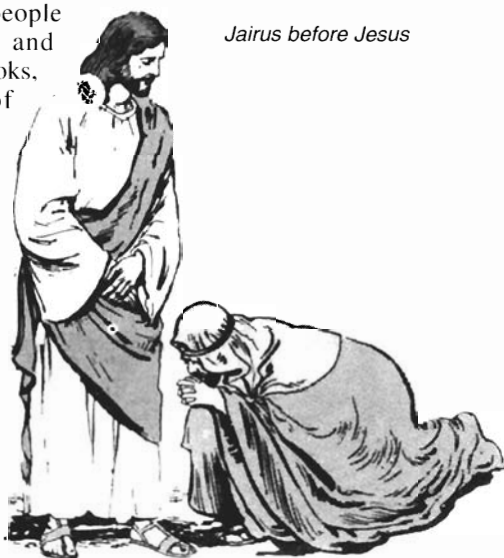
**Jairus Pleads  
Jesus' Help  
(Mat. 9:18-19;  
Mk. 5:22-24;  
Lk. 8:41-42)**

Why had he not sought Jesus earlier? We are not told, but it could have been that Jairus had been influenced by some of the controversy that raged around Jesus, and due to his official position, thought it best to remain aloof from it all, particularly as the Pharisees

and rulers showed animosity toward the Lord. With death ready to strike, however, Jairus set aside any reservations he may have had regarding Jesus, and hastened to seek his help.

Urgently pushing his way through the crowd of people surrounding the Lord, and ignoring their curious looks, he fell at the feet of Christ, and pleaded with deepest feeling for him to come and save his child. "My little daughter lieth at the point of death," he cried piteously, "Come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live!"

His need called forth faith, and the Lord responded. Turning from the disciples of John with



*Jairus before Jesus*

whom he had been speaking, he followed Jairus who eagerly and instantly led the way. Other people, hearing of the mission and hoping to witness a miracle, went with them, so that gradually the company increased in number. Soon a large crowd thronged the Lord as he moved toward the home of the ruler of the synagogue.

**The Nameless Woman's Opportunity** Among the people who heard of the mission of the Lord was a certain woman who had endured a terrible affliction for some twelve years. She suffered constant haemorrhage of such a nature as not only left her weak and sickly, but also cut her off from full communion with God and her fellows (cp. Mk. 5:25 with Lev. 15:25). Any in her condition were considered by the Law of Moses as unclean, treated as lepers and put out of the camp (Num. 5:2). Not only so, but any touching a person in her condition were also considered unclean, and likewise excluded from worship for a time (Lev. 15:19).

This was done to emphasise the seriousness of sin. Even though the poor woman could not help her state, the Law treated such afflictions in this way so as to constantly remind the people that sin comes from within (Mk. 7:20-21), and is natural to the flesh.

Twelve years of painful affliction had left the poor woman weak and sickly. Vainly she had sought the help of physicians, spending all her money on them, but the only result was a worsening of her condition. Made desperate by her sufferings, Jesus was her only hope.

But would he help her? She knew the Law, that anybody touching her would contract legal defilement and would be put out of the synagogue for a time; and she could understand him refusing to take that risk. Moreover, she was so self-conscious of her affliction, that she had not the courage to boldly approach him, as Jairus had done, and publicly seek his help. Nevertheless she believed he could help her, and thus she had faith.

"If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole," she whispered to herself.

She decided to force her way through the crowd, and secretly touch the Lord, confident that he could heal her.

And so this pale, emaciated woman commenced to struggle her way through the crowd. Her very need gave her the courage to conquer her timidity. Spurred on by her confidence in Christ's ability to help, she endured the crushing and bruising this must have entailed, and fought her way through the thronging people, until she found herself close to the back of Jesus. She had now only to put out her hand and touch him as she desired.

What a strange procession that was! In front was the ruler of the synagogue, urging the Lord along as fast as he could, frightened that his 12-year-old daughter might die; behind was this poor woman, a

daughter of Israel, excluded from the synagogue through her 12-year-old affliction, which constituted a living death. The ruler wanted to save his daughter from a physical death; the woman desired a health that would restore her to spiritual life! The synagogue could not help either the daughter or the woman, but could only impose a curse upon them both. Jesus alone had the power to provide for all needs, and lead all beyond the curse of the Law to a higher way of life.

Meanwhile, the woman now had the opportunity she had long sought; she had only to put out her hand, and she could touch the Lord without him knowing! But her understanding of the Law of Yahweh, her very faith in God, caused her to seek a special portion of the Lord's garment, and stooping down, she touched its hem, or border (Mat. 9:20; Lk. 8:44).

This was a most important part of Jewish dress. The Law required that all Jewish people should include a fringe of blue on the hems of their garments. It declared: "Bid the children of Israel that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments... and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue. And it shall be for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of Yahweh and do them: and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes..." (Num. 15:38-39).\*

This fringe of blue on the hem thus served as a reminder to all true Israelites of what was due to Yahweh in obedience to His will, and it seemed to the woman as a most appropriate part of the Lord's garment to touch, to be thus identified with him. She realised that he was a man of God, one who performed all the commandments of the Law, and who recognised that this fringe of blue was not a meaningless formality or mere show, but of particular significance to him.

Moreover, there was doubtless something of personal significance in seeking this part of his garment, and perhaps she indicated thereby that if she were healed, she would give herself more completely to doing the will of Yahweh.

Therefore, quickly and as unobtrusively as possible, she stooped down and touched the hem of his garment. In the crush nobody saw her do it. But was it adequate to her need? She had the answer immediately, for straightway she experienced the impact of miracle. She felt a new strength surging through her body, and knew she was healed of her malady.

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\* Notice that this instruction is found between two accounts of wickedness: the man who rebelled against the instruction of Moses and who was condemned to death (Num. 15:35), and the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (ch. 16:1-21) who were consumed by the judgment of Yahweh in an earthquake. Between both, the commandment concerning a blue hem on the garments of the people is given. The instructions were to strengthen faith and understanding, as every person was to observe the blue hem of others, and thereby be reminded of the divine commands. — *Ed.*

**“Who Touched  
My Clothes?”**

But to the consternation of the woman, the Lord stopped, and turned around on the thronging, excited crowd! “Who touched my clothes?” he demanded. He had felt the virtue, or strength, go forth from him by which the woman was to be healed (Mk. 5:30), for though he had power to perform miracles, they were not done without personal effort and expenditure of energy on his part.

The people, of course, did not realise that a miracle had been performed, and looked at him in amazement. What did he mean? There was a chorus of denials (Lk. 8:45) during which the woman, in terror, remained silent. It was not that she was ungrateful, but she was extremely timid and self-conscious of her affliction, and after all, in view of the legal defilement attached to her complaint, she should not have been mingling with the crowd.

So, taken aback, she said nothing.

Meanwhile, Peter, on behalf of the disciples, gently remonstrated with Jesus.

“Master,” he protested, “all the multitude throng you, so why do you ask, who touched me?”



*Artist's  
impression of  
the Master  
healing the  
woman with an  
issue of blood  
(from an ancient  
Roman fresco)*

"Somebody has touched me," answered Jesus, "for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me!"

As the Lord spoke, his eyes rested on the trembling woman before him. She realised that he knew all that had been done, and now coming before him, she fell at his feet, and openly testified all the truth concerning her problem. She spoke of her affliction, of her need, of her helplessness, how that she had spent all her money on physicians who did her no good, of her conviction that Christ could help her, of her determination to make personal contact with him, and of the wonderful results of her so doing.

It was like a public witness to the saving power of Christ. She had made contact with the divine Altar (Heb. 13:10), and this had cleansed her (see Exo. 29:37). She did what we all must do if we would be cleansed from sin, for we, too, must make personal contact with the Christ-altar to be saved from the polluting effect of sin and mortality of which the flesh is heir; the afflicted woman suffered a living death through that which was the symbol of active sin. Christ alone can save us from spiritual death (Eph. 2:1) as well as physical death (Jn. 11:25), and this he demonstrated and taught on that dramatic day as he followed Jairus the ruler of the synagogue.

He had words of instruction and comfort for the trembling woman before him. "Daughter," he said kindly, "be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague!"

Her faith had given her the victory (1Jn. 5:4), not the mere touching of the garment. It is faith that can save us, and not Christ independent of faith. We must demonstrate that faith in order that he may help us, and sometimes that demands courage. It did so on the part of this poor woman weakened by a terrible affliction. The Lord had allowed her to suffer the indignity of having to publicly confess what she had done in order to bring this essential feature home to her attention. He doubtless knew that she was in the crowd, and yet he had allowed her to suffer the pushing and buffeting she must have received in forcing her way into his presence! It was another method of teaching the people of the need of faith and courage if they would gain the victory and receive the reward that Yahweh alone can give.

Meanwhile, Jairus must have viewed with greatest impatience this interruption, and now he received news that drained him of all hope, and left him a crushed and broken-hearted man.



## Chapter 6

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### JAIRUS' DAUGHTER RAISED FROM THE DEAD

**W**HILST the Lord had been speaking to the sick woman, a group of mourning servants from the house of Jairus had arrived, to report to him the sad news that Jesus' help was too late. "Thy daughter is dead," they told the grief-stricken ruler. "Why troublest thou the Master any further?"

Why indeed! The Lord might be able to help someone with infirmity, but to restore a dead person was beyond all possibility as far as they believed, for neither they, nor Jairus, had heard of the miracle of Nain.

Compassionately, the Lord looked into the hopeless eyes of the stricken father, and then, to the astonishment of all, spoke remarkable words of comfort and assurance: "Be not afraid; only believe and she shall be made whole," he promised.

This was a test on Jairus' faith, and was also designed to teach the people a wonderful truth. Jesus was about to show that the Lord of life was in their midst, and that he was capable not only of restoring the nation (the daughter of Zion) to fellowship (as in the case of the cured woman), but of raising it to newness of life as well (as in the case of the ruler's daughter, figuratively, the believers; Rom. 6:3).

It was a puzzled, solemn procession that continued on its way to the ruler's house, its excitement stilled by the sad news that had been received.

#### **Why Mourn and Weep?**

Outside the house, the noise of mourning from within could be heard. Here Jesus stopped, and commanded that no one should enter except Jairus, Peter, James and John. The Lord had special tasks for these three disciples to do, and thus granted them greater privileges (Mat. 17:1-7; Mk. 14:32-34).

Inside the house, the Lord, for a moment, looked at the mockery of mourning. In those days, professional mourners were employed, some to weep and wail (though they rejoiced in the monetary reward that death gave them!), others to chant sad dirges lamenting death. They were all there. Some were beating their breasts, tearing their garments, heaping dust and ashes on their head, "weeping and wailing greatly."

It was indicative of the hopelessness of man, even under the Law, and it was a token that faith alone can save. So the Lord had told the ruler of the synagogue to "have faith."

At last Jesus spoke, and ordered the tumult to cease. "Why make

ye this ado, and weep?" he asked. "The damsel is not dead but sleepeth!"

The mourners paused in very astonishment! What did he mean? They knew that he had been called for and had agreed to come, but they had no faith that he could raise people from death, and had immediately given way to mourning. His statement, therefore, was received with mocking scorn, much the same as the world at large treats the doctrine of the resurrection (Acts 26:8; 17:32).

Thus the professional mourners commenced to laugh and jeer, but the Lord spent no further time on them, but ordered them out of the house. There is no need for mourning when the Lord of life is present (Rev. 1:18), and besides, the miracle was to be hidden from these scorers, as the Resurrection will be hidden from the mocking world at Christ's coming.

### **"Talitha Cumi"**

The house now empty, the Lord took the father and mother, together with his three apostles who had accompanied him, and made his way into the room where the little girl was lying dead.

Gently he took her by the hand whilst her parents and the disciples looked on wonderingly.

*"Talitha cumi!"* he said.

This is a form of mixed Hebrew for "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise!"

The effect was instantaneous! To the tremendous astonishment and delight of the ruler and his wife, the girl's eyes opened, she sat up on the couch, and then got up and walked.



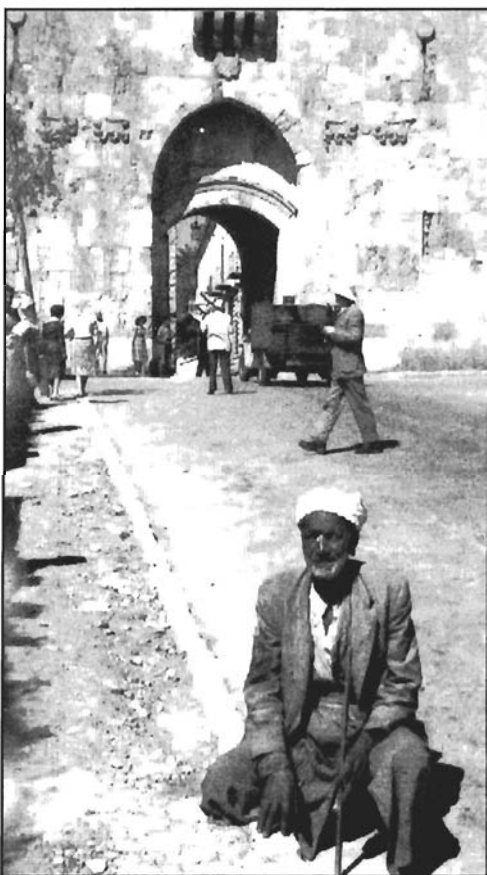
It was an amazing miracle. Full of delight the joyful parents turned to the Lord. What could they do for him? One thing only. Keep the matter to themselves. He did not want the spiritual significance of the miracle submerged by more curious wonder-watchers. Moreover, people did not appreciate the full meaning of what such a miracle purported, and, reasoning from a false standpoint, could be led to make a great mistake (see e.g., Jn. 6:15).

How different was the Lord in his attitude to those who falsely claim to be able to perform miracles today! They want everyone to hear of their boasts and seek their help.

Meanwhile, the Lord demonstrated his understanding of human needs. Whilst the onlookers were still considering the magnitude of power they had witnessed, he drew their attention to a humble service that needed to be done.

He commanded the delighted parents “to give her something to eat.”

So Jesus demonstrated that whilst he is the Lord of life, and has the keys of death and the grave (Rev. 1:18), he recognises our need of daily material requirements, and directed Jairus to attend to these things also.



***Blind man begging  
outside the walls  
of Jerusalem.***

## Chapter 7

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### MIRACLES IN CAPERNAUM: THE BLIND AND THE DUMB ARE CURED

**T**HOUGH Jesus asked Jairus not to publish the remarkable miracle he had performed in restoring life to his daughter,\* it was impossible that such an event should not become widely known. After all, people had heard the mourners' doleful tumult as they wept and wailed at the death of the little girl, had seen them ejected from the house of Jairus, and then, later, observed with wonder the little girl herself walking around full of life and energy!

Such a remarkable miracle could not be kept entirely secret.

For some, however, the incident was but a passing wonder, to be spoken of to their friends in awed tones; but to others it presented a marvellous opportunity. If Jesus could raise the dead, he could help other afflicted people!

#### **Two Blind Men Are Given Sight (Mat. 9:27-31)**

*have mercy on us!"*

But Jesus ignored them completely, and continued on his way.

Nothing daunted, the blind men hastened after him the best they could, stumbling along the street in the darkness that encompassed them, perhaps bumping into folk or obstacles as they made their way along with hands outstretched, and all the time keeping up their

*In a few short verses, the story of two remarkable miracles is told in the Bible, but the lessons revealed therein are so powerful, that a mistake would be made if they were quickly read without thought. We need to try and mentally picture what actually happened, and then draw from the incidents the spiritual lessons that are to be found therein. The life of the Lord is full of instruction, as John reminds us (Jn. 21:25), for the things he did are so significant that we must ponder them closely if we would properly understand why they were selected to be recorded out of the many things he actually did.*

Among the latter were two blind men. They heard of the raising of Jairus' daughter, and when the Lord left the home, they followed him crying piteously: "Thou son of David,

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\* A reason why Jesus may have requested this of Jairus and of others is suggested in Jn. 12:10 where the Jewish authorities decided that they would put Lazarus to death because of the miracle performed on him. Jesus foreknew the growing resentment that would be shown toward him, and realised that the publishing of his miracles would only add fuel to the fire of antagonism whilst accomplishing no good as far as his ministry was concerned.

mournful chant. They felt that they had much to gain from Jesus, and because their need was great, they were not deterred from obtaining it, although they faced difficulties that were in the way. They continued to stumble their clumsy way along, following Jesus with cries for help.

**Faith Gives The Blind Determination** And Jesus let them stumble along! Not that he was cruel or indifferent to their sufferings, not that he wanted to embarrass them, but because he wanted to impress them with the fact that God's gifts are not for those who are not prepared to manifest courage and determination in the face of problems and troubles.

So he ignored them and continued on his way, at last entering into the house in which he was staying in Capernaum.

But the blind men followed him, still beseeching his help.

And now the Lord took heed of them: "Believe you that I am able to do this?" he asked.

"Yes, Lord!" came the instant and eager reply.

They had a confidence born of faith. They recognised him as the Son of David, and knew of the prophecies relating to the coming Messiah. Perhaps their physical blindness had enabled them to concentrate more on the light of Truth, and possibly, as they had sat in a synagogue, without the distractions that sometimes hinder those with sight, they had listened with greater understanding to the glorious words of Isa. 42:6-7, which declare: "I, Yahweh, have called thee [the Messiah, the son of David] in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

Therefore, confidently they had replied to Jesus, "Yes, Lord!"

But Yahweh requires that those who wish to benefit from His goodness must do more than merely *listen* to words of Scripture; they must also *apply* them. Jesus, himself, had taught: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Mat. 7:7).

We must labour for the things of God as the blind men had to stumble after Jesus, and we must constantly pray for help (see Lk. 18:1), as the blind men had to keep up their mournful chant.

That was the lesson the Lord was trying to impress on both the blind men and his disciples; and as this story is recorded in the Bible, it is the lesson he would also teach us!

**Sight for the Blind** Meanwhile, the blind men, having fulfilled all that was required of them, Jesus stretched forth his hand, and touching their eyes, declared: "*According to your faith be it unto you!*"

They had faith, for instantly their eyes were opened, and the first thing they saw was the noble, kindly countenance of their Saviour, full of grace, understanding, and mercy. No greater sight could they see than that!

“See that no man know it,” he commanded, referring to the miracle.

He did not want them telling of his miracle-working power, but rather to concentrate upon the spiritual significance of all that had been done; he wanted them to use their sight to glorify the Father.

So they who had stumbled into the house enclosed in darkness, went forth seeing with strong, steady, confident steps, rejoicing in the goodness of God to them.

But then they made a mistake. Jesus had commanded them not to publish the miracle abroad, but, unfortunately, they did not obey him. Possibly out of a mistaken zeal that all honour should be paid to Jesus, they began to spread abroad his fame throughout the land. They failed to realise that men best honour the Lord by obeying him, and not merely praising him!

Thus, although their eyes had been opened physically, they were still blind to their full responsibilities, and their disobedience seriously interfered with the work of the Lord; for it aroused the enmity of the Pharisees, who tried to counter the fame of Jesus by reiterating their claim that he performed miracles through “Beelzebub, the prince of demons” (Mat. 12:24), and not by the power of God.

### **The Privilege of Speech Restored (Mat. 9:32-33)**

Meanwhile, Jesus made preparations to leave the house in Capernaum for a final preaching tour of Galilee. As he left it, in company with his disciples, he found a large company of people had gathered outside. They had with them a poor afflicted man who was not only dumb, but also mentally affected.

He had not the gift of speech to plead his cause, as had the blind man. His friends had to bring him to Jesus, and seek his help. And, again, the Lord did not fail the plea of compassion. Mercy was extended; the poor, dumb man was healed of his affliction, and began to speak, no doubt in praise of God.

It was a partial fulfilment of Isa. 35:6, “*the tongue of the dumb shall sing...*”

The crowd of people outside the house in Capernaum was greatly impressed. A murmur of applause went up. “It was never so seen in Israel,” declared many of them.

And yet, in a sense, miracles such as these continue even until the present time, inasmuch as men and women have their eyes opened to divine realities, and learn to open their mouths in confession of divine truths, whenever the gospel is preached to them, and they show faith enough to embrace it.

# **Final Preaching Tour of Galilee**

**J**ESUS had already toured Galilee on previous occasions (Mat. 4:23; Lk. 8:1-3), and now does so again in what proved to be his final preaching tour. It aroused the people to a climax of enthusiasm, in the midst of which he again visited his hometown of Nazareth. But there, as before, he found the people cold and indifferent to his message, and completely lacking in a saving faith. Whereas people of other towns warmly applauded the work and ministry of the Lord, the people of that pretty village, perched up on its high hill, saw him only as their carpenter, and refused to acknowledge the divine power that he so clearly manifested. How typical this is of human nature.



## Chapter 1

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### A LAST CHANCE FOR NAZARETH

**T**HE dumb man had interrupted the Lord as he was leaving the house in Capernaum to commence on his third and final preaching tour of Galilee. It was a tour that aroused tremendous enthusiasm among the people.

He took a circuit of the district, travelling along the dusty roads from city to village, proclaiming in each place the refreshing truths of God's Word, entering the synagogues to preach the gospel to the people, and healing those who were afflicted with diseases.

Thus he not only taught and preached the Word, but demonstrated its power by miracles of healing.

Preaching is only really effective when its power is seen in the preacher himself, as it was in Jesus. It does not require the presence of miracle for this to be done today, but it does require sincerity of purpose and the personal application of the principles taught on the part of the teacher if his message is to have any power. The people both heard and saw the influence of God in Christ (2Cor. 5:19), and people today must see and hear the influence of Christ in us (Phil. 4:13; Acts 4:13), if we would be effective servants in his cause.

**Tremendous  
Enthusiasm  
Aroused  
(Mat. 9:35-38;  
Jn. 6:1-2)**

During the Galilean ministry of Jesus, people saw poor, afflicted men and women, with all the marks of horrible diseases upon them, come to the Lord Jesus and be cured. They saw his strong, healing hands outstretched, and heard gracious words of comfort come from his lips. They witnessed marvellous sights. Desperately sick people were instantly healed; crippled people began to walk with strong, confident steps; the deaf heard; the blind saw, as Isaiah had said, Messiah would do (ch. 35:4-6).

These miracles of healing aroused excitement to fever pitch. The preaching tour became a triumphal procession as crowds followed him from place to place, and gathered from all parts to see the preacher, hear his message, and witness his power.

**“A Prophet is Not  
Without Honour  
Except...”  
(Mat. 13:53-58;  
Mk. 6:1-6)**

What of his own town, and the familiar friends among whom he had been brought up? Previously they had tried to kill him when he had preached to them the things of God; they had been filled with bitter resent-

ment because one they had looked upon as a mere carpenter should claim to be a prophet.

But the Lord understood their attitude, and held no grudge against them. He wanted to show them that he was anxious to help them, in spite of their previous murderous intent.

This attitude should have softened their hearts! The reports circulating since throughout the land should have caused them to heed his preaching now!

As later for Judas, the Lord would give them another opportunity to grasp the precious truths he had to offer them. And so, early in his second general Galilean tour, he again turned toward where the despised little village of Nazareth stood perched proudly aloft on its steep mountain overlooking the historic Plain of Esdraelon.

Climbing the steep height, he again walked along the streets where he had often run and played as a child, and turned to the familiar synagogue where, as a young man, he had frequently been appointed to read.

Once again he took the teacher's seat and began to discourse to the people of the things of God. Again he amazed them with his knowledge, and the power of his preaching, as on the previous occasion when he had visited the place (Lk. 4:22). At that time, he had also revealed to the congregation from whence he derived this power, for he read the prophecy of Isa. 61:1-2 to them, and had told them that the prophet's words were being fulfilled before them that very day. But they saw only a man of common parentage, yet marvelled at his understanding, as they did now at his second visit: "From whence hath this man these things?" they asked, "and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" (Mk. 6:1-6).

How petty and foolish they had remained! They conceded that he performed mighty miracles; they recognised the power of his teaching; and yet they failed to acknowledge that these things must come from God!

How unreasonable men naturally are! The record says that they were "offended at him" (Mk. 6:3). To them he was but a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," and in part they fulfilled the prophecy of Isa. 8:14. They stumbled at him because of very familiarity; because they could not believe that one so humble, so close to them, could have a mission so lofty, even though they had to acknowledge the power of his words and deeds. They assessed matters as they saw them from their fleshly viewpoint. They looked



upon him as of humble birth, of indifferent education, and considered his claim of being a prophet to be an impious fraud.

Jesus had an answer for them; one that applies to many others besides the people of Nazareth: "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house," he declared.

The saddest part of this experience was: "He could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them" (Mk. 6:5).

In other words, their unbelief frustrated the power of God. It was not that Jesus lacked the power, but that their attitude made them completely unfit for any help. They refused to accept Jesus and therefore he could not help them.

Amazingly enough (and even Jesus "marvelled because of their unbelief" — Mk. 6:6) among those so affected were members of his own family. Later they learned their mistake, and one of them wrote: "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (Jas. 4:8). That is the great principle taught in the visits of the Lord to Nazareth. We must learn to co-operate with God before we will be fit subjects to reflect and reveal the power of His Word.

So the Lord sorrowfully shook the dust of Nazareth from his feet, and again descending the winding road leading to the plain beneath, he continued his preaching ministry throughout Galilee at places where the people were more receptive to his teaching.

### **Multitudes Flock After Him (Mat. 9:36-38)**

Isolated Nazareth might have received Jesus coldly, but not populous and warm-hearted Galilee! People flocked to see and hear the Lord from all quarters, gathering to him in large companies as he went from village to village. They followed him like a flock of sheep, eagerly listening to his message, indifferent to the discomfort that they endured by so doing.

The Lord looked upon them with compassion. How like sheep they were! But where were their shepherds? There were none to help except himself! As he looked with sympathy at the multitude, his mind went to the prayer of Moses under similar conditions. Moses, like Jesus, was a leader of the people, and they flocked to him in large numbers, so that he could not give adequate attention to them all. He then prayed unto Yahweh that some help might be given him to look after the people, so that: "the congregation of Yahweh be not as sheep which have no shepherd" (Num. 27:17).\*

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\* Notice that the statement of Mat. 9:36 is a quotation from Num. 27:17, and that as the prayer of Moses preceded the appointment of Joshua, so the prayer of Jesus preceded the appointment of the disciples to their preaching labours. See also Isa. 53:6; Eze. 34:5.

Moses had prayed unto Yahweh, and had been blessed with help in the person of Joshua, and now the Lord, reminding the disciples of that fact, called upon them to remember it, and apply the exhortation.

“The harvest truly is plenteous,” he declared, “but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.”

A waving field of golden grain invites many reapers and demands haste. So it was then with the Gospel harvest, and still remains that way today. There is ample work to be done, but few labourers equipped to do it. What then must one do? Jesus has given the answer: “Pray the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers.” Such a prayer should ever accompany our preaching efforts if the greatest amount of good is to be derived from them.

### **The Disciples Sent Forth Two by Two**

Having laid the foundation for their work in his own preaching methods, the Lord now sent the disciples forth that they might gain experience in this work, in preparation for the time when he would ascend into heaven.

He had directed their attention to the multitudes which were “like sheep without a shepherd,” and had reminded them of the prayer of Moses who asked for help. And now, in the twelve, there were the “labourers” sent forth to tend the harvest.

He first equipped them by giving them power to perform miracles. Though that power is not available today (for there is no need of it, the witness of prophecy testifying completely to the truth of God’s Word), those who take the Word of Truth to the people must see that they are properly equipped to do so. That is why Paul counselled Timothy that a “novice” should not be given a position of responsibility in an ecclesia. Proper, effective teaching will only come from those who are competent to supply it, and that means that they first must serve an apprenticeship at the Word. If they are ignorant of God’s revelation, or lack an understanding of it adequate to the requirements of the labour they are about to perform, they will not be effective servants, or “labourers” in God’s cause.

Jesus then sent the disciples forth to gain experience. His intention seemed to have been threefold:

1. To prepare them for their future work after he had ascended into heaven, for he made reference to trials which they would then have to endure (Mat. 10:18-19, etc.). They had had opportunity of carefully observing his methods, and now he sent them forth to gain experience for future labours.
2. Like the twelve spies whom Moses sent forth, the disciples went to search the land and bring of the fruits thereof (Num. 13:1-20). Later they would be sent to the Gentiles.

3. Mk. 6:7 says that they went forth in pairs. They did this for witness (2Cor. 13:1) and for fellowship. Thus each could help the other, and all would learn to co-operate with one another. Mutual labour is a great aid to more effective service. The wise man taught: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up... if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him..." (Ecc. 4:9-12).

4. They were to go forth with a prayer upon their lips, and as "labourers in the harvest." Such are workers and not merely talkers. They are required to labour tirelessly in the broiling sun, in hot and heavy work. But the period of time for such labour is short, and the wages offered more than abundantly compensate (see 1Cor. 9:8-11; 1Tim. 5:18).

The disciples were sent out two by two, and Matthew, in his account, couples their names in pairs, as though this was how they were divided up. Thus Simon Peter, the hot-headed, impetuous disciple, was coupled with Andrew his brother, who was much more deliberate and thoughtful. Thomas the doubter, went with Matthew who saw in all the actions of the Lord, a fulfilment of prophecy, as his Gospel shows. Philip, who was rather of a retiring nature, was joined with Bartholomew, also known as Nathanael, who had an earnest conviction and did not hesitate to apply it. Simon the Canaanite,\* whose very upbringing made him reckless of consequences, was linked with Judas Iscariot, whose training as a man of the city made him careful of material matters.

There seems, therefore, to have been a deliberate selection of personalities in the coupling of one disciple with the other, so that each might be of greater help to his fellow.

### **Instructions for Preaching**

Jesus painstakingly instructed them as to how they should preach. At this stage, he limited their activity, for they were not then ready for the difficulties and trials that would beset them when later they took the message throughout the Gentile world; and he also taught them to carefully discriminate in the people to whom they would preach. He commanded: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise

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\* The R.V. renders this as "Canaanite," a member of the nationalist party known as *Zealots* (from the Hebrew *qanna*, or Greek *kananaïos*). The Zealots were a party in Judah which would stop at nothing to gain their ends — a violent, determined, hot-headed group of people.

the dead; cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give" (Mat. 10:5-8).

There were very good reasons for all these instructions.

The Gospel was to be preached to the Jews first because of their privileged position in the sight of God. On the other hand, "the way of the Gentiles" was to be avoided because, as Jesus had earlier taught, they characteristically seek first the things of this world (Mat. 6:31-34). They were told not to go into the cities of the Samaritans because, in general, they would only accept a doctrine that was disassociated with the worship in Jerusalem (Lk. 9:53). They were, however, told to seek out the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." The sheep, in contradistinction to "the goats" were those in Israel who would be prepared to hearken to the message; and they were "lost" in the sense that they were in need of redemption (Jer. 50:6, 17).

To such people they were to "preach," and the word that Jesus used (*kerusso*) means "to herald as a public crier; to proclaim loudly." So they were to boldly proclaim the purpose of God publicly before the "lost sheep of Israel."

Finally, they were to perform miracles, and so illustrate that the power of God was with them.

In a measure, these principles should be adopted by those who proclaim the Gospel message today. Avoiding the incurably worldly-minded (typified by the Gentiles), and standing apart from sectarianism that refuses to recognise the true destiny of Jerusalem, they are to boldly proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God, and show the fruits of its teaching in a way of life that spiritually heals the sick, cleanses lepers, raises the dead, and so forth.

The *equipment* of the apostles was to be faith. Jesus told them not to be concerned with material possessions, such as a wallet (scrip) for the journey, changes of raiment, or anxiety as to where their daily food was to come from. Like the Levites in Israel, the apostles were without material inheritance, and dependent upon the goodness of Yahweh. He would see that they were cared for.

Their *method* was to be a careful seeking out of the righteous. When they came to a city they had to "search out" (RV) who in it was worthy (Mat. 10:11), and abide with him. They were to be careful, therefore, not to identify the cause of Christ with any who would dishonour it (cf. 1Cor. 5:11), nor to pass by a worthy person lacking this world's goods in order to dwell in a rich man's house. They were to seek the peace of those among whom they remained, praying Yahweh that He would grant this blessing. On the other hand, if people were to refuse the message, they were to ceremoniously shake off the dust of their feet, and warn them of the consequences of such rejection: "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in that day of judgment than for that city."

Their *attitude* was to be one of wisdom and harmlessness. They were to exercise the attributes of sheep among wolves. Sheep are clean, harmless, patient, useful animals, but they lack any form of defence. Wolves, on the other hand, are fierce and implacable, crafty, greedy, ravenous. Among men such as these, the apostles had no adequate defence, except in Yahweh. Therefore, they were to behave with the utmost prudence, never giving cause for provocation or needlessly exposing themselves to danger. They were to be “wise as serpents” (and no animal equals the serpent in the rapidity and skill it shows in escaping danger), and as “harmless as doves.” A serpent, even a harmless one, excites the enmity of most people, but who would kill a dove! So, Jesus warned the apostles to be both wise and harmless, for one attribute leads to the other.

The *scope* of their work was to be worldwide. He told them that the time would come when they would be brought before governors and kings for his sake, and for a testimony against them and the Gentiles (v. 18), and in doing so, he forewarned them that the time would come when they would take the message to all the world, including the Gentiles. They were to proclaim a faithful testimony, without being over-concerned about making converts, but rather, following the example of faithful Noah (Heb. 11:7), giving a testimony *against* the world.

Their *defence* was to be in God (vv. 19-22). They were to speak only His truths and not to rely upon worldly wisdom.

Their *reception* would be one of hostility (vv. 23-25). He spoke to them of the dangers they would face: how men would come to hate them because they fearlessly proclaimed the truths of God’s Word. As a result, a tide of bitterness would arise against them, so that men would seek to kill them, and they would be hated on all sides for “his name’s sake.” When this occurred, they were to turn from the centre of hostility and seek a different sphere of activity, for “You shall not have gone over [the Greek word signifies “complete,” or “accomplish”] the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.”\* He reminded them that they were his disciples, and as such, they could not expect any different treatment than he received. As the Pharisees had contemptuously aligned him with Beelzebub, so they could expect to have to endure scandal for his name’s sake.

Their *preaching* was to be forthright and fearless (vv. 26-31). He

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\* This saying indicates that there was unlimited scope for apostolic labours, and that the work he has set his disciples is never finished! There will never be a want of work “till the Son of man be come.” That statement is true to these days, but there was an immediate sense in which it could apply to apostolic days, for the judgment of AD70 on the Land of Judea is described in Scripture as a “coming” of the Lord (Mat. 24:27). Christ thus taught the apostles that if they received persecution in one city to flee to the next, for there were plenty of cities to be served.

told them to be bold and open in preaching, and to avoid the hypocrisy so rampant at that time, for "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed." He had earlier instructed them quietly and patiently relating to the things of God, but now they were to go forth and proclaim it on all sides. "Preach it upon the housetops" where all would see and hear! Don't hide it, but choose the most public method of drawing the attention of all to what you have to say. Men might hate them for this, and might seek to kill them, but their heavenly Father would overshadow their lives, and nothing would be done without Him allowing it. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," he said. What a tremendous statement was that! When all the magnitude and immensity of creation is considered, it is amazing that the Creator of it all should take heed of mere man and his needs. But that is a truth that Jesus impressed upon his disciples that day as he prepared them to go forth and preach. They would see angry men about them, cursing them and threatening to destroy them; but he exhorted them to look beyond this appearance of things and "see" the invisible Creator who would overshadow their lives for good, and ultimately gather them into His kingdom.

Their *pleasure* was to be in doing Christ's will (vv. 32-33). They were to seek to please him, confessing him before all men in the assurance that if they did so, he would confess them before the Father.

Their *life* was to become a dedicated sacrifice (vv. 34-39). He warned them that the time for peace is not now, but rather that it is a time of argument, contention and even war. In the face of these circumstances, a man's first love must be toward Christ. He must be prepared to "take up his cross and follow him"\* in the realisation that he who seeks to please himself will lose everything, whereas he who is prepared to deny himself now, will ultimately gain all things.

Their *reward* is assured (vv. 40-42). He sent them out as his apostles, men with a specific commission, so that in receiving them, men received Christ because he had given them the authority to so go forth. He told them that the smallest kindness (even the giving of a drink of water) that is shown to a disciple in Christ's name would not lose its reward; and he thus emphasised that it is not in lavish,

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\* This is an allusion to the custom of the Romans who forced criminals to carry their own cross to the execution (cp. Jn. 19:17). The saying thus speaks of the public exhibition of a devoted or dedicated life. The "cross" was the badge of the criminal, and whereas the world is looked upon as criminal by those who have embraced Christ, men of fleshly instincts look upon those who are truly Christ's as criminals (see Gal. 6:14). The first act of bearing such a cross is to be baptised "into the death of Christ" (Rom. 6:3), and this means that the convert must "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24), or, as the term signifies, live in complete awareness and submission to the will of the Father. So important is it that Christ's followers should "carry the cross" in this sense, that he reiterated the need (Mat. 16:24; Lk. 9:23; 17:33; Jn. 12:25).



extravagant display that he takes pleasure, but in the humble, needful, faithful service of love.

### **The Preaching of the Apostles**

Fortified by Christ's example and instructions, the apostles went forth carrying the message of the kingdom of God, and demonstrating the power of its teaching by the miracles that they did.

Jesus also continued in his ministry (Mat. 11:1), preaching the same glorious message in various cities that he visited.



## Chapter 2

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### THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

**I**N the gloomy prison-cell at Machaerus, John Baptist remained shut up for several months. To such an active man as he, this inactivity must have been most frustrating, and often he must have paced up and down the cell wondering when his release would come. From the window of the dungeon, he could look down into the shining waters of the Dead Sea nearly 4,000 feet below, and across to the rugged mountains of Judea in the distance (see vol. 5, pp. 253-254). Sometimes he was visited by his disciples, and from them he learned of the ministry of Jesus, and through them he sent a message to the Lord, designed to stir him to declare himself before the people, and set up the impatiently-awaited kingdom of God (Lk. 7:18-28).

John had been imprisoned because he had dared to criticise the action of Herod marrying the wife of his half-brother, Philip. This had aroused the vindictive hatred of this evil-minded woman, who sought every means to destroy John. Herod, however, believing that John was a prophet feared to destroy him; but, because he also feared his wife, he kept John imprisoned.

#### **A Banquet in the Palace**

The palace at Machaerus was the scene of the greatest excitement and activity. Slaves were hurrying about preparing for a most luxurious banquet for the courtiers, generals and Galilean nobles of Herod. No expense was spared. The best food and drink was to be provided without stint.

Moving through the crowd of servants, supervising every detail of the sumptuous preparations was the notorious Herodias, the wife that the king had robbed from his half-brother.

Perhaps some of the noise of the preparations penetrated into the dungeon where John Baptist was languishing. If so, they only confirmed his opinion of the king and his consort. With fearless, fiery words of rebuke, the stern prophet in his harsh garb had denounced them both in blunt words of condemnation, ignoring alike the flushed, angry rebukes of the king, as well as the implacable and bitter hatred of Herodias. The faithful purity and dauntless courage of the prophet was more than a match for the servile corruptness of the monarch, so that the conscience-stricken king cowered before the fettered prisoner.

But Herodias was not cowered. Like Jezebel before her, she hated the Elijah of her day, and was determined that he must die. But she could not move her weak spouse to action, and awaited impatiently the opportunity that would forever destroy her enemy.

Meanwhile, whilst in prison and in palace the various parties awaited the outcome of the drama, preparations for the feast hastened on apace.

It was the king's birthday (Mk. 6:21), and therefore celebrations of the most lavish kind were being arranged. But Herodias had organised for the occasion a further item of entertainment that was well calculated to please the degraded taste of the king and his company. It was common, in those days, to complete such a feast with some gross and lewd presentation, but on this occasion, Herodias had arranged for her own daughter by a former husband, Salome, a beautiful princess, to dance among the dissolute and half-intoxicated revellers.

The dancing was not only immodest in itself, but also a shameless flaunting of Herod's unlawful marriage, and thus an act of defiance to the poor captive languishing in the dungeon below. In addition, it was part of a careful plot, hatched by the cruel and vindictive Herodias as a trap to destroy her hated enemy, for it was designed to excite the admiration of Herod (whose licentious character she knew so well), and extract from him a promise to put John Baptist to death.

Carefully this evil woman had instructed her daughter what to do.

### **Herod's Offer and Salome's Request**

The drunken orgy was at its height in the brilliantly lit hall of the fortress when the shameless, dancing girl was introduced to the company. Her act was received with acclamation by the dissolute company, as she moved around the tables, "dancing in the midst" (Mat. 14:6; RV, AV mg.) of the guests. They watched her movements with delight, as with drunken voices they shouted their praise. The dance quickened to its climax, the excitement became intense; all



eyes were centred on the girl, and then, suddenly it was all over.

Thunderous applause broke out, echoing through the palace, as intemperate voices acknowledged their admiration of the act. It excited the king beyond all measure. With face flushed with drink, he too proclaimed his approval. In his drunken stupor he decided that she must be adequately rewarded for gracing his feast so well. Rousing himself, calling universal attention to his action, he loudly shouted with an oath that he would give her anything she wanted, even to the half of his kingdom.

But although Herodias had already instructed the girl what she should do, such an offer was too much for Salome to waste on an act of vengeance. What might she not receive! Moreover, she was reluctant to make the demand her mother had already instructed her to make.\* She flew to her mother to report the success of her act, and to again ask: "What shall I request?" It was the moment for which Herodias had planned and for which she awaited. There was but one thing *she* wanted, and for which she was prepared to sacrifice the riches or power her daughter might have received. She wanted vengeance on her enemy. This was the moment of her triumph. Her cruel, beautiful face lit up with anticipation as she contemplated the sweetness of revenge, and without hesitation she hissed out the cruel answer: "***The head of John Baptist on a charger!***"

Back hastened the dancer into the hall of pleasure where still the king and his courtiers were carousing together. Salome approached the king doubtless again applauded by the company. She was about to make her request, and they listened with amused pleasure as to what the beautiful and feminine dancer might request of the king. But what a chill must have fallen upon that company as they heard the grim and grisly request, and as they watched beautiful lips mouth the terrible, evil words: "***I will that thou give me by and by on a charger the head of John the Baptist.***"

It brought to an end the pleasure of the king and of the company. They all knew the dauntless and courageous John, and most of them respected him. But the boast had been made, and confirmed with an oath. In the spirit of bravado before the company the king felt that he was committed by the promise he had made. Nevertheless he was apprehensive as to the result, and irritated at being taken advantage of in such a manner. He was "exceeding sorry" (Mk. 6:26). The words signify "to run around." He tried to think of some way he could get out of his predicament, but could think of no way at all. He was

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\* Salome seems to have been somewhat reluctant to press the request. Mat. 14:8 says that she "being instructed of her mother." The word in the Greek is *proibazo* and signifies "to force forward." The RV renders: "put forward by." She was thus urged on by her merciless mother to make the terrible request that she did.

caught not only because of the oath he had uttered, but because he had proclaimed his intention before all the company in his hall, and felt he had to go on with his promise.

He gave the order, the executioner was immediately sent to the dungeon to carry out the sentence, and soon, in the presence of the now sobered company, the head of John Baptist, grotesquely offered on a plate as a final act of contempt and humiliation, was presented to the dancing girl, and she, in turn, offered it to her mother.

The forthright, courageous, faithful voice of the feared prophet had been stilled by the murderer's sword.

**The Burial of John** Thus the Lord's great forerunner had been wantonly sacrificed to the licentious fascination of a young woman, instigated by the implacable vengeance of her mother, and as the result of the rash oath of a worthless and merciless prince, John Baptist takes his place in the Honour Roll of Heroes mentioned by Paul in Heb. 12. He was one who would not accept deliverance, that he "might obtain a better resurrection" (v. 35), and of him it can truly be said "the world was not worthy" (v. 38).

He will soon rise again to receive his eternal inheritance, and to enjoy the glory of the kingdom concerning which he preached to the people. His death illustrates the words of Solomon the wise: "I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands..." (Ecc. 7:26).

News of the sad end of John Baptist was soon told his disciples. Grief-stricken, they made their way to the dungeon where the poor, mangled body lay, and tenderly taking it up, they laid it in a tomb. The sorrowing company of mourning disciples around the tomb emphasised the lesson that they had to seek a greater than John if they wanted the life that God offered. It also provided them with a salutary warning that they should take heed of the teaching of their leader, for John had predicted to them his decline (Jn. 3:30). His death now showed his disciples the truth of much that he had taught in relation to Jesus; it stilled their doubts, and stopped the feeling of jealousy that had been developing in relation to the following the Lord had attracted (Mat. 9:14; Lk. 7:18-28). In fact, it turned them to Jesus, so that when they had buried John they "went and told Jesus" (Mat. 14:12).

In this way, though John was dead, he still spoke to his disciples, directing them to the Lord.

**The Excitement and Rumours Stirred Up By Jesus' Campaign (Mat. 14:1-2;**

Meanwhile, the separate campaigns of the apostles and the Lord had aroused excitement on all sides. There were thirteen men now preaching and performing miracles

**Mk. 6:14-16;**  
**Lk. 9:7-9).**

throughout the land, whereas previously there had been only one. Who was this Jesus whom all acknowledged as the leader? The people did not know. Some thought it was Elijah returned to complete the work he commenced so long ago; others thought that it must be one of the prophets risen from the dead; and again ministering to the people.

Rumours even reached the palace of Herod and began to trouble him. He was a Sadducee, and thus denied the resurrection, but his superstitious fears had got the better of him, and he was convinced that it was John Baptist risen from the dead.

The murder of John had preyed upon the mind of the dissolute king, and now he was filled with terror that John was again alive.

"John I have beheaded," he said to himself, "but who is this, of whom I hear such things?"

He discussed the matter with his servants, seeking all the information from them that he could. The more he heard, the more convinced he became in his mind that the severed head of John had been restored to its body, and the prophet had indeed risen from the dead to exact vengeance. Full of foreboding, he declared to his servants: "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him" (Mat. 14:2).

**The Jubilant Apostles  
and Sorrowing  
Saviour  
(Mat. 14:13;  
Mk. 6:30-32;  
Lk. 9:10; Jn. 6:1-3)**

Meanwhile the apostles had returned to the Lord, to report to him what they had done, and what they had taught. It had been a wonderful experience for them to go two by two into the various towns and villages preaching the gospel, and performing miracles. They had learned, under practical conditions, something of the responsibility that rested upon Jesus. Even Judas Iscariot had gone forth on this occasion, and doubtless had experienced something of the thrill of bringing to others the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.

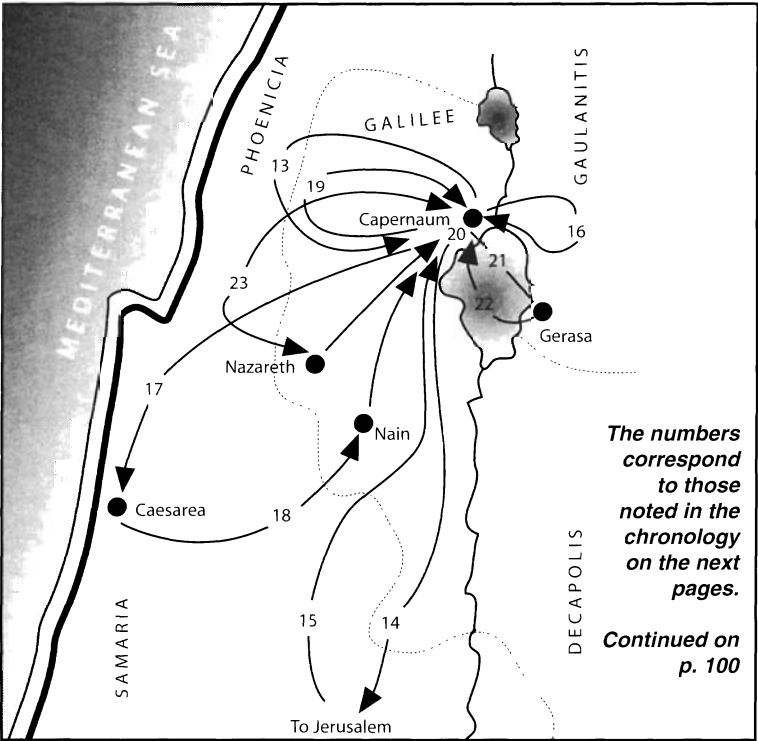
But returning they found the Lord sorrowing the death of a cousin and friend. He had just received the news of John's brutal murder, and doubtless saw in this a foreshadowing of his own end. He realised, too, that ultimately the apostles would similarly suffer, and whilst death meant nothing to the Lord, because he could see beyond it (Heb. 12:2), he nevertheless could feel for the sufferings of others, and had a deep compassion for them in their sorrows and trials.

Above all, he could see the need of solitude with the apostles, that mutually they might be strengthened for the work before them. He could feel the growing hostility of the leaders of the nation toward

him and his work, and though he was now at the height of his popularity with the people, he knew that shortly the tide would begin to turn, and his popularity would wane. Already, with the death of John, threats were being put into action, and he could sense the shadow of the stake stretching toward him.

But from the external viewpoint, there was no hint of that at the time. People were flocking around him and the apostles, and making such demands upon them all that they had no leisure so much as to eat. The Lord, realising the needs of the body as well as those of the mind, called a halt to this state of things: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while," he said to them.

So, once again, they sought the refuge of the water. They left Capernaum (to which place they had assembled), and taking ship they went across the Sea of Galilee, to a place along the northern tip of the lake. It was not far, only about six miles, but it would have been adequate for his purpose, except that the people saw where he landed and hastened by land (Mk. 6:33) to join up with him there, for they were anxious to hear more of the powerful expositions of Scripture he had already delivered unto them.



## THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE LORD

See vol. 5, p. 279, for previous summary.

### CONTINUATION OF THE GALILEAN MINISTRY

*This outline will help you to harmonise the Gospel accounts. Notice that Matthew's record is not set in sequential order, though Luke's is. He set out to state "in order" the things relating to the Lord (Lk. 1:3). Numbers # as on the map.*

#### [1] To the Gerasenes and Return

- #19 a. A further tour and return to Capernaum (Lk. 8:1-3).
- b. Jesus' relations hinder him (Mk. 3:20-21).
- c. He cures a blind person, but the Pharisees decry it as of Beelzebul (Mat. 12:22-24).
- d. Jesus' relations try to restrain him from his work (Mat. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35).
- e. Preaching by parables (Mat. 13:1-53; Mk. 4:1-34; Lk. 8:4-18).
- f. Third attempt by his relations to hinder him (Lk. 8:19-20).
- #20 g. Requirements of discipleship (Mat. 8:18-22).
- #21 h. Jesus stills the stormy sea (the first storm; Mat. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25).
- i. The maniacs of Gerasa (Mat. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39).
- #22 j. Return to Capernaum (Mat. 9:1; Mk. 5:21; Lk. 8:40).

#### [2] Preaching and Healing in Capernaum.

- a. Jairus pleads with Jesus for his daughter (Mat. 9:18-19; Mk. 5:22-24; Lk. 8:41-42).
- b. A woman is healed by touching his garment (Mat. 9:20-22; Mk. 5:25-34; Lk. 8:43-48).
- c. Jesus raises Jairus' daughter (Mat. 9:23-26; Mk. 5:35-43; Lk. 8:49-56).
- d. Jesus cures two blind men (Mat. 9:27-31).
- 3. Jesus cures a dumb demoniac (Mat. 9:32-34)

#### [3] The Twelve sent Throughout Galilee.

- #23 a. Jesus' last visit to Nazareth (Mat. 13:54-58; Mk. 6:1-6).
- b. Jesus' last tour of Galilee (Mat. 9:35-38; Mk. 6:6).
- c. Jesus sends out the twelve apostles (Mat. 10:1-42; Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-6).
- d. Jesus completes his tour (Mat. 11:1).
- #24 e. Herod mercilessly kills John Baptist (Mat. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-29; Lk. 9:7-9).
- f. The apostles return and report to Jesus (Mk. 6:30; Lk. 9:10).



## Chapter 3

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### FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND

**T**HE tragic death of John, though inevitable, would have deeply affected such a sensitive man as the Lord Jesus. Not only did it bring to an end the career of a beloved friend and co-labourer, but was also a sharp reminder of his own sacrificial death which was to take place, as he well knew, only twelve months hence.\* Worn out by his recent exertions, and mourning the death of John, Jesus felt the need of seeking the solitude of the wilderness that he might recoup his strength by communion with the Father. For that reason, he had taken ship to an isolated part of the coast of the Lake of Galilee, a short distance from Capernaum, and there, on one of the hillsides, he relaxed with the apostles.

But he did not enjoy this seclusion for long. Some, desirous of hearing him expound the Scriptures, and perhaps to seek the favour of a miracle of healing, followed him across the land; and when it was learned that he was not far off, soon a great company was streaming out of Capernaum, and making for the hill where the Lord had taken refuge.

**The Multitude  
Seek Jesus  
(Mat. 14:15-21;  
Mk. 6:31-44;  
Lk. 9:11-17;  
Jn. 6:1-14).**

It was nearing Passover time, and consequently many travellers were on the roads, moving toward Jerusalem to keep the feast. When they learned that the prophet of Nazareth was in the vicinity, they, too, joined the procession of people seeking him, until a crowd of some 5,000 people were met together on the hillside facing the Lord. Among them were a number of sick folk who laboriously struggled up the hill hoping that he might help them.

As he watched the great crowd assembling around him, the meek and lowly Saviour, the Son of God and King of the world, forgot his own needs, his personal weariness and need of rest, and was filled with compassion for the great leaderless legion who came seeking him. They were like "sheep without a shepherd" (Mk. 6:34), and he, of course, was the good shepherd.

And so, setting aside his own needs, he began to teach them.

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\* The public ministry of Jesus occupied about three and a half years, and terminated at the fourth Passover. The first Passover is recorded in Jn. 2:13; the second in Jn. 5:1; and the third in Jn. 6:4, showing that only twelve months of his ministry now remained.

speaking to them of the kingdom of God, and healing the sick that came pathetically before him pleading his help. It was heavy, exhausting toil, and it continued throughout the day.

But what a privilege for the 5,000 people, to listen to the Lord's sweet discourse on the Scriptures! How wonderful a teacher he was, extracting from the Word the essential meaning that would help them to grasp the divine revelation better! Intently the people listened to his wonderful exposition, so that gradually a word-picture of the coming glorious Kingdom was revealed to them, causing them to ardently desire its manifestation in their midst at that very moment.

**Needs of the Body as Well as of the Mind** The sun passed majestically through the heavens as the day wore away and the people listened on the hillside, and soon shadows began to creep across the grass to show that night was approaching.

And now the disciples were beginning to become a little impatient and anxious. The people must be fed; who was going to do it? And

*The Gospel of John records eight outstanding miracles of the Lord, which are described as "signs," and which tell in sequence the purpose of Yahweh through His Son. We have listed these "signs" on p. 207 of volume 5, and a glance at the list will show how one "sign" builds upon the other. On pp. 207-209, 263-265 and 326-331 of that volume, we have outlined the first three signs, and they are introductory to the fourth, which is the feeding of the 5,000 people by the Lord. In order to gain the greatest benefit from your consideration of this miracle, it would be profitable for you to refresh your mind concerning the three former "signs" referred to above. They are as follows:*

1. **WATER INTO WINE** (Jn. 2:1-11) — Teaching that there is joy in the service of the Lord incidental to accepting the invitation to his marriage.

2. **THE RULER'S SON CURED** (Jn. 4:46-51) — Showing that Christ alone can cure those who are spiritually dying.

3. **THE IMPOTENT MAN MADE STRONG** (Jn. 5:1-47) — Revealing that Christ will strengthen those who recognise their helplessness and need of him, to walk firmly before him.

4. **FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND** (Jn. 6:1-14) — Demonstrating the ability of the Lord to nourish his followers with spiritual food sufficient for their needs.

*Notice the gradation of principles expressed in these miracles specially selected by John as outstanding signs. First, the invitation; second, elevation from the bed of death (cp. Col. 3:1); third, strengthened to walk firmly; fourth, provided with nourishing, sustaining food.*

where could they go? The Lord, however, did not seem to be at all concerned, and continued his discourse to the people. At last, in their concern, the apostles approached him, and broke into his labours to remind him of the problem before them:

“This is a lonely place, and the day is now over,” they said (Mk. 6:35-36). “Send the crowds away to go into the towns and villages about to lodge and purchase food for themselves!”

One can well understand Judas instigating such an interruption for such a purpose (see Jn. 6:70-71). As treasurer of the little group, the idealistic approach to money matters, that characterised Jesus’ teaching must have often irritated him. But if Judas led the way, the other apostles needed no pressing to join in the request.

The tired Saviour looked at them. When would they learn! They had not considered that he had not thought of his own convenience during the day, but had willingly given up his time and energy to serve the people and do God’s will, knowing that the Father can provide all things. He decided to teach them a lesson in the value of self-sacrifice, and for that purpose, selected Philip, who was more retiring than many other of the disciples.

“How are we to buy bread, so that the people may eat?” he asked Philip.

Jesus was really testing him, because he knew what he intended to do (Jn. 6:6).

But Philip did not know, nor was he equal to the occasion. Instead of recognising that the Lord could provide bread as easily as he could turn water into wine, or raise to life a dead person, the cautious Philip made a quick mental calculation of how much money was required, and soon came to the conclusion that the poverty-stricken apostles could not provide it.

“Two hundred pennyworth would not be enough to buy bread so that each might have even a little!” he remarked.

Two hundred pence was a large sum in those days, when a labourer’s wage was only a penny a day, and even that large amount would not provide sufficient for each one (see Jn. 6:7). Philip was doubtless perturbed at the magnitude of the problem; it seemed even beyond the usually impetuous Peter to blurt out some preposterous solution.

If so, both he and the rest of the apostles must have been staggered at the next statement of Christ, for replying to Philip, he declared:

***“They need not go away! You give them something to eat!”***

The cautious, shy Philip was amazed at the statement. How could he do such a thing! He had no money; and what money the apostles jointly possessed was in the common purse held by Judas. It was true that the apostles had some food that they had been careful enough to bring for themselves, but what was that among so many; surely Jesus

did not mean that this should be given to the people!

All the disciples felt the same concern as Philip. How were they to feed this large, hungry crowd of people? Tentatively they put to the Lord a suggestion: "Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" they asked.

But the Lord replied:

"How many loaves have you? Go and see!"

The friendly Andrew, ever ready to help, instantly replied:

"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are they among so many?" (Jn. 6:9).

What indeed! It would not be enough for everyone to have even a taste. And, moreover, this food was the provisions for the hungry disciples, and they did not want to see it given to the multitude!

"We have no more than five loaves and two fishes, unless we are to go and buy bread for all these people," they declared (Lk. 9:13).

"Bring them to me," ordered the Lord.

The mystified disciples did so. Jesus then ordered them to set out the people in "companies"\* of 50 and 100 (Mk. 6:40). The disciples did so. The vast audience of people was organised by the apostles in companies of 50, reclining on the grass (of which there was much in that place, so speaking of divine blessing — Jn. 6:10), and facing further groups of 50. It was a colourful arrangement. The green grass on the hill-slopes, the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee not far away, the sun beginning to sink in the west, throwing a golden hue over the whole scene, and the people in their multicoloured robes and gowns organised into groups, created a scene of colour, peace and beauty. The various companies looked like garden plots filled with blooms



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\* In Mk. 6:39, the word rendered "companies" in Greek is *sumposia*, and signifies a company of guests at a table, but the word rendered "companies" in the parallel account in Lk. 9:14 is *klisia* in the Greek, and signifies to recline as at a meal. They were in companies of 50 and 100, so that one set of 50 faced another as at a table, making each group to be 100, and the disciples served them with the food supplied by the Lord.

of varied hues,\* and the relaxed picnic arrangements lent a pleasant informality to the circumstances that would assist in bringing the people together in good fellowship one with the other.

### **The Food is**

### **Wondrously Supplied**

And now a hush fell on the wondering people and apostles, as they awaited the next move on the part of the Lord. They could see what seemed to them a pitifully inadequate supply of food for such a large company of people. But now they saw him take up the fish and barley loaves in his hands, and with solemn dignity lift up his face to heaven; and then heard gracious words of thanks directed to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, for the meal they were about to partake.



\* Mk. 6:40 speaks of the company being organised in "ranks." The word is *prasiai* in the Greek, and signifies a "garden plot" reminiscent of the words of Isa. 60:21, "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." What a significant setting took place on that hillside by the Sea of Galilee so long ago: The Lord giving food to the apostles, and they passing it on to the people whom they had organised into ranks (garden-plots where the seed of Truth had been sown). So there is presented a picture of ecclesias organised by the written instructions of the apostles, and receiving the bread of life from the Lord through their ministration.

Then, turning to his apostles, he began to break the barley loaves and pass the fragments to them, that they might give them to the multitude.

The amazed people saw the bread and fish miraculously increased in the hands of the Lord, until the food originally designed for the twelve apostles, was distributed among the 5,000 people, and they were all filled. All had sufficient; none went without; all were provided with their needs.

Not only so, but when the feasting was over, the Lord commanded the apostles:

“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

Twelve baskets of fragments were taken up; a basketful for each apostle, more than that with which they commenced! They learned the lesson that by serving others in God’s cause, they would lack nothing themselves, but will be more than adequately provided for (see Heb. 11:6).

A murmur of admiration broke from the crowd of people as they witnessed the miracle.

“This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!” they declared.

They were referring to the prophet “like unto Moses,” the Messiah of Israel, whose coming is predicted in Deu. 18:18-19. They had listened to the Lord as he had spoken to them of the kingdom of God; they had witnessed his power in the miracles he had performed and now, excited by all they had heard and seen, they recognised him as the prophet-leader who should appear, and impatiently waited for him to assume his position as king.

**What the Sign Taught** As we have noted above, John used the word *semeion*: “sign,” to describe these miracles, because they constitute “signs” revealing matters of great importance and significance.

What was the sign shown by this wonder?

Jesus demonstrated by it that he can provide food necessary for life, and not merely natural life, but eternal life as well. He once told the apostles: “I have meat to eat that ye know not of” (Jn. 4:32), and his true disciples, who feed off the living Word, can use this same expression to the world about them.

In studying this miracle as a sign, notice the following features:

**The time was significant.** It was close to Passover (Jn. 6:4), a feast of the Jews that proclaimed deliverance from oppression.

**The need was significant.** The people wanted food, and, as Philip observed, a great price was required to satisfy this great need, but what was beyond the power of man to supply, the Lord was able to accomplish.

***The instructions to the apostles were significant.*** They were taught to serve the people first, and to give them of their own food. This they did, not only on that occasion, but also when they went out preaching the gospel, or supplying spiritual food to the people.

***The seating of the multitude was significant.*** They were treated as honoured guests to the table of the Lord (v. 10). Is not that the case with all those who accept Christ? Do they not feast with him as they partake of the Word of Truth?

***The method of distribution was significant.*** The food was increased in the hands of Christ. Is that not true of the purpose of God also? Christ came to confirm the promises made to Abraham, and to extend The Hope inherent therein to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:8-9). In that way the “food” in the hands of Christ was increased to supply the greater need.

***The number of loaves, fishes and people were significant.*** There were five loaves, and five is the number of grace. There were two fishes, and in Scripture there are the two great covenants of Law and Grace; the first Christ fulfilled, and the second he confirmed. There were 5,000 people indicative of the thousands called to Grace. They were divided into two groups of two, speaking of the two great families of mankind (Jew and Gentile) both of whom are invited to partake of the food that Christ can supply. The bread was made of barley, the food of need, so mankind must have a need of God, to eat the food that Christ offers.

***The gathering of the fragments was significant.*** Though the apostles gave the multitude their own food, they lost nothing by so doing. In fact, they learned the lesson that in ministering to others they gain more for themselves, for instead of five loaves, there were now twelve basketfuls of the fragments. This is a basic teaching of Scripture. Isaiah declared: “The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand” (Isa. 32:8). The wise preacher declared: “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself” (Pro. 11:24-25). The instructions of Christ were: “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost” (Jn. 6:12). So it will ultimately prove with the work of the Truth. Though it may seem now that much that we do for Christ is wasted, that is not so if it is performed truly in faith. The “sign” illustrated that basic truth.

***The effect of the miracle was significant.*** It caused the people to recognise that Jesus was that prophet who should come (Deu. 18:15). This will be the case, also, with those who feed off the living Word. People will recognise the truth in Christ Jesus, and respond accordingly.

The fourth sign is thus full of lessons and exhortations for those who care to seek into its meaning and significance.

## Is It A Contradiction?

There is an apparent contradiction between the accounts of the feeding of the 5,000 in the Gospel of Mark when compared with that according to John. Did the people follow the Lord to the place where the miracle occurred according to Jn. 6:2, or did they arrive there first according to Mk. 6:33?

When the two narratives are compared this appears to be what happened: the Lord entered the ship, but the people seeing him departing, recognised him, and ran afoot to the place where he landed (the distance is shorter by land than by sea). Others followed more slowly, for it is obvious that neither invalids, nor women with children, would run all that distance, so that a large crowd followed the more eager runners. Thus, when the Lord alighted from the vessel, and "came out of it," he saw a number of people, and their eager desire to listen to him aroused his compassion. So he led the way (as John now tells us) up the hillside with his disciples, the crowd being augmented with many others who continued to converge on the place until there was an audience of 5,000. Many of these were his disciples, for the term included more than the Twelve, as John clearly shows in ch. 6:66-67.



*Matzo Bakery in modern Israel*



## Chapter 4

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### CALMING THE STORMY SEA (The Second Storm: Mat. 14:33)

**T**HE fifth sign followed immediately upon the fourth, and, indeed, developed out of it. It is a sign full of drama as well as significance. The enthusiasm of the crowd rose to a fever-pitch of excitement as the result of this miracle. They saw in the Lord not only one who could heal their sickness, and expound the Word of the Kingdom in a vivid way, but also a leader capable of providing for their everyday needs as well.

People spoke in terms of the greatest admiration and wonder of his ability, testifying to one another that he was undoubtedly the promised Messiah, the expected King of Israel.

Never was the popularity of the Lord greater than at that moment. From that point of time it began to recede until, at last, they crucified him. But meanwhile, the people felt a compelling desire to place themselves under his authority, and to follow him as their king.

As they discussed among themselves the remarkable miracle that he had performed, and acknowledged one to the other that this was an undoubted sign of his Messiahship, they decided to “take him by force and make him a king” (Jn. 6:15).

#### **The Disciples Sent From the Crowds**

The apostles, also, were apparently swept away by the heady excitement of the crowd, for the Lord saw need to send them away from such an environment. Mark records that he “*constrained* his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side unto Bethsaida” (Mk. 6:45). He told them that he would meet them there, so that they were to await his coming (Jn. 6:17). Meanwhile, dismissing the crowds, he ascended to the top of the hill to commune with his Father in heaven through prayer.

#### **The Storm**

It was evening time when the disciples commenced their journey in the boat. They were heading for Capernaum (adjacent to Bethsaida), the *City of Consolation*, as the name signifies. It was not far distant, but it was late when they made their way to the boat, and soon after casting off, the sun had sunk in the west, and darkness fell. Then, one of those sudden storms for which the Sea of Galilee is



notorious, suddenly made itself felt. A strong wind began to blow, and increased in tempo, until it was like a roaring tornado, whipping the water of the lake into large angry waves, that rushed upon the small craft, threatening to swamp it.

So wild and fearful was the storm, that it drove all other ships from the open water to shelter in the little harbours that are found here and there around its shores (Jn. 6:23), but the apostles pressed on as they had been commanded. They bent their backs to the rowing (for sails were useless in such a gale) trying to make headway against the strong wind that shrieked in the rigging of the boat and drove into the very faces of the apostles. Buffeted by the waves, striving to make way in the very teeth of the gale (Mk. 6:48), the progress of the boat was slow and laborious. It seemed to the apostles that they would never make Capernaum.

### **The Lord Calms the Storm**

On the hill above the lake, where he could look down upon its waters, and in the moonlight observe the efforts of the apostles, the Lord was engaged in prayer. The people had wanted to make him king; they had swarmed around him with words of praise calculated to feed his ego; but the suffering Saviour mourned the death of a beloved co-labourer that day, and very well knew that the popular acclaim of the multitude was something to be avoided. He recognised that the time would come when he would be delivered up to the executioners, and not a hand would be lifted in his defence. It was his determination, on the morrow, to plainly warn the people; and in the meanwhile, to seek the strength that Yahweh alone could give him.

So he prayed, as the apostles strove at the oars to make their destination. The distance was not great, but all night was spent in trying to keep the vessel afloat and to make some progress. In the fourth watch of the night\* (Mat. 14:25), the situation seemed hopeless. The wind and waves had reached a crescendo of fury, and the apostles were now completely exhausted and discouraged with their night's labour (Mk. 6:48). They were barely half way to their destination, and were now terribly distressed by the terrible hours of heavy rowing that seemed to get them nowhere.

And then they saw a sight that startled them, and sent a chill of fear through them all.

There was a form silently moving along the waters, effortlessly "treading upon the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8), and quickly moving

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\* The Jews originally divided the night into three watches: the first (Lam. 2:19), the middle (Jdg. 7:19), and the morning (Exo. 14:24). During Roman times, however, a fourth watch was added. The first began at 6pm, the second at 9pm, the third at 12pm, and the fourth at 3am, ending at 6am.

on to the boat as though to pass it. Fearfully, the apostles stopped in their rowing, and with startled, frightened eyes, looked at the approaching form. What was it! Surely it was not an illusion. They did not know what it was, and, weakened by the storm's exhausting strivings, the terrified men cried out in fright.

But now the form was nearer, and they could see that it was Jesus. He spoke to them comforting words: "Take heart," he said, "It is I, do not be afraid!"

Instantly those quiet, calm words, took the minds of the apostles off the rough storm that raged around them so tempestuously, and restored some of their confidence. Bold, impetuous Peter, as usual, took the first move. "Lord," he called, "if it is you, bid me come to you on the water!"

"Come!" was the instant reply.

Nothing loathe, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water, toward the Lord Jesus. The amazed disciples now saw two

men defying the laws of nature, and walking on the water. And, for a moment or two, all went well. But then the eeriness of it all gripped Peter. He felt the wild wind tearing at him, the rough waves heaving underneath his



feet, and threatening all the time to engulf him. He found it difficult to stand upright as one moment he was on the crest of a mighty wave, and the next moment Jesus was almost hidden from him as he went down into its trough. The shrieking wind, the angry sea, the dark night, was all too much. His courage evaporated, his confidence ebbed away, his eyes turned from Jesus and took in the wild waste of water about him, and he commenced to sink.

He began to panic. He struggled to keep afloat, and fearfully cried out for help: "Lord, save me!" he screamed.

And the Lord was there to help, as he ever is. His strong, steady hands were outstretched to hold the panic-stricken disciple, and his quiet words of confidence were heard above the shrieking of the storm to still his agitation:

***"O ye of little faith, why do you doubt?"***

Why indeed! So we all might think as we read those words in the quietness and security of our homes.

But go out on that stormy sea with Peter! Feel the lurching of the angry waves, the tearing force of the gale. Look at the dark, fierce sea, as it casts up its foam, and hearken to the roaring of the wind; or observe the little cockleshell of a boat full of frightened men tossed up and down by the violence of the storm, and driven further and further away!

Why doubt if Jesus is near? Yet we show fear or anxiety many times, in situations not so perilous as that of Peter's, though we sometimes wonder at his lack of confidence! He began to fear and doubt because he took his eyes from off the Lord and directed them to the evidences of the storm about him — and we do likewise when we let the problems of life dominate us to the exclusion of God's promise that He will "never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). We can be assured that if we do our part, He will do His, even though circumstances may seem rough at times. Jacob experienced many reverses during his lifetime, but at its conclusion he could see how that the angel of Yahweh had overshadowed all the vicissitudes of his life for good (Gen. 48:15-16). But, like Peter, we must learn to keep our eyes firmly fixed upon the Lord, in spite of all the storms that may swirl around us, for by so doing, we will find strength in time of need.

How often we need to use that prayer: "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!" (Mk. 9:24).

### **At the City of Consolation**

Helped by the Lord, Peter got back into the shelter of the boat, and Jesus followed him.

No sooner had they done so than the wind ceased, and the stormy sea subsided. Once again the disciples were astonished, for they had not understood the sign of the loaves (Mk. 6:52). With admiration for his power they looked at him: "Truly you are the Son of God!" they exclaimed (Mat. 14:33).

John adds: "Immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going."

They thought they would never get there; they believed that the storm of wind and water would defeat their hope, but as soon as the Lord joined them, they were at Capernaum: *The City of Consolation*. They had come through the rough night and were safe.

### **The People Seek Jesus**

Early the next morning, the multitude that had been fed by the Lord, went to seek him and his disciples. They were filled with

enthusiasm for his cause, and were determined to make him king.

But neither he nor his disciples could be found.

The people went down to the seafront, and there they saw the small dinghy that was normally attached to the ship the disciples

had used,\* but of the ship itself there was no trace. They were concerned as to the outcome of this, and were certain that some tragedy must have overwhelmed them. Other ships from Tiberias had been driven into the harbour by the violence of the wind and storm during the night, and that led them to expect that the disciples must have also returned for, they thought, it would have been impossible for them to have struggled successfully against a storm of such magnitude as had burst over the lake during the evening.

The disciples, however, could not be found. Nor, for that matter, could Jesus be found, though they searched for him. They knew that he had not left with the twelve, and therefore confidently expected him to be somewhere in the vicinity. However, when he was not to be found there, they made their way to Capernaum seeking him, and there they found him surrounded by a great company of people. And to their amazement, there they saw the disciples also.

### **What the Sign Taught Them**

Every detail of this “sign” is of the utmost significance, for by it the Lord was teaching both his apostles, and all disciples that come after, what they might expect during his absence.

Consider these features:

***It was significant that he should ascend into the mountain to pray.*** It reminds us of the present position and status of the Lord; for he has ascended into heaven, there to intercede on the behalf of his followers. From the hilltop, the Lord could look down upon the apostles rowing valiantly in the stormy waters. He is not indifferent to us today as we battle with the storms of life, particularly when we endure them in his cause.

***It was significant that it should be evening time.*** In Jn. 9:4-5, the Lord likened night-time to the period when he would be taken

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\* Jn. 6:22 says “the people... saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered...” But actually the boat into which the disciples had entered was then at Capernaum, not on the part of the lake where the miracle of the feeding had taken place. What then does the statement signify? Notice that the word “boat” occurs twice in this verse, but in the Greek there are two different words used. The first one is the word *plouarion*, which signifies a skiff, dinghy, or small boat; the second one is the word *ploion*, which signifies a larger vessel, a ship (see also v. 17). The people went down to the seafront where they saw the empty dinghy belonging to the larger boat used by the apostles. They had either left it there the night before, or it had broken from the larger vessel during the storm and had been driven to this shelter, along with other boats (v. 23). But they could find no sign of the larger boat used by the apostles, nor of the apostles themselves, and therefore concluded that some tragedy had taken place during the storm. People will doubtless similarly react at the coming of Christ when the living saints are taken to him.

from the apostles, and now, at evening-time, he sends them across the water on their own, as he ascended into the hill to pray.

***It was significant that the apostles should labour in expectation.*** John 6:17 says that “Jesus was not come to them,” implying that they were expecting him to do so. Thus they laboured in hope of the coming of the Lord — as all true disciples must do.

***It was significant that they were heading for Capernaum.*** Capernaum means *The City of Consolation*, and surely, in this sign, this haven of rest points forward to the consolation that will come to all true disciples when they finally reach the haven of rest at Christ’s coming. The record says that “immediately” Jesus took his place in the boat, it came to the land. How true this is of his second coming, for then all present strivings and difficulties which are the lot of his disciples now, will be at an end.

***It was significant that they should run into a storm.*** Storms (often God-directed) have been the lot of disciples throughout the ages, and they have had to struggle on in spite of contrary winds, and exhausting rowing, with the realisation that relief will one day come, and that the Lord knows their lot. Thus they labour in faith.

***It was significant that Christ should be seen at the fourth watch.*** It was nearing dawn, and figuratively the time when the Lord shall return.

***It was significant that Peter’s lack of faith should be made manifest.*** For the lack of faith on the part of many shall be revealed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, even though they may be brought into the boat ultimately through the forgiving love of God manifested through His Son.

***It was significant that next morning the people were concerned at the absence of the apostles.*** This is stated in Jn. 6:22-24. There will be amazement shown in various parts of the world at the return of the Lord Jesus when, unknown to their neighbours, his followers will be drawn to him. As in the case of Enoch (see Heb. 11:5), a search will be made of the believers as to the cause of their absence, “but they will not be found.”

***It was significant that the multitude should seek Christ in the morning.*** See Jn. 6:25. In fulfilment of this “sign,” unbelievers will seek the Lord in the morning of “his day,” and many will be incorporated in the kingdom that he will set up on earth (Zech. 14:16).

## Chapter 5

### DISCOURSE ON THE BREAD OF LIFE (JN. 6:25-59)

**J**ESUS had no sooner reached Capernaum with his apostles, than the news of his return swept through the city and neighbourhood like wildfire (Mk. 6:54), and people hurried to bring sick folk on their pallets to where they expected the Lord to be. But he did not stop at Capernaum, leaving for a short tour of the villages and cities close to the Sea of Galilee. Everywhere he went, he was applauded by the people, who, as they witnessed the many miracles he performed, were filled with excitement.

They were convinced of his Messiahship; his popularity had reached its height.

*In Capernaum, the popularity of the Lord Jesus was at its peak. People clamoured for him to proclaim himself king; but instead he quietly revealed to them his spiritual character and mission, such as was required at that time. He called upon them to accept this, and to eat of the bread he was prepared to give them; but his words revolted them, and they turned from him in disgust.*

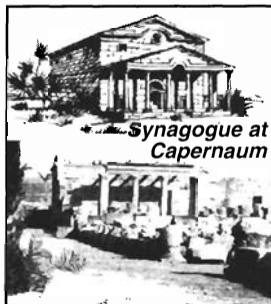
#### **Preaching in the Synagogue**

Ultimately he returned to Capernaum, to teach in the synagogue. It was there that those who previously had benefited from his miracle of the distribution of food in the desert, continued to seek him. They wanted to make him king, but the Lord proceeded to teach them what this required, in eight points of rebuke, that squashed the popular appeal he had until then.

#### **1st Rebuke: Seek Enduring Meat!**

But at first, those who had been seeking him eagerly flocked around him. "Rabbi, when came you hither?" they enquired. He answered them bluntly and to the point, and in a way that must have startled and offended them: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for him has God the Father

But at first, those who had been seeking him eagerly flocked around him. "Rabbi, when came you hither?"



sealed.”\* (Jn. 6:26-27).

They wanted by force to make Jesus their Jewish king on earth to reign from Jerusalem (see Jn. 6:15) as a political power against their enemies. This would have meant war with Rome, which was not then part of the mission of the Lord. Therefore he answered them sharply in order to quell the rising conspiracy in which they hoped that he would participate.

He told them that they “did not see the miracles.” But here, again, the word really means “signs.” They saw the miracles, but did not comprehend their inner, spiritual, significance, pointing forward to his great redemptive work; they were unable to perceive their true teaching, but sought him for the benefit of the food he had supplied them. How much more important it was to labour for that which would give eternal life, rather than for personal, present advantage!

### **2nd Rebuke:**

#### **Learn to Believe!**

The people saw the point of the Lord’s rebuke, and answered him civilly enough: “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” Jesus replied: “This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom He hath sent” (Jn. 6:29).

This was not at all the sort of language that they expected. It implied that they disbelieved God as well as the Lord, whom they were prepared to make king! They felt that they *did* believe God, and that Jesus ought to have been grateful that they were prepared to honour him by permitting him to be king! How strangely he acted; he was not at all like the normal politicians who sought their support! Their ardour for him began to cool. First he had told them that they did not “see” or perceive the signs he had manifested to them (v. 26), and now he rebuked them by saying they did not believe God!

### **3rd Rebuke: Feed on the Heavenly Bread!**

The tension in the synagogue in Capernaum was rising as the people who had so eagerly sought Jesus felt themselves rebuffed. Irritably they turned on him: “What sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’.”

Now they stood before him self-condemned. How many signs did

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\* This is a very beautiful expression which the people would comprehend, and which denoted Christ’s commission and authority as a prophet. When a monarch wished to communicate his mind or will to someone at a distance, he authenticated the message by impressing his seal on the document. The Father had done this with the Son. The character, doctrine, and miracles that Jesus manifested constituted the seal, and revealed that his authority came from Above. The Lord was the fully accredited Ambassador of Yahweh sent to treat with His rebellious subjects and call them back to their proper allegiance.



## **A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels.**

### **ANDREW, THE HELPFUL**

His name means *Manliness*. He was Peter's brother, and one of the twelve apostles (Mat. 4:18; 10:2). He has the distinction of being the first disciple who was called to associate with Jesus (Jn. 1:40), and immediately brought his own brother to the newly found Messiah (Jn. 1:41), though both did not, at that time, continue with Jesus as did Philip and Nathanael.

Andrew seems to have been of a friendly disposition, and ever ready to assist. It was Andrew who brought the lad with the loaves and fishes to Jesus (Jn. 6:8-9); again at the following Passover, the more timorous Philip turned to him when the Greeks approached him with the request that they would like to meet Jesus (Jn. 12:21-22). His name is frequently coupled with that of Peter, and it seems that he was sent out in company with his brother when the disciples went forth preaching two by two under the supervision of the Lord (Mat. 10:2). His quieter, friendlier, more restrained nature would have been an excellent counter to the more boisterous, impetuous attitude of his brother.

Like Philip's, Andrew is a Greek name. He was of Bethsaida of Galilee, a fisherman in partnership with Peter and Zebedee (Lk. 5:10), and, originally, a disciple of John Baptist. As a disciple of Christ, he seems to have been on special terms of intimacy with the Lord (Jn. 1:35-40; Mk. 13:3), and probably this was due to his own earnest, friendly attitude.

Tradition has it that his ministry, after the ascension of Christ, was in Asia, adjacent to the Euxine Sea. Here he laboured with great diligence and much success in extending the gospel message. But his very success excited the enmity of Aegenas, proconsul of Achaia, who ordered Andrew to cease his activities. He refused to do this, and after severely denouncing him, Aegenas passed sentence of death on him. He was first of all scourged, and then crucified on a cross made in the form of an X, hence the name of *Andrew's Cross*.

There is something lovable about the friendly, amiable, helpful Andrew that attracts one to him, and when blended with faith these are good attributes to emulate.

### **ANNAS, THE UNSCRUPULOUS**

Annas is the Greek form of Hananiah, meaning *Yahweh hath been gracious*. He was an astute and powerful ecclesiastical statesman, a Sadducee, who took part not only in the trial of Jesus, but also in those of Peter and John (Acts 4:6).

Annas was high priest at Jerusalem, being appointed to the position about AD7 by Quirinius, governor of Syria, and was deposed by the procurator of Judaea, Valerius Gratus, about AD16. Each of his five sons became high priest, and he was father-in-law of Caiaphas (Jn. 18:13). Even though Annas was no longer officiating high priest when Jesus was arrested, he was yet the most influential priest and still bore the title (Lk. 3:2; Acts 4:6), so that Caiaphas deferred to him. Thus to him Jesus was first taken (Jn. 18:13), and after being examined by him was sent bound to Caiaphas (v. 24). When Peter and John were subsequently arrested, Annas was prominent among their examiners (Acts 4:6).

they require? Had not he performed miracles in their midst? Had they not themselves remarked among themselves, as he fed the 5,000, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world?"

But now they were contemptuously comparing the fragments of barley bread (the bread of poverty) they had received, with the manna that they described as "bread from heaven," and they conveniently forgot that their forefathers had said "We loathe this light bread" (Num. 21:5).

Jesus could have gone to lengths to carefully explain these matters to them, and exhort them to follow him, but to do so would have been to descend to the level of flesh, whereas he wanted to elevate flesh above itself. The only way he could do that was to make men *think* on a higher plane than merely fleshly thoughts (see Pro. 25:2); he would not help them by pandering to their unbelief, or to the merely material and selfish worship that they were prepared to give God. So he answered: "Truly, truly, I say unto you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that\* which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world!"

**4th Rebuke: The Bread is Before You: Eat It!**

They did not quite understand what he meant, but he was claiming that God was his Father, and that the manna in the wilderness given by God and not by Moses, was typical of the "true bread" that God would supply.

The people were bewildered. They had seen the power that Jesus manifested, and were convinced that he was a prophet; but they could not understand him. They remembered the bread they had eaten on

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\* The Revised Version has the word "that" in this place instead of "he" as in the A.V. The statement is referring to "bread" and should, therefore, be translated in the neuter gender.

the hillside, and concluded that he was referring to something like that, and was promising to supply them with the material needs of life through the power of God. Therefore, eagerly they accepted his offer, as they understood it.

“Lord,” they replied, “give us this bread now and always!”

Jesus answered with words that would have repulsed those in his audience who were merely seeking material blessings, but invited the few who might understand him, to wholeheartedly accept him on the grounds that he would receive them and care for them. He declared: “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

These glorious words rang through the synagogue, but they fell mostly on deaf ears. The people did not “see the Son” in the person before them, but all they could see was “Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know.”

They began to murmur one to another: “What does he mean, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven’?”

“He is speaking of his Father in heaven, but he is the son of Joseph!”

“It is blasphemy for him to say, ‘I came down from heaven’!”

“This man is not true, I know his father and mother!”

The Lord looked down upon them and listened to the angry, bewildered murmurings that arose from the audience. Israel had not changed its ways! Here was the true manna about to be offered to the people, and they were murmuring, as their fathers did before, in the wilderness. Why didn’t they read the Scriptures with understanding, and learn the lessons there plainly set forth! When the manna was first given to the children of Israel by Moses (in whom they now gloried), the people had murmured among themselves, saying, “What is it?” (Exo. 16:15), and that very murmuring and questioning had caused God-given food to be called *Manna*, meaning “What is this?”

Now the true manna was before them, and they could make nothing of him either!

And how much greater was the life-sustaining power of this manna than of that which fell in the wilderness. It sustained the people in mortal existence from day to day; but this spiritual manna would result in everlasting life at the last day.

**5th Rebuke: You Don't Accept Me Because You Reject God** The murmuring in the synagogue continued for a while, and then ceased as again the Lord spoke to the people words filled with power and significance. He did not dispute that the doctrine he set before them was hard to understand, but he reminded them that they must be led of God. As Moses (whose name means *Drawn out*) drew the people out of Egypt to God, so the people should follow this second Moses, and thus be drawn of God.

"Murmur not among yourselves," Jesus exhorted them. "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life; I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

This statement angered the Jews. They had now forgotten they had wanted to make him king, and began to "strive among themselves" (Jn. 6:52). The word means *to fight, quarrel, dispute*. The synagogue was in an uproar as the confused, dismayed and dissatisfied people contended among themselves as to what the Lord meant.

They were not the only ones to have done so! The words of the Lord, spoken that day in the synagogue in Capernaum, have been the subject of dispute and argument ever since. What did he mean when he said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven?"

The Jews, themselves, had actually supplied the answer! They had quoted the words of Neh. 9:15 in describing the manna that Moses had given their fathers, saying: "He [God] gave them bread FROM HEAVEN to eat" (Jn.

6:31). Notice, carefully, how this very statement of the Jews provides the key to all that the Lord taught on that occasion, and how they were self-condemned by the very reference they had advanced.

They, by their use



of Neh. 9:15, had shown that the manna in the wilderness was actually “bread from heaven,” and in their mounting irritation, they had advanced this thought as though to repudiate the idea that the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 could rank with Moses’ bread from heaven!

But how did that bread come from heaven? Was it made in heaven, and wafted through the illimitable bounds of space, as a huge cloud of manna, to the earth beneath? Or was it manufactured by the spirit of God on earth for the use of Israel? Obviously the latter. And in the same way, Jesus had been born, for Mary was told: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35). The manna was “bread from heaven,” because it was supplied by the power of the Holy Spirit; and Jesus, the true manna, was “bread from heaven” because he was born by the same means.

What did Jesus mean when he implied that a believing man can “see the Father?” (Jn. 6:46).

He used a similar term in regard to the Son in v. 40, but actually, in the Greek, two entirely different words are used: that of v. 40 is *theoreo* and signifies to carefully view in all its details; that of v. 46 is *horao* and means not merely to “see” by sight, but to discern by understanding. A believing person can “discern” the Father through the Son (Jn. 1:18; 12:45; 14:7). He sees that in the wonderful doctrine and character of the Lord Jesus there is a manifestation of Yahweh, and as Jesus revealed Him in his life, so the believer must, in turn, reveal the Lord in word, deed and character.

But the statement that angered the Jews more than anything else, was the declaration of the Lord that they must “eat the bread which he could give them, and that bread is his flesh.”

He was teaching that they must make him part of themselves, absorbing his teaching, the very principles of his sacrifice, into their lives.

They could only interpret the words literally, as though he would make cannibals of them. So they strove and argued vehemently among themselves, as to the meaning of the Lord’s statement — and the more they argued, instead of quietly listening and seeking truth, the more they drifted from him — so that rather than wanting to make him king, they felt a rising anger against him, that wanted to erupt into violence.



## Chapter 6

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### MANY DISCIPLES LEAVE JESUS

**T**HE forthright and yet profound discourse of the Lord in the synagogue at Capernaum not only disturbed many of the people, but some of his disciples as well. At that time, his followers numbered hundreds throughout the land in addition to the twelve apostles (1Cor. 15:6-7; Jn. 4:1), and they looked upon him as Messiah, the King of Israel (Jn. 1:49).

It had been some of these followers who had tried to take him by force and make him king (Jn. 6:15), but now, as they hearkened to the strange doctrines he was teaching in the synagogue they had serious doubts concerning him; and the doubts grew throughout the length of the Lord's discourse.

They could not understand what Jesus meant when he claimed that he was "from above," nor what he wanted them to do when he said they must "eat his flesh and drink his blood!" Interpreting his words literally, the former sounded like blasphemy, and the latter was completely abhorrent to them, as though Jesus was suggesting some form of cannibalism!

So, forgetting his miracles, his gracious bearing, and the obvious power of his teaching, they began to criticise him among themselves until the synagogue was full of angry mutterings and murmurings.

This did not concern the Lord. He was proclaiming the words of God and such words should be accepted without question, if people were to come unto him and live. He did not descend to their fleshly reasoning, but tried to elevate them to his. If they were really to be his disciples, they must recognise that he was the manifestation of the Father, the seal of Yahweh in their midst, and not the son of Joseph. And when they understood that, they must learn also to manifest him in their lives, as he was manifesting the Father.

But the spiritual understanding of most of them was completely unequal to the task of comprehending the meaning of his words.

"This is a hard saying," they declared, "who can hear it?"

But the Lord replied: "Does it offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not!"

These words required some thought before they could be understood by his audience, but the people, with growing irritation, were not prepared to give them that consideration. Actually, this

statement of the Lord was the key to the whole of his discourse. Already he had told them that when he claimed to have come down from heaven, it was nothing more than what they claimed for the manna that had been given Israel in the days of Moses (Jn. 6:31-35), so that all that it meant was that he had been begotten by the Spirit (Lk. 1:35); and now he explained the matter even more completely.

He told them he was the "Son of man" who had descended from heaven. Obviously a son of man could not come bodily from heaven unless he had first ascended there. A son of man is one born into the human race, so that in using this title, Jesus clearly showed that he claimed no personal or corporeal existence before his birth of Mary. What, then, did he mean when he implied that the Son of man came from heaven? He answered it himself in the words: "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profits nothing." The spirit descended from heaven, and resting on the virgin Mary, caused her to give birth to the Lord Jesus.

The same life-giving spirit, contained in the Word of God, can give spiritual life and being to those who come unto God through it. And so the Master continued: "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him [to do so] of my Father!"

To the indignation of many in the synagogue, he not only claimed God to be his Father, but also declared that they were not moved by God because they rejected his teaching.

**"Will You Leave?"** The Lord's words angered the people even more. They looked upon him as a miracle-working prophet, not the Son of God. The murmuring in the synagogue became louder as puzzled looks were thrown in his direction, and people discussed the meaning of his words one with the other. With many of them, his discourse was decisive. They had felt that he was the Messiah (though they did not look upon the Messiah of Israel as the Son of God), but now his words convinced them that he was not.

The service over, many left the synagogue loudly repudiating the Lord as they did so.

Sadly Jesus watched them go. How thoughtless and unreliable is flesh! A little earlier they would have joyfully made him king and paid him their allegiance; now they stormed out of the synagogue in disgust, determined not to follow him.

Even the apostles looked somewhat puzzled at his teaching, and dismayed at the turn events had taken. So he turned to them and spoke sorrowfully. "Will you also go away?" he asked.

Peter had the answer — simple, direct, and bold: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and

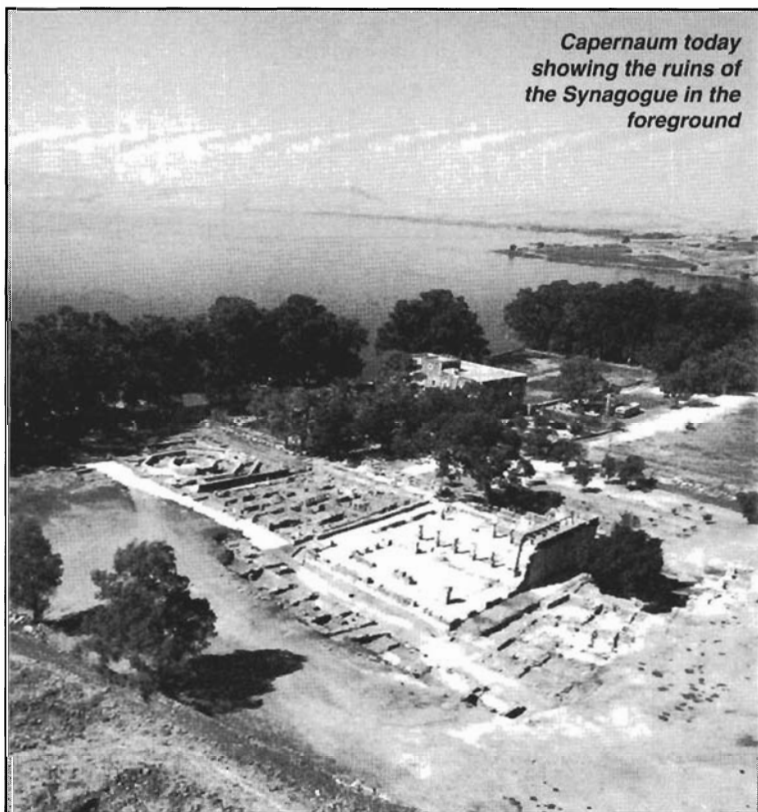
are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!"

Peter might well speak like that! Had not the disciples seen the Lord walk upon the water and calm the dreadful storm that threatened to destroy them? Had not Peter, himself, experienced the miracle of walking on the water, and had been saved from drowning by the Lord? It had all taken place only a short time beforehand, so that the disciples should have been certain of the standing of the Lord.

Peter boldly spoke for them all, but as the Lord well knew, all did not endorse Peter's belief. So, to their amazement and confusion, he replied: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

He had chosen them; they had not chosen him. He had conferred privilege on them; not they on him. But even so, one of them was an adversary, a false accuser, and would betray him. He referred to Judas Iscariot, but the apostles did not know that at the time.

It must have been a very uneasy group of disciples that left the synagogue in Capernaum, puzzling over the ominous words of their Lord.





## Chapter 7

### DISCOURSE ON THE WASHING OF HANDS

*The account in Jn. 6:4 records that the Passover was at hand, but in Jn. 7:2 the statement is made that the Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. The Passover was held in the first month of the Jewish year (Abib), and the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month (Ethanim), so that from the end of Jn. 6 and the beginning of Jn. 7, there elapsed a period of approximately seven months. It is necessary to go to the other Gospel accounts to learn what happened during that period. Doubtless Jesus and the disciples went down to Jerusalem to keep the Passover as was required by the Law, and then returned to Capernaum. His actions and words had been carefully observed by his enemies, and doubtless they discerned the division of thought that had been manifested by some of his followers (Jn. 6:66) because of the outspoken and perplexing speech he delivered in the Capernaum synagogue. Perhaps, because they discerned that his popularity was declining (as indeed it was), certain Jews came up from Jerusalem in an attempt to injure his work and weaken his influence even further.*

*A careful consideration of the various accounts of the Lord's ministry imply this, and show how they supplement each other. For example, John records that the Passover was at hand (which required the Lord's presence in Jerusalem), whilst the very next incident recorded by Mark after the feeding of the 5,000 was that of the "Pharisees FROM JERUSALEM" ascending to Capernaum on a fault-finding mission. Why should they do so at that time? Doubtless the Lord's presence in Jerusalem for the Passover had excited renewed interest in him among the Jews of the capital, and caused some of the authorities to move to destroy his influence. This aroused active opposition, causing the Lord to leave Judea (see Jn. 7:1). But his persecutors followed him to his headquarters in the north, to try to undermine his work. Thus, by gathering the two records together, John implies that Jesus visited Jerusalem, and received bitter opposition, and Mark shows that his opponents ascended from that city against him. The combined accounts speak of the growing antagonism that he was receiving on all sides.*

*His accusers came from Jerusalem, the very heart of the nation; but out of that heart proceeded the evil thoughts that would defile the whole body of Israel, illustrating the parable he explained to his disciples on that occasion (Mk. 7:21). The state of*

*Jerusalem at that time confirmed the words of Zephaniah the prophet: "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in Yahweh; she drew not near to her God... Her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. The just Yahweh is in the midst thereof; He will not do iniquity; every morning does He bring His judgment to light, He faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame" (Zeph. 3:1-5).*

**J**T was after the third Passover in Jesus' ministry\* that certain Pharisees and Scribes of Jerusalem had reason to visit the busy city of Capernaum. There they probably heard the Lord Jesus teach, and afterwards observed his disciples eating. To their astonishment they saw that his disciples did not first ceremoniously wash their hands before eating, as was the custom with the Pharisees.

The observation disgusted them.

### **Fault-Finding**

#### **Pharisees**

**(Mat. 15; Mk. 7)**

Not that the hands of the disciples needed washing because they were dirty, but it was the custom of the Pharisees to always wash hands or brazen vessels, cups, etc., as a religious ritual, even though their hands, or the utensils, were perfectly clean. It was one of the traditional laws they had set up; and so extreme were they in observing it, that they classed anybody as defiled who did not do so.

One Jewish teacher, Rabbi Akiba, declared that "He that takes meat with unwashed hands is worthy of death." He was so fanatical about this that he perished from thirst in prison by washing his hands in water rather than using it to drink, merely because portion of it had been accidentally spilt!

This ordinance was one of the traditions of the Pharisees that they had superimposed upon the Law of Moses. It was one of the many man-made laws and teachings which they scrupulously observed, even at the expense of God's Word itself.

So important did they consider these man-made laws that they most bitterly condemned anybody who violated them, though they often overlooked it when God's laws were broken! The Pharisees put great importance on externals, the things that people could see, and so scrupulous were they about washing of hands, that they never ate

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\* The events of Mat. 15 and Mk. 7 must have occurred after the Passover, for John tells us that the Passover was at hand when the miracle of feeding the multitude took place (Jn. 6:4), and Mark says that the Pharisees were from Jerusalem — yet no Pharisee would leave Jerusalem on the eve of Passover!

anything until they had first carefully washed their hands up to the elbow (see Mk. 7:3; mg.).

Their formalism illustrated the words of Scripture: “*For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked [lit., engraven] before Me, saith the Lord Yahweh*” (Jer. 2:22). “*O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?*” (Jer. 4:14). “*There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness*” (Pro. 30:12).

How easy it is to be like that! To put on an outward show of being religious, and yet have a heart that is full of wickedness!

A true washing is one that cleanses the heart, as Jeremiah observed, and not merely the hands or dishes! Isaiah instructed Israel in the kind of washing the people required: “*Wash you, make you clean [and then as if to show what is required]; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow*” (Isa. 1:6-17).

The Lord Jesus did all this, and therefore was morally “clean” in the eyes of Yahweh. On the other hand, the Pharisees made a great show of external cleansing but hid hearts of wickedness. They sheltered behind a religious formalism that men respected, and therefore it was important that the apostles should witness such an encounter as now occurred, to see the veneer of false sanctity stripped from these leaders of the people. It was part of the training of the Twelve that would help them to discern the difference between a true religion of the heart, and a merely empty external formalised one.

Meanwhile, the Pharisees, who were “sticklers for tradition,” were horrified at the action of the disciples, and determined to make a public show of the way Christ’s followers defied the law as they understood it.

### **The Argument\***

They therefore openly accosted Jesus, and entrenched in their own conception of right and wrong, boldly and publicly challenged him: “Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread!”

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\* The two accounts of this incident (Mat. 15 and Mk. 7) present variations in order, though not of words. The most natural order seems to be that of Matthew. For example, it seems obvious that Christ’s question (Mat. 15:3) seems to retort upon that of the Pharisees (v. 2). Mat. 15:3 should follow after Mk. 7:6, “He answered...” and then vv. 9-13 of Mk. 7 should follow the question, and thus be placed before vv. 6-8. There is no contradiction, only a different setting out of the order of narrative. Mark, who wrote for Gentiles, sets out certain details more fully, and so explains the customs of the Pharisees — cf vv. 3-4. We have combined the two accounts in the discourse above.

The Lord answered with a question of his own: *"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded saying, 'Honour thy father and mother;' and, 'He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.' But you say, Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, it is a gift [corban] by whatsoever you might have gained from me, he need not honour his father or mother, and you demand that he do nothing more for them. Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition! You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men!'"*

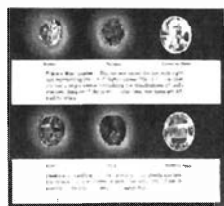
What a terrible indictment for those self-righteous Pharisees to receive before all the people whose good opinion they so fondly cultivated! "You transgressed the commandment of God!" "You virtually curse your fathers and mothers!" "You make void the commandments of God by your tradition!" "You are hypocrites!" "You fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah!"

These were certainly not words calculated to please the Pharisees, with their sanctimonious attitude and lordly dress!

Notice the points of contrast expressed in the interchange of words: "Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders!" "But you transgress the commandment of God!" "God **commanded**" but "you **say**" (Mat. 15:4-5).

### Explanation of the Discourse

The word *corban* (Mk. 7:11), signifies something "devoted," and therefore "a gift" offered to God. The same word is rendered "oblation" in Lev. 3:1, "If his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offering" or "if that which he is devoting is a sacrifice of peace offering." In the N.T. the word "corban" is used in Mat. 27:6 and Lk. 21:1-2, where, however, it is translated in the A.V. as "treasury." Monetary gifts were put into this treasury, and it was for this purpose that the woman cast in two mites when she was observed by the Lord Jesus, and commended by him, though doubtless the rich men who were ostentatiously casting in their gifts, looked contemptuously at the poverty of her offering.



The law of God commanded that mother and father should be honoured in a very practical manner, so that in time of need, material resources were freely placed at their disposal. On the other hand, severe punishment was threatened against those who "cursed father or mother." The Greek word translated "curseth" in Mk. 7:10, signifies not only to revile, or to speak with contempt or injury, but also to slight, to set light by. Ezekiel condemned those who "set light by" or

slighted their parents (ch. 22:7), and the law punished with death a disobedient and stubborn son (Deu. 21:18-21. See also Pro. 20:20; 30:17). The New Testament endorses this principle (Eph. 6:2), and Paul commands children to honour their parents. This is a principle that can be applied ecclesially, so that Paul also wrote: "The elders that rule well should be accounted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1Tim. 5:17).

Parents, of course, have to play their part toward their children (cf Eph. 6:4), so that, with all members of a household governed by God's law, true harmony will prevail.

These are principles that need to be constantly re-affirmed in these days, when the influence of family life, and home control are in decline. Juvenile delinquency is in the ascendancy today because these God-given laws are ignored or defied. Young people who respect the authority of Scripture, however, will honour God by honouring their parents. They will seek, in every way, to understand their viewpoint, and render back to them what is due to their position. And within the ecclesia, they will seek to likewise honour those whose age and experience entitles them to such.

But the self-righteous Pharisees defeated this law of God by a tradition of their own. They established a law whereby a person could make an offering (*corban*) of his possessions to the temple, but retain use of them during his lifetime. Once a person had willed his possessions in a *corban*-gift, they were accounted as no longer his, though he used them during the term of his life. His possessions became like a legacy, willed to the temple on his death. But what if his father and mother fell into need and required help? That was unfortunate for them, because, having given his possessions in a "*corban*" offering to the temple, it was deemed that he no longer had any right to use them for such purposes, and they would have to go without! This traditional law of the Pharisees permitted a person who had given away his goods in this fashion, to do nothing more for father and mother; he was no longer responsible to assist them. So the law of God was broken, that a tradition of men might be maintained, and yet, as Paul observed in Eph. 6:2, to "honour father and mother" was the "first commandment with promise."

The attitude of the Pharisees was rank hypocrisy. It was an adding to the commands of Yahweh, which is strictly condemned throughout the Word of God (Deu. 18:18-22; 4:2; 13:32; Pro. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). No wonder the Lord addressed them as "You hypocrites!"

Christ's scathing words of rebuke must have left the Pharisees smarting with indignation.

### **The People Warned of the Pharisees**

This hypocritical handling of the Word of God by the Pharisees, was deserving of the

**(Mat. 15:10-11;  
Mk. 7:14-16)**

strongest and most public rebuke, for they were leading the people from God by their false teaching. Therefore, to the indignation of the Pharisees (Mat. 15:12), Jesus called the people together, and openly warned them of the truth-nullifying formalism of Pharisaic teaching. They heard these forthright, fearless words proclaimed: "Hearken unto me every one, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man! If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mk. 7:14-16).

The Lord did not deliver a long speech on this occasion, but his words were full of meaning.

He called upon the people to "hearken unto him"! By so doing, they would fulfil the Law which the teaching of the Pharisees destroyed; for the Law declared that when the prophet like Moses appeared, the people should "hearken unto him" (Deu. 18:15).

But merely to listen is not sufficient, for people must "understand" as well. God desires that His children should follow Him in light, and not stumble in darkness as do the blind (Mat. 15:14).

The statement that puzzled the people more than any other, however, was the declaration that nothing that a man ate defiled him! That seemed contrary to the instruction of the Law! After all, it commanded that they abstain from unclean meats, and warned them of the defiling contact with things that had died of themselves.



Was the Lord destroying the Law?

By no means! He was revealing its true significance. He was demonstrating that all the ordinances of the Law were educational in their teaching. A man was defiled not by the type of meat he might eat, or the dust that might adhere to the hands, but when he defied the obvious intentions of God, as the Pharisees were doing, and offenders were punished by the Law.

Unless a Jew understood that the natural habits of a pig taught a spiritual lesson, and illustrated things that he should avoid, there was little point in abstaining from eating pork!

The same was true regarding touching a dead body or anything dead. In itself this did not defile a person, for it did not affect him physically in any way. It was not only the physical action to which the Law drew attention, as much as the inner significance of what was portrayed thereby.

Few understood those matters, and that is why the Lord concluded with that favourite saying of his (see Rev. chs. 2-3): "*If any man have*

*ears to hear, let him hear."*

It was to individuals with hearing ears to whom he appealed then, and still does so today.

Those words constituted the Lord's answer to the Pharisees: "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?"

**Christ's Parable of  
the Blind Leaders  
(Mat. 15:12-20;  
Mk. 7:17-23)**

The Pharisees had no answer to the forthright, sweeping, and yet so obviously true statements of the Lord, and left him incensed that they should have been so treated before the multitude.

Jesus and his disciples also left, and returned to the house where they were staying in Capernaum.

But the disciples were as puzzled as the Pharisees had been, and a silence settled on the little group as they made their way along.

In the shelter of the home, the disciples broke the silence. "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended after they heard you today?" they enquired.

They possibly felt that such forthright actions as the Lord had manifested were dangerous against such powerful opponents. After all, John Baptist had recently been beheaded and resentment against Jesus was rising as they well knew. In Judea, particularly, for reasons we are not told, there was a conspiracy to kill him (Jn. 7:1), and the disciples felt that a policy of conciliation was called for under such considerations.

But the Lord replied with a parable that predicted the ultimate overthrow of the Pharisees, rather than his own movement. He declared: "*Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*"

As a polluting weed not planted of God, the Pharisaic Movement was doomed to be rooted up, which came to pass in the destruction that came upon Jerusalem in AD70. The Pharisees might *claim* to be leaders, but the Lord warned the disciples to be sure not to follow them, for they were but blind leaders of the blind, and would lead their followers into the ditch.

Jesus thus plainly taught that it is not the duty of his disciples to blindly follow their leaders, but to first make sure that these leaders are "in the light" (see Isa. 9:16; 56:10-11; Jer. 5:3; Mal. 2:7-9). When ecclesial leaders are not following the right way, Christ would have his disciples ignore them. "Let them alone," he declared concerning the Pharisees, "Have done with them, regard not what they say or do against me or my doctrine!" Jesus, as the good shepherd, would have his sheep hearken only unto his voice, not the voice of those who teach a contrary way, even though they may do it in his name.

**Explanation of the Parable of Defilement**

The minds of the apostles, however, still grappled with the problem of Christ's earlier words in which he had implied that a distinction of meats did not avail anything unless the doctrinal significance was understood.

So Peter broke into the discourse: "Declare unto us this parable!" he requested.

The Lord did so. He pointed out that it was not meat or dust that entering into the mouth defiled a person, for the body was so constructed as to throw off any poisons that might accumulate; but it is those things that come out of an evil heart (mind) that defile.

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man!"

Meat does not enter the heart but into the stomach (Mk. 7:19), and therefore cannot defile a person. But false teaching, such as the Pharisees were guilty, does enter the heart, and can become defiling. Moreover, the heart, unenlightened by the Word of God, does, of itself, produce the defiling things that the Lord enumerated.

Thus the Lord taught the importance of carefully understanding why God commanded certain things to be done under the Law, and to follow out the spirit of its teaching, avoiding a formalism that would destroy this.

It was Peter who asked him to expound the parable concerning the distinction of meats, but Peter did not understand then the full significance of what the Lord taught. This was later shown him in the vision that he received, of a sheet let down from heaven, filled with all kinds of animals. When this vast sheet filled with all manner of beasts was displayed to him, a heavenly Voice invited the apostle to "rise, kill and eat." Peter refused to do so on the grounds that he had never previously defiled himself. But when he later met Cornelius, and learned that God had opened the way of salvation to Gentiles, he comprehended the significance of both the vision, and the Lord's public discourse to the Pharisees (Acts 10:34-48).

This incident reminds us that we do not always instantly grasp the fulness of the divine purpose in a single reading or study of the Word. We need to carefully ponder the words of Scripture, that we may apply them in a practical way in our lives.



*Jewish Ritual of washing*



## Chapter 8

### WORKING AMONGST GENTILES

*The Lord was now intent upon preparing the apostles for the great crisis that lay ahead of them when he would be crucified upon the stake, and afterwards, when he would be finally taken from them, and they must enter upon their own work.*

*This specific training of the Twelve actually commenced from the time of the feeding of the 5,000, when so many wanted to take him by force and make him king; it continued with the dispute that he had with the Pharisees over the washing of hands; and now it was extended by a tour he commenced in the Gentile regions of Tyre and Sidon to the northwest of the Land.*

**S**HORTLY after his discussion with the Pharisees, the Lord visited the area of Tyre and Sidon, about 35 miles northwest of Capernaum. During the discussion, he had made the point with the apostles, that the distinction of meats did not amount to much importance, if the doctrine it was intended to impress by this ordinance was not understood. In other words, there was no merit in being a Jew unless the Hope of Israel was embraced as a way of life.

**Jesus Visits the Area of Tyre and Sidon** It seems as though he now travelled the long distance to Tyre and Sidon in order to impress that fact upon his disciples. This was a part of the Holy Land, today known as Lebanon, which was largely inhabited by Gentiles.

#### **A Canaanitish Woman Seeks His Help**

area and flocked to meet him. Among those who did so was one styled by Matthew “a woman of Canaan,” though Mark calls her a Syro-Phoenician woman. She came to the Lord and pleaded his help, asking him to heal her

But though the district of Tyre was so far from home, the fame of Jesus had spread abroad, and people soon heard that the amazing prophet of Nazareth was in the



daughter who was grievously sick.

It is significant that Matthew should give her the title of a “woman of Canaan,” for there was a curse pronounced on Canaan (Gen. 9:25), and when Israel entered the Land they were told to “utterly destroy” them (Deu. 7:1-2).

But, as in the cases of the Gibeonites and Rahab, the mercy of Yahweh is ever extended to those who seek Him in truth, whatever nation they may belong to. Indeed, Zechariah had predicted that even Philistines would seek Him (Ch. 9:7), and now the apostles were to witness grace extended to a Gentile who was under the curse.

She publicly approached the Lord, piteously beseeching his help.

“Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David,” she cried, “My daughter is grievously ill!”

But the Lord, normally so compassionate toward suffering humanity, took no heed of her, and answered her not.

Her need was so great, however, and so completely did she realise that only he could help her, that she took no heed of the way he ignored her, and continued to beseech his assistance.

“Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon!”\*

But the Lord continued to ignore her.

And still she kept crying unto him for help.

She was exhibiting the lesson that he later tried to impress upon his apostles, when he told them that men “ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Lk. 18:1).

By now her constant pleading, her piteous cries for help, had begun to weary and irritate the apostles. They felt embarrassed with the woman following them and crying to Jesus to help her. They had not properly grasped the point that the Lord had tried to make them understand that there was no real difference between meats (i.e., between Jews and Gentiles) apart from spiritual enlightenment. That which makes a person attractive to Yahweh is his faith, not the accident of his birth; so that a faithful Gentile is a source of far greater pleasure to Him than a faithless Jew!

“Give her what she wants and send her away,” his apostles said contemptuously, “for she crieth after us!”\*\*

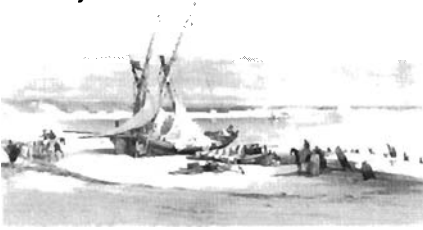
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\* See our explanation of this term in vol. 5, pp. 284-285. This was the normal way in those days of describing somebody who was seriously ill, particularly suffering mental or nervous disorders.

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\*\* The words of the apostles (Mat. 15:23) literally rendered, signify: “Let her depart,” but some suggest that they really mean: “Grant her her request and let her go.” Certainly the context implies that (cp. v. 24), and thus we have represented their words in that way above.

### ***The Harbour of Tyre in the Nineteenth Century***



But the Lord was not prepared to do that just yet.

"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel!" he answered.

Once again we should notice that the Lord was not over-anxious to use his miraculous powers. He was not like those charlatans

today who claim they have the power of the Holy Spirit, and are anxious to go out of their way to lay their hands on sick folk with the vain hope that they might be cured. Jesus was most selective in the performance of miracles, invariably requiring a measure of faith on the part of those who sought his help.

Meanwhile, the desperate plea of the agitated woman had attracted a crowd of people. But still the Lord ignored her, and at this point, to avoid both the woman and the growing crowd, he entered into a house.

**The Crumbs From the Rich Man's Table** The Lord was not left in peace in the house for long. The woman, in her great need, and her great faith, also forced her way therein, and now prostrated herself before him, pleading his assistance.\*

"Lord, help me!" she piteously cried.

He could ignore her no longer. She was crouching at his feet in supplication, and for the first time he addressed her: "Let the children first be filled," he declared, "for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs!"

By "the children," he meant the Jewish people, the children of God, and by "the dogs," he meant the Gentiles, for so they are sometimes referred to in Scripture (Phil. 3:2). Dogs are unclean animals according to the Law, and therefore symbolic of Gentiles who are normally outside the covenant of God.

The woman took no offence at the words of Jesus. Instead, she entered into the spirit of his statement, and was quick to grasp its import. Quick also to answer him with an appropriate reply which more than matched the skill of his words on that occasion.

"Truth, Lord," she earnestly replied; "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table!"

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\* Matthew says that "she worshipped" Jesus (Mat. 15:25), but Mark shows what is meant by that statement, by recording: "She fell at his feet" (Mk. 7:25). This is really what is meant by the use of the word "worship" in such places (cp. Rev. 3:9).

It was an outstandingly wise answer, and one also full of humility. By it the woman showed that she recognised and endorsed the relative positions of Jew and Gentile in the sight of God. Indeed, she had given a testimony as to her faith. In her pleading, she had already acknowledged:

**1. That Jesus was “Lord” and worthy of respect.**

**2. That he was the Son of David and therefore heir to the throne of Israel.**

**3. That Israel was a privileged nation.**

Therefore she had expressed her belief in the Hope of Israel, and of Jesus as its Messiah and future King. Her answer expressed her humility, and her recognition of God’s authority to confer privileges where He will.

And Jesus was greatly impressed by her words. Here was a true daughter of God; one who really illustrated the truth of his earlier comments to the Pharisees. They would have scorned to speak with this woman, for to them she was of an unclean nation, and, like unclean animals, condemned by the Law. But Jesus had taught them that it was the heart that counted, and that a person’s understanding of God’s purpose was greater than the accident of his birth.

So with pleasure he now addressed the Canaanitish woman: “O woman, great is your faith! be it unto you even as you would have it! For this saying go your way; the devil is gone out of your daughter.”

Gratitude shone out of the eyes of the woman as she heard these gracious words. Thanking the Lord, she rose to her feet, and hastening out of the house, ran quickly to her home, to find it even as the Lord had promised. There was her daughter, healed of the terrible malady that had her in its grip, and now quietly resting on her bed.

**Modern  
Tyre**



## Chapter 9

### MIRACLES OF HEALING IN THE DECAPOLIS

*From the region of Tyre and Sidon, the Lord travelled east along the northern border of the land through Decapolis. This territory was occupied by Gentiles and included the region where lived the cured madman called Legion. Here he had spoken to his friends about the remarkable cure that Jesus had performed on him, and therefore many were ready to receive and hearken to the Lord (Mk. 5:20). In consequence, great crowds followed him as he made his way along the roads.*

**T**HE miracles that the Lord performed were messianic in their character, and illustrated the work he shall yet accomplish in the earth at his return. That was the case in regard to a particularly remarkable cure that he performed in Decapolis which caused the Gentiles, living in that area, to proclaim their admiration of his power, in the terms of the highest praise.

#### **Jesus Cures a Deaf Man With an Impediment in His Speech (Mk. 7:31-37)**

There was a man of Decapolis who was deaf, and had a serious impediment in his speech. Some of his friends, learning that Jesus was close by, decided to seek his help to effect a cure. The man, of course, was unable to speak for himself, and so his friends conducted him to Jesus, and explaining to him the problem, besought him to heal him if he would.

In performing the miracle, the Lord followed a remarkable procedure, and one calculated to help the disciples in their preaching, if they carefully thought upon the reason for his actions.

First, he took the man aside from the multitude, to a suitable place where they could converse quietly on their own. He was one who was prepared to submit to what the Lord required of him, one of whom it could be said (in spite of his deafness), "Blessed are your ears, for they hear..." (Mat. 13:16). How **necessary** it is to take people aside from the multitude, into a quiet place where their ears can be opened to the message of salvation! In such circumstances, the still, small voice of Truth can be taught more effectively.

Next, the Lord put his fingers in his ears. This was to indicate to the deaf man what he intended to do. He was expressing his intentions in sign language, in the simplest possible form; and he

did so because of the man's inability, through deafness, to understand his words when he uttered them. Likewise, in preaching the Truth, we need to bear in mind the limitations of those to whom we speak, and so simplify the things we say.

He then spat, and touched the man's tongue. This, again, was sign language, to indicate that the power to perform the miracle came from within Jesus, a power that he had received from God, and which was revealed in the words that he spoke. By touching the man's tongue, Jesus indicated that he would be cured, not only of deafness, but of the impediment in his speech.

The Lord then looked up to heaven, and so directed the man's attention to the real Source of his cure. And as he did so, he "sighed" (the word means to "groan"), thus agonising in prayer on the behalf of the one he wished to cure — for these miracles of healing cost some effort on the part of Jesus (Mk. 5:30); they were not performed without expenditure of energy, as the groaning, or sighing of the Saviour in prayer indicated.

Finally, he said in the Hebrew language, *Ephphatha*, which signifies, "Be opened."

Immediately, by this word of command, the miracle was performed. The man's deafness was cured, and he heard properly; his tongue was loosed and he spoke with ease. To his great joy he could both listen to and speak for Jesus, and was anxious to do both.

### **The Cured Man Disobeys Jesus**

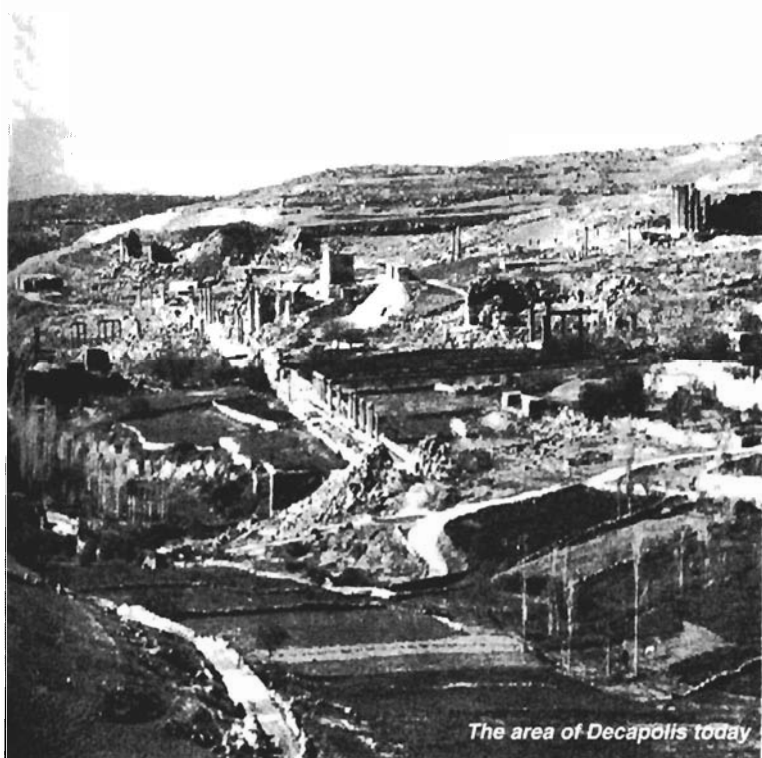
But the Lord had no need of the testimony of the man at that time. Indeed, he preferred, for the moment at least, that knowledge of these miracles should not be spread abroad. They were the very miracles that the prophets predicted the Messiah would perform, and therefore they stamped him with the seal of God. To testify concerning these miracles was to confess that he was the Messiah, and it was becoming increasingly dangerous to admit that in view of the determination of some of the leaders in Jerusalem to kill him. Moreover, the tendency was for men to see a political issue in the ministry of the Lord, and already he had to restrain some from taking him by force, and to make him a king. Therefore, in order to restrain any such attempts in the future, and to save his true followers from the danger that threatened them as well as himself, he commanded the people who witnessed the miracle not to proclaim it abroad.

But it was impossible for the people to keep silent about it. They had been astonished beyond all measure by what he had done, and had to tell it to others.

"He hath done all things well," they declared. "He maketh both

the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.”

So even Gentiles testified to his ministry, for this was an area largely inhabited by them. Meanwhile, Jesus travelled through Decapolis, coming to a point not far from the Sea of Galilee, and ascended one of the mountains that overlook the vast Lake. There the people sought him (Mat. 15:29), for news of the remarkable miracle he had just performed had been published abroad. Many sick people also made their painful way to him, pathetically begging help, whilst he, full of compassion, cured them of their sickness.



## THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE LORD

(continued from page 60)

### *Training the Disciples*

#### [1] **From Capernaum to Jerusalem and Return**

- #24 a. The feeding of the Five Thousand (Mat. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:31-44; Lk. 9:11-17; Jn. 6:1-14).
  - b. Jesus spends a night in prayer (Mat. 14:22-23; Mk. 6:45-46; Jn. 6:15).
- #25 c. Jesus calms the storm (Mat. 14:23-33 Mk. 6:47-52; Jn. 6:16-21).
- #26 d. Jesus heals many in Gennesaret (Mat. 14:34-36; Mk. 6:53-56).
  - e. Discourse in Capernaum on the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:32-59).
  - f. Many disciples forsake Jesus (Jn. 6:60-66).
  - g. Peter's confession and Christ's warning (Jn. 6:67-71).
  - h. Return from Passover at Jerusalem (Jn. 7:1).

#### [2] **In Capernaum and Phoenicia**

- a. Disputing about the tradition of the elders (Mat. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23).
- #27 b. Tour of Tyre and Sidon (Mat. 15:21; Mk. 7:24).
- c. Healing the Phoenician woman's daughter (Mat. 15:22-28; Mk. 7:25-30).

#### [3] **Through Decapolis**

- #28 a. Tour through Decapolis (Mat. 15:29; Mk. 7:31).
  - b. Teaching and healing multitudes (Mat. 15:30-31; Mk. 7:32-37).
- #29 c. Feeding four thousand (Mat. 15:32-39; Mk. 8:1-9).

#### [4] **To Dalmanutha**

- #30 a. Withdrawing by boat to Dalmanutha (Mat. 15:39; Mk. 8:10).
  - b. Pharisees and Sadducees demand a sign from heaven (Mat. 16:1-4; Mk. 8:11-12).
- #31 c. Warns of the leaven of the Pharisees (Mat. 16:5-12; Mk. 8:13-21).
- #32 d. Heals a blind man at Bethsaida (Mk. 8:22-26).

#### [5] **Near Caesarea-Philippi**

- #33 a. Peter's Great Confession (Mat. 16:13-20; Mk. 8:27-30; Lk. 9:18-21).

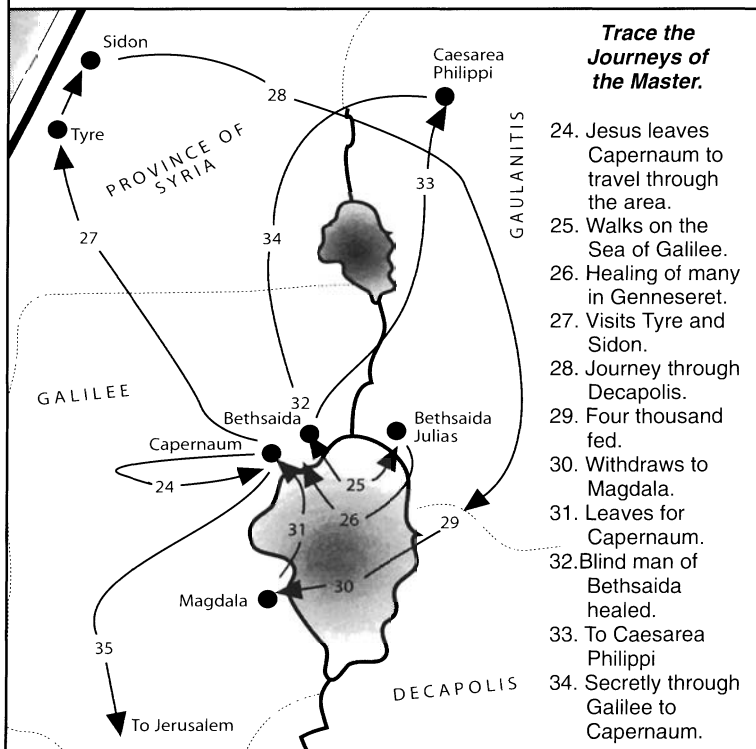


- b. Jesus foretells his death (Mat. 16:21-28; Mk. 8:31-9:1; Lk. 9:22-27).
- c. On the Mount of Transfiguration (Mat. 17:1-13; Mk. 9:2-13; Lk. 9:28-36).
- d. A demoniac boy is healed (Mat. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43).

#### [6] In Capernaum

- #34 a. Returns quietly through Galilee, again predicts his death (Mat. 17:22-23; Mk. 9:30-32; Lk. 9:43-45).
- b. Who is greatest in the kingdom? (Mat. 18:1-35; Mk. 9:33-50; Lk. 9:46-50).
- c. Peter and the Temple tax (Mat. 17:24-27).

*Though it is not specifically stated that Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover, there is little doubt that he did so in order to keep the Law, and it could be that the circumstances of that visit (not recorded in the Gospels) caused the antagonism to arise to which John makes reference in ch. 7:1. Compare the incidents above with the sketch-map of the Lord's travels.*



## A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

### ARCHELAUS, THE ASSASSIN

His name means *The People's Chief*. He was the elder of two sons whom a Samaritan wife bore to Herod the Great (see *The Story of the Bible* vol. 5, pp. 92-93), the younger being Antipas, followed by Herod the Tetrarch. With his brother Antipas and his half-brothers Herod and Philip, Archelaus received his education at Rome. While there, Antipater, his half-brother, falsely accused him and Philip of plotting to murder their common father; but Archelaus and Philip were acquitted, and the crime which the accuser had alleged against others being brought home to himself, he was put to death. Herod the Great died immediately afterwards, BC4 ; and when his will, which had been altered a few days previously, was opened, it was found that the greater part of the kingdom was left to Archelaus, though tetrarchies had been cut out of it for Antipas and Philip, and some cities reserved for Herod's sister Salome.

At that time, however, Rome dominated Judea, and Archelaus prudently refrained from ascending the throne until he had received formal approval from Augustus, the Roman Emperor. He decided to personally interview Augustus to this end, but before he left for Rome an unhappy incident occurred. A number of people, who felt they had a grievance, appealed for it to be immediately redressed by strong measures. Their demand was premature, but they would take no denial, and when they could not have their way, they rioted at the Passover, until, against his will (for he desired to gain popularity) Archelaus had to repress it by military action, and some 3,000 people were slain. In consequence, a deputation of Jews was dispatched to Rome, to urge the Emperor to reject his application. His younger brother, Herod Antipas, also appeared as his rival, petitioning that he, in place of Archelaus, might be made king. But the deference of Archelaus won for him the support of Augustus, and he received confirmation of the appointment.

Once in power, Archelaus became barbarously cruel. He ruled with appalling ruthlessness, and in an atmosphere of increasing fear, hate and opposition. Jews and Samaritans both dispatched embassies to Augustus complaining of his excesses, and of his complete indifference to the lives and feelings of his subjects. Finally, his conduct became so bad, and such a disgrace to the Roman Empire, that in the tenth year of his administration (AD6), he was deposed by Augustus and banished to Vienne in Gaul, and his wealth put into the imperial treasury.

In Egypt, shortly after the death of Herod the Great, Joseph, in charge of the infant Jesus, heard rumours of the brutality of Archelaus, and feared to take the child back to Judea. He prayed for further instructions, and, as a result, instead of returning to Bethlehem, he ascended north into Galilee where Antipas, the brother of Archelaus, ruled, and took up residence again in the city of Nazareth.

The parable of the nobleman, referred to in Lk. 19, seems based upon the action of Archelaus in ascending to Rome to receive his authority, and of the citizens of his realm in opposing him.



***Area in the north of the Land***

## Chapter 10

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### FEEDING FOUR THOUSAND PEOPLE

(Mat. 15:30-38; Mk. 8:1-9)

*On a mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee, and not far removed from where he had earlier fed five thousand people, the Lord repeated the miracle for the benefit of another large crowd of some four thousand men besides women and children. Though there are points of similarity between the two incidents, one remarkable feature emerges that seems to provide the key to the second miracle. Faced with the needs of the hungry crowd, the Lord Jesus asked the apostles how food might be supplied for these famishing people. The apostles, however, instead of suggesting that he should repeat the miracle he had performed only a short time before, seemed embarrassed at his inquiry, and could not offer a solution. Why was this? Why did they not suggest that he merely repeat the earlier miracle? We suggest that the answer lies in the character of the crowd before them on this occasion, and that in performing the miracle, Jesus desired to impress an important lesson upon his apostles. The earlier crowd of five thousand was Jewish in character; but this audience of four thousand was predominantly Gentile. The disciples were possibly hesitant about suggesting that God's gift should be used for Gentiles whom they looked upon as being beyond the scope of salvation; but the Lord swept aside their Jewish prejudices, and in feeding this audience of four thousand Gentiles taught that the time was at hand when God's gift of salvation would be made available to Gentiles equally as to Jews, and that as the apostles would minister unto Jews in preaching the Gospel, so they would also be later called upon to minister unto Gentiles.*

**L**EAVING the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon (Mat. 15:21), Jesus travelled through the northern part of the Holy Land, toward the Sea of Galilee. This part of the land was dominated by Gentiles. The Lord made no secret of the fact that his primary duty was to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mat. 15:24). At the same time, when pressed to do so, he did not refuse to help Gentiles who came beseeching his aid. He performed miracles for their benefit, and preached to them the things concerning the Kingdom of God.

And so Gentiles also were drawn to him. They viewed with

wonder his marvellous deeds, they heard with joy his comforting message, and they, too, benefited from blessings primarily designed for Israel.

**A Three Days  
Pilgrimage  
(Mat. 15:32-39;  
Mk. 8:1-9)**

Many of them acknowledged this in words. For example, the Canaanitish woman, whose daughter had been healed, expressed this truth when she confessed: "The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Mat. 15:27). She thus acknowledged that Israel is the "master" nation as far as the purpose of God is concerned, and though she was a Gentile, recognised that approach to God must be through the Hope of Israel.

Her attitude was imitated by many others, who, having seen the miracles of the Lord, "glorified the God of Israel" (Mat. 15:31).

The apostles became the amazed witnesses of crowds of Gentiles following the Jewish Messiah, acknowledging the hope of Israel, and glorifying their God! This Gentile interest became intensified as the Lord traversed the region where the man called Legion resided, whom he had cured of madness (Mk. 5:20). Perhaps the enthusiastic reception that he there received was partly due to the effect of the preaching of Legion when he had returned to his own people to do so, as commanded by Jesus.

Be that as it may, the excited crowds of Gentiles who now followed the Lord provided an anticipatory fulfilment of words he uttered later: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd (Jn. 10:16).

So the Lord continued east toward the Sea of Galilee, and many of the Gentiles continued with him as he made his way along. They brought food with them, and, camping out in the open air, they remained with him for some three days, until finally all their provisions were consumed. Captivated by the Lord, excited and amazed at all they saw and heard, these Gentiles could not tear themselves away from his presence, and were ready to listen to him at the expense of their own convenience.

**On the  
Mountain Side**

Meanwhile, the Lord ascended a mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Ignoring the inconvenience, the people followed him there that they might continue to listen to him, or to beseech his help on the behalf of sick and afflicted friends whom they had brought with them (Mat. 15:30). All day long he ministered to them, and then, late in the afternoon, there were signs of distress among the huge crowd of 4,000 men plus women and children.

Their food had run out.

What were they to do?

The Lord decided to put his disciples to the test, to see if they had learned the lesson of his ministry throughout this predominantly Gentile area. Calling them to his side, he pointed out to them the distress of many of the people, and his own feelings in regard to them.

*"I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way, for many of them come from far."*

Some, indeed, may have come from as far away as Tyre and Sidon, others from Gentile regions closer to hand. What was to be done for them? The Lord had hinted at the solution when he said, *"I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."* The Lord will never do that to those who seek him! Israel was taught that truth in the wilderness, when Yahweh suffered them to hunger, but then fed them with manna that they might learn that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh doth man live." (Deu. 8:3).

Now here was another great company of 4,000 people hungering in the wilderness, identified, by very number, with Israel which was noted for its four square encampment (Num. 2). These, too, had likewise been "called out of Egypt" in a typical sense. They were Gentiles following Israel's Messiah, and hungry for food! What was to be done for such people?

The Lord put the question to the apostles, but they did not know. Perhaps they recalled the words of Jesus to the Canaanite woman who had been so persistent in her request for help, when he had told her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs!" Jesus had then plainly stated that it is not right to feed Gentiles with that which rightly belongs to Israel.

Should Jesus perform a miracle for Gentiles? Should not bread, so miraculously manufactured, be limited to Israel's use?

The apostles evidently thought so, for they did not suggest that he repeat his earlier miracle. His own words to the Canaanite woman seemed, to them, to endorse their personal prejudice against Gentiles and their Jewish exclusiveness. To them, there was no hope for Gentiles until they embraced Judaism. They classed Gentiles as unclean, like the outcast dogs that prowled around the outskirts of Jewish towns and villages.

True, Jesus had performed miracles for individual Gentiles who showed great faith; but who could say that this crowd before them had such faith? In any case, none of them had asked Jesus to feed them.

So the apostles might have reasoned, while they, too, sympathised with the problem facing the multitude, though it was beyond them to solve it.

“From whence can we, or any man, satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” they answered the Lord.

They doubted that the power of God should be extended to feed these Gentiles as it had been for the Jews who earlier gathered together, and had been so liberally fed.

They did not then believe, as they were forced to do later, that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34).

Little did they realise that the time would come when they would be sent forth into the Gentile world to provide ample spiritual food for its people. In fact, their eyes were blind to the realisation that their own prophets proclaimed that salvation which must ultimately be offered freely to Gentiles (see Isa. 9:1-2).

Jesus had tried to break down their racial prejudice by taking this tour into the Gentile parts of northern Palestine, and performing miracles of healing among its people. Now the time had come to more clearly show that Gentiles would be invited to partake of the gospel message equally with Jews, and that these very apostles, who were then reluctant to minister to them in material things, would be called upon to do so in spiritual matters.

So he turned again to his followers.

“How many loaves have you?” he enquired.

“Seven,” was the answer.

It is a significant number, for seven is the number of completion, the number of an oath. In Hebrew, the same word does duty for “seven” as for “oath” (the Hebrew word, *sheba*), and “the oath” points to the great covenants of promise made to the worthies of old, “the oath which He swore to our father Abraham,” concerning which Zechariah had sung (Lk. 1:68-73). The seven loaves, therefore, became a fitting symbol for the bread of the covenant.

### **The Food is Miraculously Increased**

First, the Lord commanded that the people take their places upon the ground in order that they might be served with food. With what amazement, the huge concourse must have viewed the scanty provisions that were to form their meal! Only seven loaves of bread and a few fishes! And they so hungry! But Jesus, taking the seven loaves in his hands, gave thanks to God, and commenced breaking them into portions. To the astonishment of the people, they saw the seven loaves miraculously increased in the hands of the Lord until there was plenty for all. Jesus kept on passing the pieces to his disciples, and the disciples

carried them to the people (Mk. 8:6).

It was a remarkable incident, both as regards the miracles as well as the ministering. If the Samaritan woman at the well had been surprised that Jesus, a Jew, should speak to her, how much more surprising it must have been for the Gentile crowds on the mountain-side to be served by twelve Jews presided over by their Lord. To do it, the disciples had to temporarily set aside their exclusive Judaism (which later caused Peter to seek to avoid proclaiming the gospel unto a pious, God-fearing alms-giving Gentile — Acts 10), and serve the needs of famished Gentiles at the bidding of their Lord!

The bread having been dispensed, the Lord then gave thanks for the fishes, and, through the disciples, passed these also to the multitude.

And to the amazement of all, the food was miraculously increased until the vast multitude of hungry people had received all they needed. Then, when the fragments were taken up, “that nothing be lost” (Jn. 6:12), it was discovered that seven baskets\* were filled with food!

Once again, the lesson was brought home to the apostles that no service performed in the name of the Lord is wasted, but returns a greater reward than the cost of sacrifice. In this case, there was more food at the conclusion of the meal than at the beginning!

But the greatest lesson this miracle taught (though it was not then properly understood), was that the time was at hand, when the apostles would have to minister the bread of the covenant to Gentiles as well as to Jews, and to do this satisfactorily, they would have to overcome the natural prejudice against Gentiles which their upbringing as Jews had developed.

The disciples were soon to experience another adventure that should have impressed this lesson more firmly on their minds, for they were to discover how hard-hearted Jews can be toward the things of God.

Meanwhile, the Lord, having fed the people, sent them away. They left, carrying the message of hope he had preached to them, and rejoicing in the goodness of Israel’s God whose power they had witnessed in the miracles Jesus had performed.

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\* The Greek text has an entirely different word for that translated “baskets” in Mat. 14:20, from that used in Jn. 6:13. In Matthew, the word implies a large basket. It is a translation of the word *spuris* (related to *speira*, anything rolled into a circle, and from which is derived the word “sphere”) signifying that which is round, such as a capacious kind of hamper. These baskets were sometimes so large as to hold a man (Acts 9:25). The word for “baskets” in Jn. 6, implies a much smaller container.



# *Warnings and Teachings*



## Chapter 1

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### BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

*Having dismissed the multitude, the Lord took ship and crossed over the Sea of Galilee to the western side. From here he proceeded to Magdala, a town in the district of Dalmanutha (cf. Mat. 15:39; Mk. 8:10). As he entered the town he was challenged by a group of Sadducees and Pharisees who, with wicked motives in their hearts, demanded of him a sign from heaven. He rebuked them, and then, distressed by their cold-hearted attitude, he left the city. Later he privately warned his disciples of the teaching of the Pharisees; but they were absorbed with the fact that they had forgotten to bring bread with them, and were now hungry! They had overlooked the lesson of the miracles of feeding the multitude, and had to be taught it all over again! So the suffering Saviour of humanity had to bear with both the hostility of his enemies, and the thoughtlessness of his friends.*

**L**EAVING the region of Decapolis, the Lord and his disciples took ship across the Sea of Galilee, and, landing on the western side to the south of Capernaum, eventually came to Magdala in Dalmanutha. Here a completely different reception awaited Jesus. Among the Gentiles of Decapolis, he had been received with the greatest enthusiasm and respect; but the Jews of Dalmanutha met him with chilling indifference and bitter hostility.

Magdala means *Tower*, and almost as though some had been watching for him from the tower on its heights, he no sooner approached the town than he was met by a deputation of haughty Pharisees and supercilious Sadducees, determined to discredit him before the people.

#### **The Pharisees Seek a Sign**

They demanded of him a sign from heaven which would authenticate his mission among them. To the listening people, steeped in their cold-hearted formalism, it would have seemed a reasonable request. After all, had not men of old displayed their signs before the people? Did not Moses cause his rod to turn into a serpent? Did he not heal the leprous hand that he drew out of his bosom (Exo. 4:1-9)? Had not Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and the moon to cease her majestic progress across the heavens (Josh. 10:12-14)? Had not Samuel caused it to thunder in

the midst of summer (1Sam. 12:16-18)? Did not Elijah manifest his authority by famine (1Kgs. 17:1)? These signs were as the badges of their office! If Jesus of Nazareth be Messiah, where was his heavenly sign?

These hypocrites, who so questioned the Lord, made their request with an air of sweet reasonableness, but they had deliberately closed their eyes and ears to the many signs the Lord had performed in their own midst. Had not one of their own number declared: "We know that thou art a teacher sent from God, for no one could do these miracles except God be with him" (Jn. 3:2)? But Nicodemus was honest, whereas these Pharisees were not.

As an evidence of their dishonesty, they had joined forces with their enemies, the Sadducees, to form a solid phalanx of conspiracy, opposition and hatred to the Lord Jesus, doing all that they could to hinder his work, and to alienate the affections of the people from him.

The Pharisees, with their complete reliance upon the formalism of the Law, had no time for his teaching; the Sadducees with their rejection of the resurrection, had no place for the hope he set before men. The former, by resting on the typical sacrifices of the Law as the means of salvation, denied the need of Christ's first advent mission; and the latter, by their rejection of a resurrection and a future hope, did away with the need of Christ's second advent.

### **The Lord's**

### **Forthright Reply**

These hypocrites knew that no such sign as they requested would be granted them, for already Jesus had thrice refused to gratify their demand (Jn. 2:18; 6:30; Mat. 12:38). They had signs aplenty if they would heed them; they had Yahweh's Word if they would seek it. They did not desire proof of his messiahship but rather, of the contrary; and now they waited their opportunity to discredit him.

Sternly the Lord looked at them, and with true insight of their motives, he indicted them in scathing language, directing their attention to the one sign that spelled doom for both the people and the nation.

Perhaps pointing to the western sky, now crimson with the deepening hues of sunset, he called upon them to interpret afresh the signs of the times. In tones heavy with rebuke and sadness, full of indignation at their blind hypocrisy, he declared: "*When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but*

*can you not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah*" (Mat. 16:2-4).

These were ominous words indeed. They recalled the message and ministry of Jonah, who gave the people of Nineveh forty days to repent, or else destruction would fall on their city. The Ninevites repented, and the threatened punishment was averted. But the Lord, by decrying his generation as "wicked and adulterous," implied that there would be no repentance, and therefore it would suffer the punishment of God.

He called upon those hypocritical, sign-seeking Pharisees to discern the signs of the times, to see in the political and spiritual trends about them, indications of coming trouble that would destroy the very nation. The signs were obvious if they but opened their eyes to them; but they preferred to close them to facts.

They remained blind even in spite of the fulfilment of the great sign that Jesus gave them: the Sign of Jonah! This was fulfilled when the Lord rose from the dead after being in the heart of the earth "three days and three nights." But this greatest of all miracles made no difference to the leaders of the nation; they remained obstinately unrepentant, and refused to acknowledge the Son of God.

How evil can men be! How blind can they become! Forty years later (as forty prophetic days), the Romans marched over the borders of Palestine, wreaking the vengeance of God on a people who had refused His mercy and rejected His sign.

Christ's prophetic words were then fulfilled.

### **The Lord Leaves Magdala**

To Jesus, who felt so keenly the needs of the people, and who was so frequently moved with compassion by their sufferings and problems, it was distressing to be opposed by this bitter hostility and unreasonable hatred. It was such a contrast to the reception he had received from the Gentiles. Here, among his own people, he found the self-satisfied hypocrites (the Pharisees) in alliance with the political time-servers (the Sadducees) drawn up in array to oppose him, who had words of salvation to offer the people. His mission was to save lives; their aim was to destroy the Lord of life. He presented them with the mercy of Yahweh; they retaliated with the hatred generated by flesh.

He felt it all so keenly, so deeply, that he could bear it no longer. Sighing deeply in his spirit (see Mk. 8:12), he declared: "*Why does this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation!*"

Why did they seek a sign? Surely they had all the signs they

needed in the person of the Lord! Harken to his wonderful teaching, observe his remarkable miracles, consider his glorious character! Were there not signs aplenty in all this? But because they were blind to these, they would be given no further signs except the one already promised them, the sign of Jonah!

The record adds: "He left them, and departed!"

There is something terribly abrupt and final in these words. The foolish people of Magdala had lost their opportunity. The Lord of life had visited them, but opposed by their hard-hearted opposition, he immediately suddenly, hurriedly left them. He was not going to press the divine mercy on a people who so blasphemously rejected it. He turned from them, and retracing his steps to the ship, set sail for other parts.

Later, the apostles experienced a repetition of this sort of treatment, for when they were given the task of preaching the gospel after the ascension of the Lord, they often found Gentiles more receptive to their teaching, and more eager to embrace Christ, than their own nation which, to this day, remains cold and hostile to the truths concerning its Messiah.

Meanwhile, as later the nation was permitted to keep its robber and murderer (Barabbas) in preference to the Lord of Life, so now the Galileans were permitted to keep their haughty Pharisees and supercilious Sadducees and lose their Christ. He left them, never again to return to Magdala on a public mission (though he did visit the neighbourhood once more) to work miracles and to teach and preach elsewhere.

**"We Have Forgotten the Bread!"** In the ship, the Lord and the apostles made their way north toward the coast of

Bethsaida. Immediately they were on board, the apostles were reminded of an oversight on their part. They had forgotten to take bread, and there was but one loaf in the boat (Mk. 8:14). The Lord observed their concern, and perhaps with irritation, noticed how their minds were instantly diverted from spiritual matters to be dominated by material wants. He took the opportunity to press home upon them an important lesson. Probably interrupting them as they laid the blame one upon another for forgetting the bread, he suddenly broke in with an observation: "*Take heed,*" he said, "*and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees, and of the Herodians!*"

The apostles turned from considering the lack of bread, and looked up in amazement! What did he mean? "It is because we have taken no bread," they reasoned among themselves. They took the Lord literally. They knew that it was the custom among conflicting Jewish sects, to avoid, as much as possible, all dealings

one with the other, even abstaining from buying and selling with those of opposing parties. This led the apostles to think that Jesus was concerned with literal bread.

That was not the case at all, of course. He had told them to “take heed” of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees because he knew how easy it is for men to be taken in by the pretence of piety on the part of others, especially when they are in authority, and clothe their bearing with an air of sanctity and so-called learning!

He described the false teaching of these men as “leaven,” because of its influence upon the nation. Leaven works secretly, but efficiently, causing flour to swell and become light; and so did the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees as far as the nation was concerned. Leaven works silently and certainly, though none can see its action; so it was with the doctrine of the Pharisees, which was hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1). Their teaching sounded so plausible, and yet it contained a corrupting influence that instilled God-dishonouring principles into the minds of the people. Only the tiniest piece of leaven, or yeast, is necessary to affect a large amount of dough; in that regard, wrong doctrine is like leaven in the following regards:

1. *Widespread apostasy commences from slight and apparently unimportant deviations from Truth;*
2. *Its influence, at first, is usually subtle and difficult to detect;*
3. *Its leavening effect is only manifested gradually;*
4. *Its corrupting tendencies become obvious ultimately by the way other teaching and principles are affected;*
5. *Its final effect is to so dominate as to completely destroy the purity of the Truth.*

Jesus likened the doctrines of the **Pharisees** to leaven because, as the latter “blew up” bread, making it light and aerated, so the former led to pompous display and personal conceit (Mat. 23:5) which elevated the flesh. The formalised Judaism of this sect would have denied Gentiles spiritual bread, as the Lord had earlier supplied actual bread to the despised people of Decapolis.

Jesus likened the doctrines of the **Sadducees** to leaven, because their teaching “blew up” flesh in its self-opinionatedness. This sect denied the need of personal sacrifice, and inculcated the doctrine of self-preservation and self-indulgence.

Jesus likened the doctrines of the **Herodians** to leaven, because their teaching “blew up” the nation with ideas of political expediency. Herodians were prepared to tolerate Rome, so long as they had personal power. They, therefore, lost sight of the honoured position of Israel in the purpose of God, and saw only the desire for personal prestige, and for this they were prepared to compromise

spiritual principles.

The **Pharisees** stood for self-gratification in piety; the blighting effect of a religion limited by man-made laws, and devoid of true warmth of feeling toward God.

The **Sadducees** stood for self-gratification in wealth and luxury, so that God had to give place to self, and the principle of personal sacrifice was held in contempt.

The **Herodians** stood for religious and worldly compromise through which ambition would find its objective in the attainment of political prestige among men.

This was the “leaven” against which Jesus warned, a form of teaching that will corrupt men’s minds and lead them from serving God in truth.

The sects of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians have disappeared, but their counterparts remain to this present day, and comprise a “leaven” against which we must be warned. The spirit of *Pharisaic* “leaven” permeates an ecclesia where there is seen a formalised pompousness in worship and an ostentatious love of display; the spirit of the *Sadducees* is detected in the modern desire for self-gratification to the exclusion of self-sacrifice, and rejection of the need of Bible understanding; the attitude of the *Herodians* is imitated where personal power and ambition is sought that a person might enjoy the esteem of others, and where divine principles are compromised to attain it. Lest it is felt that such an observation as this is extreme, let it be noted that Paul warned the ecclesia in Corinth against the leaven of such doctrine (1Cor. 5:6-8), and because it was being blown up in conceit through this means (he told the Corinthian brethren they were “puffed up” — 1Cor. 5:2), warning that “glorying was not good.”

But the puzzled apostles in the boat, with their minds dominated by the lack of bread, could not understand the principles of the Lord’s teaching when he warned them of the “leaven” of his enemies!

### **The Lord’s Seven Pertinent Questions**

Jesus therefore took them to task. “*O ye of little faith,*” he declared, “*why reason among yourselves, because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, nor the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets you took up?*” (Mat. 16:8-10).

He asked them seven questions, and how shamefacedly must the apostles have heard them (see Mk. 8:17-21).

***Do you not yet perceive?***

***Do you not yet understand?***

***Are your hearts hardened?***

*Cannot you see?  
Cannot you hear?  
Do you not remember?  
How is it you do not understand?*

The word translated “understand” means to comprehend a matter by putting things together and learning from them. So he became even more specific in his questions, and as the boat cut through the water on its way toward Bethsaida, he brought the minds of the apostles back to the two great miracles of feeding the multitudes.

“When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up?”

“Twelve,” the embarrassed apostles answered.

“And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up?”

“Seven,” they replied.

“How is it you do not understand!” he exclaimed. “I spoke not to you concerning bread, but that you should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees!”

Instantly they recognised two truths: [1] That he had spoken to them about the doctrines of his detractors: and, [2] They should not be over-concerned about material needs of life whilst engaged in Yahweh’s service. And cannot we learn by the mistakes of the apostles? Let us answer the seven questions he put to them!

*Do we perceive the goodness of God when we experience it in life?*

*Do we learn by these experiences to place trust in Him?*

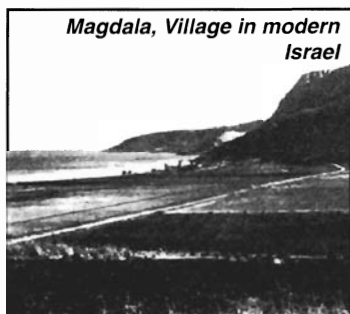
*Do we harden our hearts in moments of trial and forget the benefits of the past?*

*Cannot we open our eyes to see the hand of God revealed for our good?*

*Cannot we open our ears to His voice in His Word?*

*Cannot we learn, by putting all these things together, to appreciate better the will and purpose of our heavenly Father, and not be deterred by temporary reverses?*

These were the lessons taught by the Lord’s seven pertinent questions as the ship rode the smooth waters of the Sea of Galilee toward the coast of Bethsaida.





## Chapter 2

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### THE BLIND MAN AT BETHSAIDA (Mk. 8:22-26)

*Now occurred a miracle that seems strange in the telling. A blind man pleaded for his sight, but at first the efforts of the Lord were only partially successful, and the man had but a distorted vision. A second attempt, however, provided clear and perfect sight. Why record the miracle? And why was the cure so protracted? The answer seems to be that it provided an object lesson for the apostles. In them the Lord had twelve "blind men" with him, for in the boat he had said: "Why, having eyes, see ye not?" And though he had instructed them, they still only saw a distorted image of his real purpose!*

**I**T is interesting and instructive to notice the different methods the Lord adopted to effect cures for people. With some he seemed to go out of his way to embarrass them; with others he used the utmost consideration in attending to them. He made the woman who touched the hem of his garments, publicly confess to her complaint and cure; he later let the blind men stumble their way down the streets of the city to the house before he gave them their sight. On other occasions, he manifested the greatest consideration, comforting the widow of Nain, and weeping over the grave of Lazarus.

But whatever means he used, there was good cause for it. The Lord was not so much concerned with providing physical cures, as to leading the people to seek the spiritual healing that he alone could provide. Above all else, he was anxious to impress upon the apostles the great need to constantly seek God's way, in all the circumstances of life.

**The Strange Cure**      On landing at Bethsaida, not far from Capernaum, a blind man sought his help in such a way as to provide him with the opportunity of dramatically showing the apostles their real state in regard to his mission. This blind man had sought the Lord to touch him, for he had faith to believe that by his touch, he could receive his sight again.

But first, the Lord took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the city.

He exercised patience and care in doing this, and as the apostles saw the Lord leading the blind man away from Bethsaida, they saw a parabolic representation of what the Lord had been teaching them

in the boat. He had told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and Bethsaida was a city that was completely hardened in unbelief (Mat. 11:21). So he “took the man by the hand” to help him out of this evil environment.

The same word here translated “took” is used in Heb. 2:16 as expressive of the work of Christ in redeeming humanity: “For verily, he took not on angels [*the words in italics can be eliminated; they are not in the original text*] but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” The word means to “take hold of,” either to help or to harm, and usually to take hold of by the hand, and thus to lead to help! The Lord came, to take the seed of Abraham by the hand, and to lead them out of the bondage of sin and death to righteousness and life.

The beautiful picture of the young prophet of Nazareth guiding the stumbling steps of the blind man out of the doomed city of Bethsaida (see Mat. 11:21-22), and leading him therefrom by the hand, is thus a graphic portrayal of his purpose of salvation for dying humanity.

Outside the city he spat on the eyes of the blind man.

This was to show that the cure of blindness must come from within the Lord, from the words of his mouth, from the voice of Truth, for he was “the Word made flesh.”

And then he placed his hands upon the blind man to show that it is not merely teaching and believing, but action also that is needed.

“Can you see now?” he asked him.

The blind man looked about him wonderingly. Yes, he could see, but only with distorted vision! Like the apostles, he had eyes, but could only see imperfectly! There was need for further work on the part of the Lord before he could see truly. Meanwhile, as the man told Jesus: “I see men as trees, walking!”

He could only see things close at hand, and even those only imperfectly.

So the healing hands of the Lord were again outstretched to rest upon the eyes of the blind man, and to make him look up. And now his sight was not only restored, but he could see things properly, and at a distance, all in focus. He not only saw every man clearly, but also things afar off.\* Thus he had a vision of the future scene presented clearly to his sight.

But still the enacted parable was not completed.

“Return to your own house,” the Lord instructed him, “but do not go into the town, nor tell the miracle to any in the town!”

That town was doomed because it had refused to heed the

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\* “He saw... clearly.” The Greek word *telaugus* signifies “distinctly,” implying at a distance. Thus the man was given good sight of things at hand as well as afar off.

message of the Lord. It was hard-hearted in unbelief, blind in its refusal to see the Truth, deaf to the hearing of the Word! It represented the negation of all the questions the Lord had uttered whilst in the boat, and to associate with it would be to suffer with it in the time of its judgment.

Incurable in its wickedness, its destiny was death. Today Bethsaida does not exist.

***The area of Bethsaida on Galilee***



***What is it that we are invited to believe or place confidence in before our baptism?***

*Answer:* In the gospel.

*Proof:* "Preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). "It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1Cor. 1:21).



## Chapter 3

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### THE GREAT CONFESSION

*We come now to a climax in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Following the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, his popularity with the people reached its peak, and they wanted to take him by force and make him king (Jn. 6:15). But he rebuffed them, not caring for the accolades of men, and by his hard sayings in the synagogue of Capernaum, repelled them. Consequently his popularity began to recede. Whereas once the people looked upon him as Messiah and King, they no longer did so. At the same time, the attitude of the leaders was hardening against him.*

*Jesus had felt this rising antagonism toward him at Magdala, and it had caused him to abruptly leave that town, and also to turn from Bethsaida. It also introduced him to the final phase of his ministry, destined to terminate in his death. For this tragic feature his disciples had to be prepared, and to that end, he withdrew with them to the quietude of the area of Caesarea Philippi, where he could commune with them without interruption. Hence he extracted from them the great confession that he was the Christ (Mat. 16:16), and then revealed to them that he must die shamefully, but that this would be followed by glory. This, therefore, was a most important phase of his training of the twelve.*

*Caesarea Philippi is about 45 kilometres (30 miles) from Bethsaida, and though he visited the "towns" and villages (Mark 8:27), he evidently did not perform miracles, so that no crowds followed him. "The journey would be through the most splendid scenery of Palestine — under the shadow of the Lebanon range, in whose wild and solitary glades they had time for reflection and private conversation" (Nazareth Revisited). It was the scene of Abraham's notable victory against Chedorlaomer, after which he returned in triumph and in reverence to Melchizedek (Gen. 14); it was also the scene of great apostasy in later times (Jdg. 18:27-31; 1Kgs. 12:28-30). It was a site of the Promised Land that Moses viewed from afar (Deu. 34:1), in faith that he would one day inherit it.*

*Now the solitary Saviour and his companions walked in its shadow, speaking of the greatest victory yet to be won, the greatest apostasy yet to be revealed, and seeing afar off the hope of the divine inheritance and glory.*

**F**ROM Bethsaida, the Lord Jesus moved north toward the district of Caesarea Philippi. The time had come when he must prepare the apostles for the shameful death to which he would be subjected, and therefore he avoided the busiest places, and visited only the villages in the “coasts” or outskirts of the district (Mk. 8:27; Mat. 16:13).

**“Whom Do Men  
Say I Am?”  
(Mat. 16:13-16;  
Mk. 8:27-29;  
Lk. 9:18-20)**

In preparation for their ministry he had to bring them to an acknowledgment of his true status before God and man; had to reveal to them the circumstances of his death and what this would impose on them, and had to manifest also the glory that will ultimately be revealed. The apostles were ready for the glory, but did not realise that the cross must come before the crown; nor did they understand what true discipleship of the Lord required in the way of personal self-sacrifice.

All this had to be taught them in such a way that the lesson would never be forgotten.

To that end, he sought the help and guidance of Yahweh.

In a quiet place, undisturbed by the crowds that usually flocked around him, and with the apostles also standing apart, he gave himself up to solitary prayer, communicating with his Father in heaven, seeking His aid in the revelation that was about to be given to the disciples.

Then, having completed his prayer, he beckoned his apostles to him, and as they made their way along, he asked them a question: ***“Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?”***

There probably was a pause as they thought out the answer. They knew, from the idle guesses of the people, that in spite of all his labours, in teaching, and miracles, the Messiah had not been recognised by the very people he had come to save. Many were wondering who he really was. Some repeated the verdict of the guilty, conscience-smitten Herod, and decided he was John the Baptist; others who may have heard him sternly denouncing the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, likened him to the fiery Elijah; others, again, who had witnessed his tender compassion for the unfortunate, saw in his pathos and feeling, the manifestation of a Jeremiah sent to save the nation from disaster; but most only looked upon him as a prophet, proclaiming the will and purpose of God. The light had shone in Israel, but the eyes of men were too blind to see it.

The disciples replied: “Some say John the Baptist, others say, Elijah, others again, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

None were now saying that he was the Christ!

They had acknowledged that a short time before, but his rebuff of the people in the synagogue of Capernaum had turned many disciples from him, and had discouraged the people from looking upon him as king.

His popularity was surely waning.

That, in fact, was what the answer of the apostles confirmed!

"Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

But Jesus continued his questioning:

"But who do *you* say that I am?"

The answer came boldly from Peter. He repeated, even more dogmatically, the statement he had made when so many were turning from the Lord outside the synagogue in Capernaum (Jn. 6:66).

***"YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!"***

It was a declaration of the greatest significance.

As "the Christ," it meant that he was the King of Israel, the One who would fulfil the promises made to Eve (Gen. 3:15), to Abraham (Gen. 22), and to David (2Sam. 7). And these required that the nation of Israel must be restored, Christ must reign as king, the blessings of his rule must be extended throughout the world, with the worthy granted immortality to share it.

The declaration comprehended the fulness of the gospel message proclaimed to Abraham: "In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8, 16).

By "the Son of the living God," Peter meant that he was, in a very special sense, the Son of Yahweh. This was a tremendous statement for any Jew to make, for whilst some may have looked upon him as a son of God by divine selection and guidance of the nation (see Exo. 4:22-23; Deu. 14:1; Hos. 1:10), Peter's words signified much more than that, and implied that Jesus was literally the Son of Yahweh by divine begetting.

To confess such teaching as that, would be considered blasphemous by most Jews and would, indeed, be blasphemy — except that in Jesus' case it is true. The declaration meant that he was the manifestation of the Father from heaven by divine begetting through the virgin Mary, and that all he did and was, stemmed from the strength that he derived from God.

Only "God in Christ" could perform the miracles that the disciples had seen (Acts 2:22).

Only "God in Christ" could gain the victory over flesh that his complete sinlessness and character revealed (2Cor. 5:19).

Only "God in Christ" could utter such words of wisdom and doctrine of salvation, such as he expressed (Jn. 12:49).

Peter's confession shows that the doctrine of the Trinity is a

blasphemous error, but that people must really understand the doctrine of God-manifestation if they would truly know Jesus. It reveals that the Lord derived strength from a Power outside of himself in order to manifest the divine likeness as he did, and implies that all must do likewise who would walk in the ways of God (Phil. 4:13).

Whether Peter fully understood all that is implied in his wonderful confession is not revealed, but his subsequent actions showed that he failed to comprehend the fulness of the divine purpose in the Lord (see Mat. 16:22) until after the Lord's resurrection; nevertheless it was a declaration full of encouragement to the Master at that moment, showing that some of his instruction was penetrating the minds of the apostles. "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona," answered Jesus, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven!"

He called him *Simon Bar-jona* because as a name it expressed the attitude of Peter in giving this confession. Simon Bar-jona means: *The Hearing One filled with the Dove*. The dove was the symbol of the Spirit revealed at the baptism of Jesus (Mat. 3:16) made flesh in him, so that the use of this name was commendation that Peter had listened to the spirit-words as Christ had uttered them (Jn. 6:63, 68-69), and that his declaration was the emanation of this influence. It was not "flesh and blood" that had revealed them, though Jesus was flesh and blood, but the Father in heaven who spoke through the Son (see Jn. 8:15-16; 7:16). As Jesus hearkened to the Father (Jn. 8:26), so his followers must hearken unto him (Jn. 6:45). They must both hear and act, and if they will do this they will also be constituted "sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

The Lord continued his instruction of the apostles: "*I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my ecclesia; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven!*"

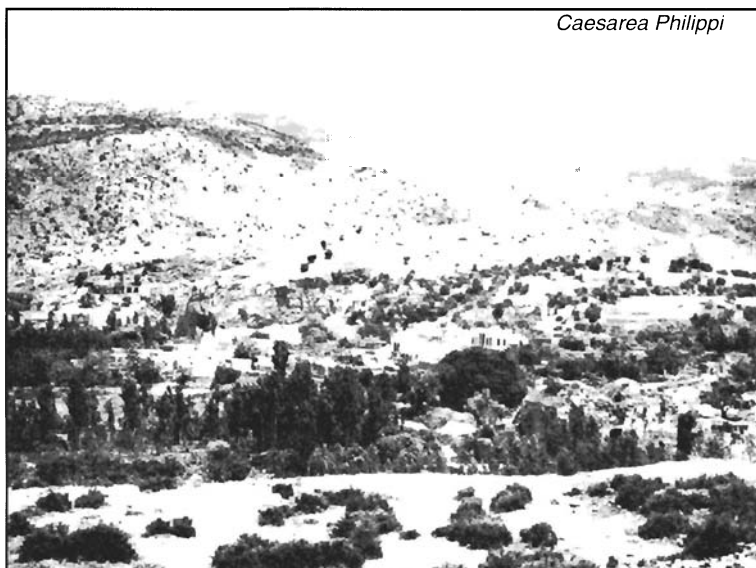
These are words charged with power, but unfortunately, they have been sadly misused. The Roman Catholic Church uses them as authority to teach its doctrine of its right to forgive sins, and that it is built on the infallible ministration of Peter who, they falsely claim, was the first bishop of the Church of Rome.

The name Peter is *Petros* in Greek, and signifies a loose, rolling stone that can be moved out of the way. But then, pointing to the "rock" of Peter's testimony, the Lord added: "Upon this rock I will build my ecclesia." Now it is commonly thought that the word for "rock" is the same as the word for "Peter," but that is not so. The Greek word for rock is *petra*, which signifies a firm, immovable

rock. In the Greek, *petra* is in the feminine gender, so that it cannot possibly relate to Peter himself, but to his testimony which, in the narrative, represents the voice of the Bride, the ecclesia.

Further, in speaking of the ecclesia, Jesus significantly used the future tense: "*I will build my ecclesia.*" The disciples may well have imagined that the enthusiastic crowds that had been following Jesus constituted his called out ones, but that was not so. The ecclesia had yet to be developed; it was to be built on Peter's declaration, for this is shown by the fact that even Peter later refuted the statement that he so boldly affirmed at that time (see Lk. 24:21). All twelve deserted the Lord at the moment of his trial, and one of them even betrayed him, revealing that, though claiming to be an apostle, he was actually a "devil," as, on an earlier occasion, Christ had warned he would so act when a similar declaration had been made (Jn. 6:70).

The ecclesia to which Christ referred, and which he said he would build on the foundation of Peter's declaration, is the perfected ecclesia. Against this ecclesia, the "gates of hell [the grave] shall not prevail." They prevail today because of sin (Rom. 5:21; 6:28; 1Cor. 15:57), but through the conquest of sin by the Lord Jesus, the gates of the grave shall ultimately open, the dead shall arise, and the righteous will be clothed upon with divine nature, never to die again (Rev. 1:18). It is that company of righteous and glorified ones that will constitute Christ's true ecclesia (Eph. 5:27).





## Chapter 4

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### THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

**J**ESUS promised to give Peter the “keys of the kingdom.” The key of office was the symbol of authority and distinction (Isa. 22:22), so that the Lord could say of himself: “I have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev. 1:18). He has the authority to unlock the grave and destroy death.

The “keys of the kingdom” provide one with the ability to unlock the mysteries of the Kingdom, and to reveal its glory unto others. That duty rested with the priests and leaders of the people. They should have expounded the “things of the kingdom” unto the people, for, as Malachi taught: “The priest’s lips should keep knowledge” (Mal. 2:7). Unfortunately, in Jesus’ day these leaders had “shut up the kingdom against men,” so that they neither had the ability to discover its secrets themselves, nor to reveal them unto others (Mat. 23:13).

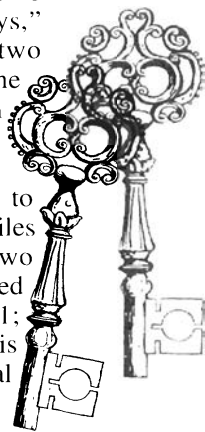
“Woe unto you,” said Jesus to the priests on one occasion, “You have taken away the key of knowledge: you entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in you hindered” (Lk. 11:52).

But now Christ promised Peter that he, with the other apostles, were to be elevated unto teachers of the people, and to them would be entrusted the “keys of the kingdom.” What constitutes those keys?

The “door” to the kingdom is Christ (Jn. 10:9). There are two keys required to open that door to the understanding, namely those things which Peter later proclaimed when he made known “the *sufferings* of Christ, and the *glory* that should follow” (1Pet. 1:11).

It is significant that Jesus, immediately after he had told Peter he would give him these “keys,” proceeded to instruct the apostles on these two aspects of his ministry, first telling them of the shameful death that awaited him in Jerusalem (Mat. 16:21), and afterwards providing them with a revelation of glory (ch. 17:1-2).

It was these same two keys that Peter used to enlighten first Jews (Acts 2, 3), and then Gentiles (Acts 10), and which are the subject of his two epistles; for the first epistle of Peter is concerned with the sufferings of Christ (1Pet. 1:11; 2:21; 3:17-18; 4:1, 13), and the second emphasises his glory (2Pet. 1:4, 17; 3:9-13). It was in this dual



theme of suffering and glory that Christ was at pains to educate his disciples after his resurrection, summarising his discourse by saying: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Lk. 24:26).

The Pharisees and Sadducees had lost both these keys through negligence. The former refuted the principle of a suffering saviour; the latter rejected the truths of the resurrection and of the second advent in glory. The religious world today still blindly stumbles in ignorance, not possessing the keys essential to true understanding. The Jews reject the idea that the Messiah could have been crucified; the Gentiles refute the truth that the Saviour of humanity is the King of the Jews. Both Jewish and Gentile worlds have lost the essential keys, and it remains the responsibility of true disciples to restore them!

**Authority in Heaven and in Earth** Jesus also told the disciples: "*Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*"

These words have likewise been distorted by the Apostasy to teach that whatever the church teaches will be endorsed by God, and whatever sin its priests forgive will also be endorsed by heaven.

But these words have been differently translated in the C.B. Williams translation of the Bible, as follows: "*Whatever you forbid on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be what is permitted in heaven.*"

In other words, when using the keys, in teaching men, the disciples had to be sure that their words were in accordance with the will of God. The ecclesia must learn to teach and act in strict conformity with the divine will, so that whatever it might prohibit men to do ("bind on earth") must be that which heaven would prohibit; and whatever it might permit men to do, must be in accordance with what God would allow.

**Final Instructions** Having thus instructed his apostles, the Lord commanded them that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

There seems a twofold reason why he should thus instruct them. Firstly, as he very well knew, they remained in ignorance of the full scope of the two "keys" he had yet to properly reveal to them, and it is not wise to send forth people to preach who are not properly qualified to do so.

Secondly, for them to go forth and to boldly teach men that he

was Christ would incite the very hostility that Jesus at that time was at pains to avoid. He knew that the time would come when he must be delivered up to be crucified, but he was careful to avoid provoking the people until that time arrived. To proclaim that he was the Christ would not induce men to follow him at that stage, but would rather bring down upon the heads of the apostles a charge of blasphemy which could have defeated his very objective. It is significant that it is on the basis of the actual declaration of Peter that Caiaphas procured a charge of blasphemy against the Lord (Mat. 26:63), and ordered that he be put to death. But until that moment arrived, it was useless for the apostles to boldly and belligerently proclaim that he was the Christ, for they were still in ignorance of some aspects of his mission, and therefore he forbade them to do so. Instead, he continued to teach them the things he must suffer, that their minds might be prepared for the trials that lay before them.

**The First Key  
Illustrated  
(Mat. 16:21-23;  
Mk. 8:31-33;  
Lk. 9:22)**

And so, as Jesus and his apostles continued on their way, the Lord taught them a little more concerning the first “key” (the “key” of trial or suffering) that must be used to open the door to the kingdom. It is only through tribulation that Christ’s followers will gain the kingdom (Acts 14:22), as Jesus himself showed when he willingly laid down his life, in order that he might attain unto eternal life, and also make it possible for others to do so.

He told his apostles of his impending trials and sacrificial death. Shortly they would turn their steps toward Jerusalem, but instead of receiving the approbation of men as they might have expected, he would suffer many things at the hands of the very people he had come to save, and finally, would be killed.

The picture, however, was not without hope.

“On the third day,” he concluded, “I shall be raised again.”

The apostles were puzzled by such talk. They thought that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear (Lk. 19:11), and in consequence, they were expecting him to shortly wear a crown, not to hang lifeless from a stake ! To speak of suffering and of death at such a time was, to them, to confess to the utter defeat of his ministry.

Boldly, Peter interrupted the Lord, and rebuked him. Perhaps he was lifted up with pride at the warm commendation he had just received from Jesus when he had so enthusiastically confessed his faith in him as the Christ the Son of the living God, and now again wanted to demonstrate the extent of his loyalty. Be that as it may,

his very words show that he did not then properly understand the meaning of the "keys" of the Kingdom to which Jesus had made reference.

"Be it far from thee, Lord," he confidently declared, "this shall not be unto thee!"

In so speaking, Peter used the tone of rebuke. Perhaps he felt that talk of suffering and death could adversely affect Jesus' ministry, particularly at that time when many were beginning to doubt. Of what value is a dead Messiah? None whatever! Therefore, the least heard of suffering and opposition the better!

So Peter must have reasoned. His motives were doubtless of the very best, but his understanding of the Lord's ministry was woefully lacking!

And the Lord decided to teach him a well-merited lesson.

He was walking a little ahead of the apostles, leading them as a good shepherd should, as with solemn words he tried to teach them. But at Peter's ill-timed interjection, he stopped, and turning around to face his companions, for a moment or two he steadily looked at them in silence (Mk. 8:33).

The apostles were abashed. An uneasy feeling came over the little group. They looked into the thoughtful, serious countenance of the beloved Lord with wonder. What had they done amiss? And then he broke the silence with an open and public rebuke of Peter.

"Get thee behind me, Satan!" he declared. "Thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men!"

Peter was "satan" to the Lord because he had opposed God's will. He was an "offence," a stumbling block, because his statement, though dictated by motives of the greatest love and loyalty to Christ, were nevertheless words of gross ignorance that greatly hurt the Lord's sensitive feelings. The Lord did not now address him as "blessed" as he had before (Mat. 16:17), but told him that he was "an offence." He was "blessed" so long as he proclaimed words of Truth, and acted upon them; but as soon as he allowed the feelings of the flesh to dominate his words and dictate his motives, he fell from that high pinnacle of favour and was rebuked.

As Jesus told Peter, he then "savoured" the things of men!

To "savour" something is to delight in its flavour. Peter's shuddering fear of trial and suffering and his repudiation of its need, came from savouring the things of the flesh, the things that please men rather than God!

The Lord therefore declared to him: "Get thou behind me!"

In the literal sense, Peter was already behind the Lord, for Jesus had to turn around in order to look at the apostles: but figuratively,

Peter was not following his Lord, but going his own way. It was necessary for him to keep behind the Lord in a spiritual and not merely in a literal sense, following him in a life of dedicated service in spite of all the shame, suffering and even martyrdom that he would be called upon to endure.

The words of the Lord taught that the first key by which the door to the Kingdom will be opened, calls upon believers to deny the flesh.

### **How Jesus Taught Peter to Apply the First Key**

The statement, "Get thou behind me!" did not end the sharp rebuke administered by the Lord to Peter. The apostle had been concerned lest the Master's teaching of suffering and death in Jerusalem might destroy his popularity with the people, but Jesus, himself, was quite indifferent to such a reaction.

And this he clearly demonstrated to Peter.

He publicly showed that if people desired to serve the Truth they must be prepared to risk the opinion of their fellows.

No longer limiting his words to the apostles, but deliberately calling the people to him (Mk. 8:34), he proceeded to preach the harsh doctrine of no compromise with the world. They heard him proclaim these unpopular words: "*Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*"

These are challenging words, setting forth the extent of sacrifice that a true follower of Jesus Christ is called upon to manifest if he would truly follow his Lord. Such must "deny" themselves, he taught. To "deny" is to disown, and this demands that when Christ requires something of his followers, they must submit completely in obedience without regard to self in any way. Having no rights in himself, recognising that he is "bought with a price," the true follower of the Lord Jesus will faithfully obey his Master without question.

He will, therefore, willingly take up his cross. What is meant by this term? Many make the mistake of imagining that a person's "cross" is some load of trouble that he or she is bearing, but that is not the meaning of the term that the Lord used. In his days, the cross was the insignia of the criminal, so that "to take up a cross" was to be prepared to stand before the world as a criminal (as the Lord did in his death) for Christ's sake.

This indicates the extent of sacrifice demanded of Christ's followers.

It also shows how sharp is the dividing line between Christ and the world. This is not always understood in these tolerant days, because the world is indifferent to the principles of religion. But in the apostolic era things were different, and Christians experienced bitter persecution, because the world hated them. They were imprisoned, tortured, burnt at the stake, and spurned as "anti-social criminals." Figuratively, they bore the sign of the cross, the sign that the world placed upon them. Paul wrote. "*We are made a spectacle unto the world...*" (1Cor. 4:9).

The hatred of the world for Christians, however, was matched by the detestation that Christians had for the blasphemous, immoral world about them. To them, the world was as criminal as they were to the world!

Paul expressed this mutual antipathy in words that have a bearing upon those spoken by the Lord to Peter: "In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..." he wrote, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). The world was a criminal to such as Paul, and, on the other hand, he was looked upon as a criminal by the world.

That is the result of applying the first "key" in one's life.

Jesus summed up the challenge in these words: "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed when he comes."

**How the Second Key Must be Applied** But though the first "key" points to suffering, the second "key" draws attention to glory; and after making reference to the inevitable trials that following him will bring, Jesus then pointed to the triumph of the Kingdom that will follow. He declared: "*For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done!*" (Mat. 16:27).

At this point, he paused to let that momentous statement sink in,\* and then he continued: "*Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom\*\* of God come with power!*"

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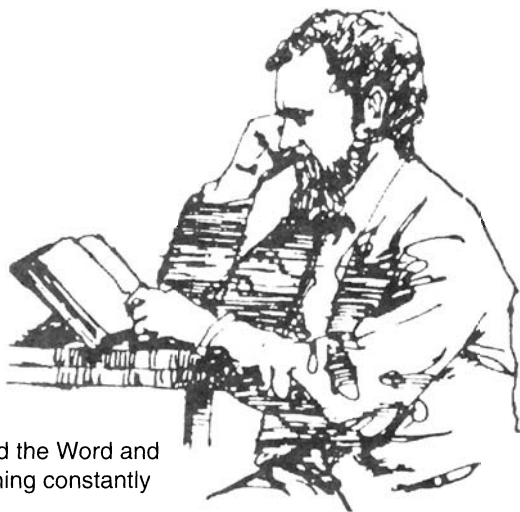
\* This is implied in the interruption to his words recorded in Mk. 9:1, "*And he said unto them.*" Evidently the Master paused, and then continued on with his discourse.

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\*\* The Greek word translated "kingdom" can also be translated "royal majesty," and is so rendered in the Diaglott. It was a vision of Christ in his royal majesty that they were to see about a week later in the mount of Transfiguration.

That was all he said at the time. He left the thought with his apostles so that they might ponder it. They were doubtless stirred by the possibilities of such an event. They did not want death, they wanted life; they did not want suffering, they wanted glory. And, no doubt, they thought that this was what he was promising them at that time.

They soon learned what he meant, however, for shortly afterwards some of them received a vision of transcending glory which was to profoundly affect them to the end of their days.



We need to read the Word and ponder its meaning constantly

## Chapter 5

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### THE GLORIOUS TRANSFIGURATION

**S** EVEN days later,\* the Lord called to him three foremost disciples: Peter, James and John. He had specially selected them to be the privileged witnesses of a wonderful occasion: they were to see the glory of which he had spoken a few days earlier.

**Glory on the  
Mountain Top  
(Mat. 17:1-13;  
Mk. 9:2-13;  
Lk. 9:28-36)**

He led them up the side of a steep, high mountain, to a spot where they could enjoy the luxury of complete solitude. And there, first of all, he gave himself to earnest prayer, for the Lord never did anything of an important nature without first

communing with Yahweh.

But the three privileged disciples, completely exhausted, worn out with tiredness, and little realising what that night was to reveal, fell fast asleep.

The solitary Lord prayed on. This world with all its hatreds, its jealousies, its bitterness toward him, was forgotten as he drew nigh to the Father, and the Father drew nigh to him.

And gradually he was changed.

A divine glory diffused him. It caused his face to glow brilliantly like the sun, whilst his garments shone with light and glistened like snow.

Then, suddenly, two men, Moses and Elijah, stood by him, talking with him. They too, appeared in glory, and spoke with him of "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses and Elijah were representative of the Law and the Prophets, both of which foretold the work of the Lord, and who both "spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." But whilst Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets, they also personally, typed the Lord in a very special way, and both have a

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\* Matthew and Mark state that "after six days" the transfiguration occurred, but Luke says "about eight days after these sayings." There is no contradiction, however. "After six days" would be seven full days after the Lord spoke with them, pointing forward to the seventh millennium when the glory should appear. The "eight days" to which Luke refers, takes into account the day upon which the statement was made, and points to the spiritual significance of the number eight, the number of circumcision. The millennium will provide for the followers of Christ, the replacement of flesh by divine nature. It is significant that the disciples fell asleep, and awoke to see the glory of the Lord, for that, in fact, is what they will do as far as their sleep of death is concerned.



work yet to accomplish in regard to Christ the King (see Mal. 4:4-6).

But what were they discussing? The A.V. says "his decease which he should accomplish." The word in the Greek, however, is *exodus*, and is compounded of two words, *ex*, out, and *hodos*, an exit; a way. It is the same word as is used in the Old Testament for Israel's *exodus* out of Egypt, and signifies "a way out." There, the

*One of the most dramatic incidents in the life of the Lord must have been his transfiguration before three of his disciples on the Mount. Controversy has raged as to the identity of the mount upon which this took place, and most people identify it with Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor rises steeply above the plain of Esdraelon in Galilee, and commands a wonderful view of the historic land,*



*both north and south. It is in excellent strategic position for such a vision. But a careful consideration of the narrative shows that Jesus was not in the vicinity of Mount Tabor at the time, for it was not until after the vision that he returned south through Galilee (Mk. 9:30) to the area of Tabor. Jesus was in the far north of Palestine, in "the coasts of Caesarea Philippi" (Mat. 16:13) when he was transfigured before his disciples, and the mount in question was probably Mount Hermon. Hermon means "high" or "elevated," and it was up a "high mountain" that they ascended (Mat. 17:1). Mount Hermon is a splendid snow-capped mountain, whose glittering peak is visible in the clear atmosphere as far south as the Dead Sea. The barrier of Hermon closes the northern frontier of Palestine, and so dominates the land, and from its heights, in the Song of Solomon, the Bride is represented as inspecting her inheritance (Song 4:8). Strong gives the meaning of Hermon as "abrupt," from a root "to seclude," hence to separate. Christ slowly made his way in its direction until its lower slopes were reached, and then separated the three apostles that they might make their way up its side. It is an extremely steep and abrupt slope, and it is little wonder that the disciples were exhausted and sleepy when Jesus came to the solitary place which he had selected to pour out his heart in prayer to the Father.*

exodus was a way out from Egyptian slavery that led inevitably to death, to a way, through baptism, that could give them life.

Thus, although the word “exodus” is used for death (as in 2Pet. 1:15), the “exodus *accomplished*” implies much more than death, and points to “the way out” for all true followers of the Lord Jesus, which a life in him promises. His “decease,” therefore, involves not merely sacrifice and death, but resurrection and ascension to the Father. Baptism, for his followers, likewise elevates them from a way of death to a newness of life (Rom. 6:1-3).

### **The Startled Disciples Awake**

Meanwhile, the dozing disciples had been startled out of their sleep by this manifestation of glory. They saw their Lord diffused in a brilliant light, shining forth with radiant glory in the darkness of the night, as he spoke with the two other persons, who were similarly manifested in glory.

But even as the three apostles watched, they saw the glory begin to fade, and the figures of Elijah and Moses receding into the surrounding gloom. Once again the impetuous Peter took the lead in speaking forth. Amazed, startled, and yet delighted with the apocalypse of glory, not really knowing what he said, but desiring to detail Moses and Elijah and retain the glory, Peter suddenly blurted: “Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah!”

He spoke without understanding. Luke says, he knew not “what he said.” Peter did not understand the import of his words. He did not appreciate that the cross must come before the crown, and any present glory is essentially a fading glory. He should have hearkened more to the voice of the Law and the Prophets (as personified in Moses and Elijah)\*, and he would have appreciated better what was required.

Even as he spoke, a cloud of bright glory settled down upon the disciples, so that they, too, were drawn into the ambit of the vision. A nameless terror seized them at the revelation of so powerful a glory; they felt that they were in the presence of God, and had seen things beyond the knowledge of mortal men. But as they crouched

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\* In this scene of glory, Moses and Elijah seem to represent both the Law and the Prophets, as well as the dead (Deu. 34:5-6), and the living (2Kgs. 2:1-11) at the coming of the Lord. As Elijah was “caught away,” so also will the living be at the coming of Christ. Moses, whose name means “Drawn out” points to those drawn out of the water of baptism; whilst Elijah whose name signifies, “My strength is Yahweh” reveals the purpose of the figurative resurrection at baptism, and the literal change to immortality at the Lord’s appearance. The conversation on the mountain top, related to the very matter upon which Christ had to rebuke Peter for lack of understanding a few days previously (Mat. 16:23). So, in the Age to come, a complete revelation will be given to all disciples and they will see things from the divine perspective.

in fear, they heard a Voice: "This is My Son the Beloved (see Diaglott), in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him!"

Thus, in this declaration on the mount, there was set forth the threefold status of the Lord. As **King** he is the *Beloved*, for it was under that name

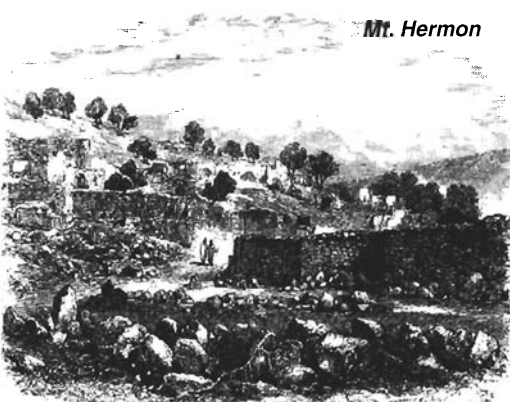
(David whose name signifies "Beloved"), that Christ the King is spoken of in the prophets (Jer. 30:9; Eze. 37:24; Psa. 2:6-7). As **Priest**, he is the obedient, firstborn son who submerged his will in that of the Father (Heb. 10:7-10). As **Prophet**, he proclaimed the purpose and will of Yahweh (Deu. 18:18-19; Acts 3:22-23). In all three aspects: as King, as Priest, as Prophet, it is incumbent upon true disciples to hearken to him.

The mysterious Voice out of the cloud, filled the disciples with awe. Already wondering at the manifestation of glory on the mount, they now prostrated themselves to the ground, in shaking terror, fearful as to the meaning of it all! It was a foretaste of that great day yet to dawn when the divine majesty of the Son will be revealed to his disciples, and all shall prostrate themselves before him (Phil. 2:9-11). They will then be permitted to see his glory, and behold the countenance of the transfigured and elevated Lord.

It is to the extent that his followers obey the King, use the mediatorial services of the Priest, and hearken to the Prophet, that they will be considered worthy to see him in glory in the Age to come.

No doubt, as many lost opportunities are revealed in that day of awe and wonder, all disciples will be as those three on the mountain top, and will prostrate themselves and "be sore afraid."

Later, Peter recognised the meaning of this wonderful vision that had been granted him with his fellow apostles. He wrote: "*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'* And this voice, which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2Pet. 1:16-18).



### **The Vision Fades**

The disciples had prostrated themselves in fear with their faces to the ground. But Jesus came and touched them, calling upon them to arise, and to fear not. Now, as they lifted up their eyes, they found that they were alone. The vision had faded, and Moses and Elijah were gone!

Jesus then led them down the mountain-side, instructing them to tell no man of the vision until he should be risen again from the dead. At that time, they were not qualified to teach men of the coming glory, for they were still in ignorance of the two keys, still did not understand that shame and trial must precede the glory. Until they had learned that lesson, they were not equipped to effectively tell people of the vision.

The three disciples therefore kept silent about what they had seen, and did not speak of it to any man. At the same time, they questioned among themselves what the “rising from the dead” might mean (Mk. 9:10), so far were they from understanding what lay before the Lord in the near future.

### **Will Elijah Come First?**

The vision of glory had left them puzzled about many things in addition to the rising from the dead. For example, if Jesus were the Christ, as they had confessed he was, and as the Voice had declared, what of the teaching of the scribes who said that Elijah must come before the Messiah?

They asked Jesus this question, and he answered it for them. *“Elijah does come first to restore all things, but it is written of the Son of man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also will the Son of man suffer at their hands.”*

The disciples recognised in this saying that he was speaking of John Baptist who had come in the spirit of Elijah. But they might not have understood the implications of the Lord’s statement when he said that the people had done to this Elijah whatever they pleased! If their minds went to the prophecy of Malachi, however, they would realise that Israel’s rejection of John Baptist’s message meant that Yahweh would smite the nation “with a curse” (Mal. 4:6).

The disciples were not anticipating this, of course, but rather were looking for the immediate restoration of glory to Israel, and because their minds were concentrating on that to the exclusion of all else, they often missed the import of much of what Jesus taught.

## Chapter 6

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### AN EPILEPTIC BOY HEALED

*With his three disciples, Jesus returned from the Mount of Transfiguration to be immediately involved in a situation of unbelief, frustration, anger and agony, providing a sharp contrast to the peace, glory and heavenly communion that had been experienced in the mountain. They found the other disciples waiting below, engaged in a heated argument with some scribes, whilst a large crowd of people watched. A young boy, suffering from epileptic fits, had been brought to the disciples to be cured; but, lacking the faith to perform so notable a miracle, their failure had become the cause of disputation with the Jewish leaders who mocked at the disciples. Even the father of the lad had evidently been swayed by the faithless Jews, so that all and sundry earned the rebuke of the Lord: "Faithless and perverse generation" (Mat. 17:17). It was the Lord's absence that had brought about this lack of faith on the part of his disciples, illustrating the remark he made later: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8).*

**T**HE day following the transfiguration (Lk. 9:37), Jesus and his companions made their way down the side of the mountain to join up with the other disciples. They found them surrounded by a great crowd of people, in the middle of which, a group of scribes were arguing with them.

**The Miracle**  
**Mat. 17:14-21;**  
**Lk. 9:38-43**

The appearance of the Lord on the scene, however, caused many to detach themselves from the arguing scribes and disciples, to come up and greet him (Mk. 9:15). "What were you discussing?" he asked the people.

But before they could reply, a man in the crowd stepped out from among them, and kneeling on the ground before the Lord, pleaded with him for help.

"Lord, Teacher," he said, "I have brought my son to you, and I beg you to look upon him, and have mercy upon him. He is my only child, and is dumb. In addition, he is an epileptic, and suffers terribly. When the fit is on him it convulses him, and dashes him down, so that he often falls into the fire or into the water. He foams at the mouth, clenches his teeth, and becomes rigid at such times. I

brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.

Instantly, Jesus detected that lack of faith was the cause of failure (Mat. 17:20), and this, not only on the part of the disciples, but also on the part of the parent who had probably been influenced by the sarcastic jibing of the Scribes.

"O faithless and perverse generation," he declared, looking around upon them all. "How long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring your son here!"

Eagerly the man did so, but even as they were coming, and probably induced by the excitement of the crowd, the boy took yet another fit. It convulsed him, so that he fell rigid to the ground, rolling about, and foaming at the mouth.

It was a most pathetic sight.

"How long has he been like this?" asked the Lord sympathetically.

"From childhood," was the answer.

"And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, threatening to destroy him. If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us!"

Jesus answered this pathetic appeal with words of the greatest importance. He told the father that he was able to help him only if the father was prepared to help himself!

"If you can believe," he declared, "all things are possible!"

The distraught father immediately replied: "I believe; help my unbelief!"

He had faith, but realised that it needed strengthening. He believed in the power of God but needed help in his doubting.

As this conversation was proceeding, the people were gathering together around them. They could see the epileptic boy foaming at



the mouth, and twisting about in his frightful paroxysms on the ground; they heard the testimony of the father as to the deep-seated nature of the complaint, and the teaching of the Lord as to what was necessary for a cure.

All this was a powerful public witness. And now the Lord turned to the poor child wallowing in the dust, and pronounced a cure over him.

But for the moment, nothing happened. In fact, the state of the child worsened. He twisted about terribly, shrieking out in his convulsions, and then, at last, with

one terrible paroxysm, he lay still like one dead.

"He is dead!" many in the crowd declared in hushed tones.

But the Saviour of the world took the boy by the hand and lifted him up. The dazed boy stood upon his feet, and was instantly strengthened by the comforting hand of Jesus. He was cured of his complaint, and the Lord handed him over to his delighted father, whilst the crowd of people gave testimony to the majesty of God. They could clearly see that it was a miracle, and they glorified the God of heaven.

**Private Explanation to the Disciples**  
**(Mat. 17:19-21;**  
**Mk. 9:28-29)**

But the disciples were puzzled. Why could they not cure the boy? They had performed other miracles! They determined to ask Jesus, and sought him out for that purpose.

"Why could we not do that?" they asked.

"Because of your little faith," declared the Lord. "For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move hence to yonder place,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. But this kind cannot be driven out by anything but by prayer."\*

Faith as a grain of mustard seed, is a developing faith. The mustard seed is a tiny seed that grows into a great herb like a large tree, so that the seed is constantly growing until its objective is reached. So with faith; it too must grow.

Such a faith as that, a faith that develops through prayer, will remove "this mountain." The mountain in question was a high one, and was most likely Mount Hermon, just behind them, which signifies "high," or "elevated." To the Israelites, Hermon was the symbol of the greatest permanency, and was identified with the nation itself. But in the context in which Christ was using the term, it could be said to symbolise pride, with which Israel was also identified, and which can be destroyed by faith.

Thus, in symbolic language, Jesus showed that faith is possible to remove the most permanent obstacle, the most elevated opponent of pride, providing there is sufficient faith in his servants. Such a faith, however, is developed only through prayer.



**Mustard Plant**

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\* The word "fasting" is omitted by many mss and is eliminated by the RSV. In fact, the whole of Mat. 17:21 is omitted by the RSV.

## Chapter 7

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### A SECRET RETURN TO CAPERNAUM

**F**ROM the northern parts of Palestine, Jesus secretly returned south to Galilee toward Capernaum (Mk. 9:30). He carefully avoided attracting any attention, for he was anxious to instruct his disciples concerning his impending death. But they could make nothing of his teaching, for their minds were intent only upon his impending glory, not his sacrifice. Try as he might, he could not get them to understand.

#### **He Again Foretells His Death**

**(Mat. 17:22-23;**

**Mk. 9:30-32;**

**Lk. 9:43-45)**

*"Let these words sink into your ears,"* he said to them. *"For the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and after three days, he will be raised on the third day!"* Plain as these words appear to us now, the disciples could

not make anything of them then! His saying distressed them; they wondered what he meant by dying and rising again, but they were afraid to ask him. So they listened to him in silence, perhaps thinking that he was uttering some parable, and wondering at its significance! Or perhaps he would suffer some catastrophe, but be delivered from it by the angels of the Father?

They did not understand for two reasons: firstly, their minds were dominated with glory and not sacrifice; and, secondly, their feelings were uplifted like Mount Hermon, filled with pride and satisfaction. For, as they travelled along, walking behind the Lord Jesus, they disputed one with the other as to who should be the greatest in the Kingdom of God.

What a scene, and how similar to the attitude of many of Christ's followers since!

He had been telling them of the suffering and death he would have to endure, but all they could think of was their personal glory in the Kingdom. With a measure of jealousy rankling in their hearts, they disputed as to which of them would be the greatest!

Perhaps the fact that Jesus had selected Peter, James and John to ascend the mountain with him caused them to boast that they were more important than the other disciples; but whatever the cause, they had all failed to appreciate the spirit which the Lord himself revealed.



## Chapter 8

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### ON PAYING THE TEMPLE TAX

*On the basis of Exodus 30:13-14, it had been made a rule that every male among the Jews of twenty years old and upwards, should give a certain sum, called a half shekel, every year, as an offering to God, for the services of the temple at Jerusalem. This was called the Temple Tribute, and Josephus shows that the Jews continued to contribute this same sum every year, from wherever they lived. Payment of this tribute, therefore, was both a patriotic and religious ordinance. In the days of Christ, the Temple authorities were demanding twice that required by the Law which, in addition, did not legislate for it to be paid yearly anyway. The demand of the Jews, therefore, was not really in accordance with the Law of God.*

**J**N due course, the Lord Jesus and his disciples arrived at Capernaum. Shortly after entering the town, Peter was approached by some tribute gatherers who had evidently been sent up to Capernaum by the superintendents of the temple on the authority of the high priest, to gather in the yearly temple tax.

**Peter and the  
Temple Tax  
(Mat. 17:24-27)**

They asked Peter whether Jesus paid the tax or not, for some Rabbis, or teachers, were exempt from it. "Does your teacher pay the tax?" they asked.

"Yes," replied Peter, caught off guard.

Later, as Peter entered the house in Capernaum where the Lord was staying, he was immediately accosted by Jesus.

"What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons, or from others?"

Peter must have felt uncomfortable under the scrutiny of the Lord, and with this direct question put to him. He had returned to Capernaum uplifted, with thoughts filled with the manifestation of glory he had seen on the Mount of Transfiguration, and with the firm belief that the kingdom was at hand (Lk. 19:11). So convinced were the disciples of this, that they had been disputing by the wayside who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Lk. 9:46). But if Jesus were king, and if the kingdom was to be set up, why pay taxes? Peter had been a little ashamed to confess his beliefs in Jesus as the Messiah-King before the Collector of Contributions, and had answered "yes" to his question to get out of an embarrass-

ment. But now, to his greater confusion, he realised that Jesus knew all. There was but one answer to the Lord's question.

"From others," said Peter, after a pause (Mat. 17:26).

"Then are the sons free," declared the Lord. "However, in order not to give offence, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself!"

Peter was thus instructed to submit to the demands of authorities, even though he served a different king (Rom. 13:1-2; 1Pet. 2:13-14). He was sent back to his worldly avocation to obtain the money, and found that his labours in that regard were divinely guided to provide for all that was necessary. Moreover, the submission of the Lord to the paying of this temple tax should have indicated to the disciples that the establishment of the kingdom was not yet at hand, although, actually, the kingdom was his, and the temple was his! Why then should he have to pay tribute?

In his confusion, Peter had tried to cover his embarrassment by readily and quickly stating that Jesus paid the tribute; Jesus taught him to pay it "in order not to give offence." For the same reason we, today, submit to what authorities request of us, if they do not violate the principles of God's Word, even though we may not agree with their demands.

Thus there are wonderful spiritual lessons to be obtained from this interesting little episode. We can imagine Peter the fisherman, down at the lake, casting in his line. He feels a jerk, and hauls in his catch. He has a fish, in the mouth of which is a piece of money adequate to the tax requirements for both himself and his Lord. It is quite common for some fish in the Sea of Galilee to pick up bright objects in their mouths, but, in this instance, Peter's labours had been God-directed, teaching him that all his needs would be provided for if he did the will of his Father in heaven (Mat. 6:25).

Christ's submission to paying this tax money (which he need not have paid, being the Son of Yahweh) should have provided a most salutary lesson to the disciples, teaching them the lesson of meekness and submissiveness, rather than wasting their time arguing about who would be the greatest.

With the money in his hand, Peter went and paid the temple tax, and then returned to the house where were Jesus and the rest of the apostles, in time to interrupt a most interesting discussion that was taking place.

***Denarius, Tribute Penny, showing portrait of Emperor Tiberius***



## **A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels.**

### **ALEXANDER THE ANONYMOUS**

Alexander means "*The Defender of Men*," and there are perhaps six men of this name mentioned in the New Testament. The Alexander of the Gospel record (Mk. 15:21) is described as the son of Simon the Cyrenian who was visiting Jerusalem at the time. Cyrene was a Greek city in North Africa, and a number of Jews from that centre had established a synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9). Men of Cyrene early accepted the Truth, and helped to spread its message in foreign parts (Acts 11:20), so that one of the appointed teachers in the ecclesia at Antioch was a Cyrenian: Lucius (Acts 13:1). There must be some reason why Alexander is named in Mk. 15:21, and perhaps it is to identify him with the Alexander of Acts 19:33 who was present at the Ephesian tumult. In writing to Timothy (1Tim. 1:20; 2Tim. 4:14), Paul warned against a certain Alexander who had become an apostate, and as Timothy was in Ephesus when he received the first letter, it may be a reference to the same person as is mentioned in Mark and in Acts. If so, he was a prominent Jewish convert, who did well for a time, but afterwards turned from the faith.

### **ALPHAËUS — THE TRANSIENT**

His name means *Transient*, and he appears in the Gospel records, mainly to identify others. Thus the father of Matthew was called Alphaeus (Mk. 2:14); so also was the father of James, another of the apostles (Mat. 10:3), and of Joses his brother. As such, Alphaeus was the husband of Mary their mother (Mk. 15:40).

### **ANNA THE PROPHETESS**

Anna is the Greek form of Hannah which means *Grace*. She was a widow, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. Her married life had lasted only seven years (Lk. 2:36), and since then she had set herself apart that she might serve God without reserve. With nothing in this life to console her, she sought comfort from Yahweh, and for 84 years was found daily at the temple at the appointed times for worship. Every morning and evening, when incense was burned upon the golden altar in the holy place by the priest, Anna was outside in the court of the temple, mingling her prayers with the ascending incense (Lk. 2:37). She must have witnessed the drama of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, when he came out deaf and dumb; and later she witnessed the infant Jesus ceremoniously presented in the Temple. She, like many others, had been awaiting the manifestation of the Messiah,

and publicly gave thanks to Yahweh in that she had been spared to witness his coming. Leaving the temple, she continued to speak of the infant Jesus to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem (Lk. 2:38).

Anna was a prophetess, and her name is significant. It means *Grace*, whilst her father's name (Phaniel or Peniel) means "*The Faces of El*" (God), and the tribe with which she was connected (Asher) means *Blessed or Happy*. Her name thus reads like an exhortation, spelling out the message. "*From the Grace or Favour that comes from the Presence of God there is found Happiness.*" Anna found a great blessing and happiness in spite of the sadness of her widowhood, for she was permitted to view the infant Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, before her death. She thus died with the certainty of redemption as a reality before her. (see *The Story of the Bible*, vol. 5, p. 125).

## **THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE LORD** (continued from page 101)

### ***The Judean Ministry***

*Knowing that he is approaching the end of his ministry, as Daniel the prophet indicated (Dan. 9:24), the Lord commenced his return to Jerusalem. He faces difficulties from the people on the way, and when he arrives at the city, finds antagonism from the leaders of Jewry. It is a time of great pressure, but the Lord gives himself to teaching the people, and preparing his apostles for the approaching crisis.*

#### **[1] Secret return through Galilee and Capernaum**

- #34 a. Peter and the Temple Tax (Mat. 17:24-27).  
b. Discussion in the house as to "who is the greatest?" (Mat. 18:1-35; Mk. 9:33-50; Lk. 9:46-50).  
c. Jesus' brethren urge him to attend the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 6:14-15).

#### **[2] He moves south to Jerusalem**

- #35 a. He goes unobtrusively (Lk. 9:51; Jn. 7:10).  
b. The Samaritans repulse him (Lk. 9:52-56).  
c. Discipleship discussed with three sojourners (Lk. 9:57-62).

#### **[3] At the Feast — The Judean Ministry**

- a. The crowds discuss Jesus (Jn. 7:11-13).  
b. In the midst of the feast (Jn. 7:14-36).

- c. The water-pouring ceremony (Jn. 7:37-44).
- d. Confusion in the Sanhedrin (Jn. 7:45-53).
- e. Judging an adulterous woman (Jn. 8:1-11).
- f. The lamp-lighting ceremony (Jn. 8:12-20).

**[4] The First Appeal**

Accept Jesus as Saviour (Jn. 8:21-24).

**[5] The Second Appeal**

Accept him as the manifestation of God (Jn. 8:25-30).

**[6] The Third Appeal**

Continue in His Word (Jn. 8:31-59).

**[7] Miracles in Jerusalem**

- a. Healing the man born blind and ensuing controversy — Sixth Sign (Jn. 9:1-41).
- b. Parable of the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:1-21).
- c. Sending out the Seventy (Lk. 10:1-24).
- d. Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37).

**[8] Activity in the City.**

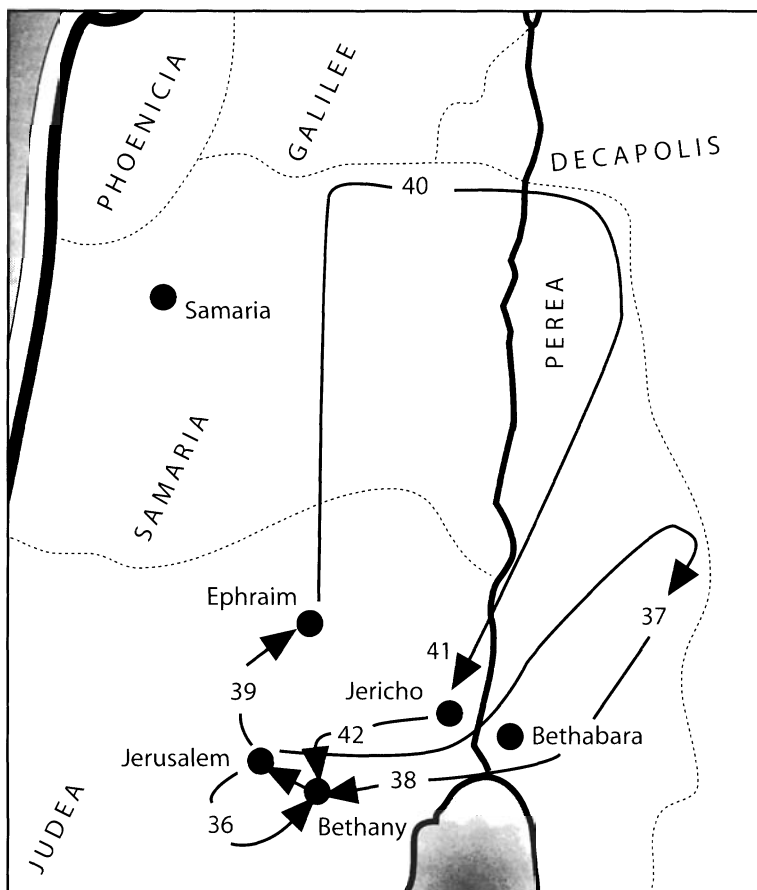
- #36
- a. He visits Mary and Martha (Lk. 10:38-42).
  - b. Teaching how to pray (Lk. 11:1-13).
  - c. Casting out demons “by the finger of God” (Lk. 11:14-16).
  - d. Controversy with the people (Lk. 11:17-36).
  - e. Dining with a Pharisee (Lk. 11:37-54).
  - f. Warning the people against the leaven of the Pharisees (Lk. 12:1-59).
  - g. The slain Galileans and the doomed fig tree (Lk. 13:1-9).
  - h. In the synagogue on the Sabbath: the bowed woman healed (Lk. 13:10-21).
  - i. Discussion of God-manifestation at the Feast of Dedication (Jn. 10:22-42).

**[9] The Perea Ministry**

- #37
- a. Circuit of Perea (Lk. 13:22).
  - b. Jesus and the Pharisees, Warning and Contention (Lk. 13:23-35).
  - c. He dines with a Pharisees; Parable of the Great Supper (Lk. 14:1-24).
  - e. He warns of the cost of discipleship (Lk. 14:25-35).
  - f. Eats with publicans; Parable of the Lost Sheep, Coin and Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:1-32).

- g. Parable of the Unrighteous Steward (Lk. 16:1-18).
- h. Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31).
- i. Responsibilities of Discipleship (Lk. 17:1-10).

*In synchronising the Gospel accounts, it is necessary to recognise that a break occurs in the narratives of Matthew and Mark, and the missing sequence is provided by Luke and John. The first part of Mat. 19:1 and Mk. 10:1 corresponds with Lk. 9:51, but then Luke and John provide a record of incidents in Jerusalem and elsewhere, omitted by the other two writers, and it is not until we come to Lk. 17:11 and Jn. 12 that the narratives again converge. Thus all the incidents recorded between Lk. 9:51 to 17:11 and Jn. 7:2 to 11:57, took place within the period when Jesus left Galilee and finally turned his face toward Jerusalem as recorded in Mat. 19:1 and Mk. 10:1.*



## Chapter 9

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### WHO IS THE GREATEST? A LESSON IN HUMILITY

*Though the Lord had tried to impress his disciples with the fact that suffering must precede glory, they had failed utterly to understand his teaching. They could sense that some momentous incident, relating to the Kingdom, was at hand; but what it was they did not know. They thought it was the immediate establishment of the Kingdom itself (Lk. 19:11), and did not dream that it was the crucifixion of their Lord that was soon to happen. Their excitement at the possibility of the immediate establishment of the Kingdom had been quickened by the transfiguration on the mount; but the fact that only three of their number had been permitted to see that vision of glory, aroused a degree of jealousy as to who among the disciples was to be the greatest in the Kingdom. Therefore, whereas Christ would have impressed them with the need of self-denial and humility, their disputations only stirred their fleshly ambition; instead of their desire for the Kingdom confirming their love and submission, it only aroused their jealousy and pride.*

*The Lord had told them that he was about to be subjected to gross humiliation that would end in a most shameful death; but they were not responsive to his words. In fact, so far were they from appreciating the principles of self-abasement that he was trying to impress upon them, that, as they travelled along, the most unseemly argument broke out among them as to who was the greatest (Mk. 9:33)! For the moment, Christ chose to ignore their quarrelling, awaiting an opportune moment to deal with it. It came a little later. Apparently Peter, as the disciple whom the Lord particularly singled out for outstanding revelations (Mat. 16:18; 17:1; Mk. 5:37) became the object of their especial jealousy. His absence from the house in Capernaum to seek the tax money (Mat. 17:24-27; see *The Story of the Bible*, p. 141) provided the rest of the Twelve with an opportunity to seek Christ's decision as to who would be the greatest in the Kingdom (Mat. 18:1). Jesus used the opportunity to teach them a powerful lesson in faith and humility. In the course of the discussion, John interrupted the Lord's discourse to pose a question (Mk. 9:38), and the Lord's reply merged into an exposition on the forgiveness of sins. Meanwhile, Peter had returned to the house in time to hear the concluding portion of*

*this discourse, and himself to ask the question of Mat. 18:21.*

*Many of the sayings of the Lord in the course of this incident are often quoted completely out of context, but it will be seen, that all that section contained in Mat. 18; Mk. 9:33-50 and Lk. 9:47-50, form one continuous narrative developed out of the jealousy of the Twelve, one with the other. A careful consideration of the teaching of the Lord at this time, will reveal many beautiful truths not normally appreciated.*

**A**FTER Peter had left to go fishing in order to obtain the money for the tax, the rest of the apostles, probably jealous of the preference that Jesus seemed to be showing him, approached the Lord with a question. "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" they asked (Mat. 18:1).

**A Charade on Faith** The question was rather hypocritical. What they really wanted to know (but were rather ashamed to state it) was who among them was to be the greatest — for they considered that no one would be greater than they in that kingdom!

Jesus looked at them sadly (cf. Lk. 9:47). When would they learn the lesson of his life! When would they appreciate that the cross must come before the crown, not only for himself, but for them as well! When would they learn that to be really great, one must learn to subject self and serve! True are the words of the Proverbs: "He that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (ch. 14:29). "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city" (ch. 16:32). "A man's pride shall bring him low; but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit" (ch. 29:23).

The Lord decided that the time had come to impress the disciples with a most needful lesson in humility and faith. First, he tried to instil in them a sense of shame.

"What were you discussing on the way?" he enquired (Mk. 9:33).

They did not reply; they were too ashamed. They realised that they had been caught out in a fault, for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest! The penetrating question of the Lord made them realise, yet once again, that he could read their hearts. They shuffled uneasily under his steady scrutiny.

They were in the house where he was accustomed to stay whilst residing in Capernaum, and, sitting down, he invited them to gather around him, whilst he instructed them in the matter of true greatness. "If any one would be first," he declared, "he must be last of all, and servant of all."



In other words, the way to true greatness is to humble self to serve! It was not the answer the apostles expected, but it nonetheless threw the challenge back to them. If they wanted to be great in the kingdom, here was the way to fulfil their ambition!

But the lesson did not end there. Whilst they were speaking, a little child entered the room. It knew Jesus well, for he was a frequent visitor there. And now he called the child to him, and drew it into the circle surrounding him.

Silently the apostles watched the Lord. They saw him take up the little child in his arms, where it trustfully nestled. What a strange scene was now being enacted in that house! The group of stalwart men standing around the Lord, with minds filled with jealous thoughts one against the other, was such a contrast to the contented, quiet little child in his arms. There was nothing self-assertive in the child; it was not dominated by jealous thoughts that somebody might be taking advantage of its weakness to usurp its position. Rather did it feel very proud and happy to be thus fondled by so distinguished a visitor; it asked for nothing more than that!

No doubt, Jesus as a frequent visitor to the house, was well-known to the little one who, with childlike intuition, could sense the understanding, compassion and strong love and affection, of the Saviour of mankind.

In actual fact, the apostles were witnessing a charade, illustrating the meaning of the word "faith." The Hebrew word for faith (*'aman*) has the significance of one reposing confidently and trustingly in the care of Yahweh, as a child does in its parent's arms. In such circumstances, a child feels comfort and protection, and quickly has its whimpering fear, or petulant anxiety, smoothed away. It does not even sense danger whilst the loving arms are about it; but let them be removed, and nameless fears can crowd into its little mind.

This teaches the lesson of faith.

If we have faith in Yahweh, we will be as a child in its parent's arms: trustful, confident and quiet. Fears will fade, and life's problems will lose their sting. We will not be concerned, as the apostles then were, that somebody might usurp our position in the kingdom, nor be jealous of the growing influence of others.

The apostles had not manifested faith whilst they argued among themselves as to who was greatest, but had been moved by considerations of their own personal ability and worth. Their arguments were particularly unseemly at this time, inasmuch as they had recently witnessed a miracle (the healing of the epileptic boy — see page 134) during which the Lord had upbraided them for their lack of faith, and exhorted them that prayer and self-denial were necessary to develop it. Yet soon afterwards, with that reproach

still ringing in their ears, they had been arguing as to who was the greatest!

As a contrast to their restless, faithless ambition, they saw the little child, confidently nestling in the arms of the Lord Jesus, trustfully looking up at him, demanding nothing more of him than his love.

“Truly I say unto you,” he continued, “unless you be converted,\* and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven!”

These were challenging words, indeed, and the Lord possibly paused at this point. So long as the apostles remained in their present frame of mind, it was not a matter as to who among them would be greatest in the kingdom, but who would even enter therein! The fact that he had selected them as apostles was no guarantee that they would attain unto the kingdom, and we know that one will not do so (see also Gal. 1:8).

The little child in his arms was an object lesson for them! They saw it trustful, dependent, obeying his will without question, expressing its affection for the one who had taken it up, content to receive whatever he might offer! That was the attitude of mind that he expected of them.

The Lord continued: “Whosoever receives one such child in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me!”

Here was a new concept of service as far as the apostles were concerned. They were called upon to receive the humblest among their number as Christ himself; which meant that they each had to humble himself before the others. They professed that they would do anything for Christ; now he showed what that involved. In rendering service to the humblest, instead of seeking personal greatness, they would not only be serving the Master, but God Himself! This is the criterion of true greatness, so the Lord continued: “For he who is least among you all is the one who is great” (Lk. 9:48 RSV).

By “the least,” the Lord meant the one who is prepared to humble himself most in service to his brethren. Here was the answer to their question: The greatest among them was the humblest!

One can imagine the disciples looking one from another, and then at the little child in the arms of the Lord, in complete amazement. What did it all mean? How could the kingdom be established by those means? Besides, were they not all sacrificing,

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\* The word means “to turn around.” Jesus was calling upon the apostles to change their attitude toward one another, and toward the things of the Kingdom.

and humbling themselves, to do his will? What more did he want of them?

It is obvious that they did not understand his teaching then, though they did so later. They ultimately became men who were completely changed through the impact of Christ on their lives — or, at least, eleven of them were! But we must never forget, that at one time they were blind as to what the Lord required of them, even though they were great men, and had been on a preaching tour and performed miracles. We must not forget this, because in them, at that time, we see a mirror of ourselves! And how frequently we, too, forget!

### **John Tries to Justify Himself**

Among the group of the apostles, John listened carefully, but in amazement, to what the Lord had said. He could not exactly understand what the Master meant. It seemed that Jesus taught they were to receive the most humble believer, typified by the little child he was nursing, as though it were the Lord himself!

But surely he would not mean that! What he doubtless meant was that the apostles were to be humble toward each other, but were to be deferred to by believers in general.

As John pondered the matter, he recalled an incident that had taken place some time back. He had seen a disciple of the Lord Jesus who was not counted among the twelve, going from place to place, preaching and performing miracles, and because this had seemed to him a usurpation of apostolic authority, John, with other of the disciples, had rebuked the man and commanded him not to work in that way.

It was rather a foolish thing that John had done, for after all, the miracle that the man had performed could only have been done through God's power. Obviously, if God was prepared to allow His power to operate through a man such as that, it was not the prerogative of John to forbid him. Of course John had done so only out of loyalty to Jesus, but this incident shows that a misplaced zeal, even in that direction, can lead to wrongdoing.

So Jesus answered John: "Do not forbid him, for no one that does a mighty work in my name will be able to speak evil of me, for he that is not against you, is on our part. For truly I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward."\*

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\* Very often these words are quoted in a way to justify fellowship with anybody who speaks in "the name of Christ" notwithstanding the doctrines taught, but when John said in regard to the one he rebuked, "he followeth not with us," he meant that he was not of the twelve, and thus not specifically appointed by Christ to preach; and not that he did not endorse the truth in Christ.

The Diaglott renders Mk. 9:40 as: "He that is not against you, is on our part," thus showing that Jesus identified himself with the work of the apostles. As he manifested the Father unto them, so they had to manifest him to those to whom they preached.

The number of those who genuinely accepted the teachings of the Lord were so few, that it was foolish to discourage any of them. The apostles must learn to discriminate between friend and foe, and to teach that Christ will adequately reward all who render service to those who bear his name.

### **The Parable of the Trusting Child**

Having answered John, the Lord again directed the attention of the apostles to the child he was nursing, and warned them of their responsibilities in regard to such. He declared: "Whosoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to offend\* it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck, and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Mat. 18:6).\*\*

The child, therefore, represented the "little ones that believe in me," as the Master explained. And as the apostles looked upon that little child, seeing its helplessness, its innocence, its trusting faith, its need of guidance and the encircling arms of the Lord around it, so they saw a demonstration of those qualities that Jesus delights to observe in believers. They should not be overbearing in their self-assertiveness; they should not be dominated by a fleshly ambition that seeks the greatest position at the expense of others; instead they are to lovingly trust in the Lord, doing his will, seeking his guidance and comfort.

Moreover, as apostles, they had a duty to minister to such. They must not put stumbling-blocks before others, but seek to help. They must not set such an example as would cause others to wander out of the way of righteousness, but guide them into all truth. If they should do otherwise (as Judas later did), a greater measure of judgment would be poured out upon them, for "to whom much is

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\* The word "offend" used by the Lord in this conversation, signifies "to cause to stumble." The word in the Greek is *skandalizo* and means "to put a snare or stumbling block in the way." The *skandalon* was the name given to that part of the trap to which bait was attached, and hence came to signify the snare itself (see Rom. 11:9; 14:13; Lk. 17:1). Jesus taught that the greatest care must be exercised lest others be led astray by the display of attractive bait, and so they stumble in the way of righteousness.

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\*\* This was a form of punishment afflicted on criminals of the worst kind by Greeks and Romans (but not by Jews). Thus those who have acted like Gentiles will be treated as such. See the fate of Babylon the Great (Rev. 18:21).

given, of him shall much be required" (Lk. 12:48).

The apostles, therefore, were called upon to manifest a child-like faith, and to minister to those of a similar disposition.

It was a beautiful lesson that the Lord Jesus impressed upon them at that time, as the little child lay in his arms, and the apostles never forgot the lesson. Years later, Peter wrote: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1Pet. 2:2).

Perhaps he also recalled the words of the Psalmist: "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in Yahweh from henceforth and forever" (Psa. 131:2-3).

The apostles learned that they had to be as receptive of the Truth of God as a little child for its mother's milk, and in consequence, manifest the love and humility of a child. So James wrote: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble..." "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up" (Jas. 4:6, 10).

Isaiah spoke of the condescension of Yahweh, and how He delights in the humble, not in those who in pompousness of spirit claim to be the greatest. He declared: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones..." (Isa. 57:15).

**The Need to Exercise Care in the World** Jesus used the pompous attitude, then being manifested by the apostles, as the very example to show that it would be the cause of offence to child-like believers. So they needed to take heed and correct their ways. Moreover, they themselves would experience trials and baiting by the world, particularly the Jewish world, then in existence. Jesus continued in his discourse: "Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh..."

The Jewish world would put stumbling-blocks in their way, and lay baits and snares in their path, to cause them to turn aside from the course they were then pursuing. Such trials were inevitable, as Christ declared, because they were predicted (see Acts 2:23). They would be raised against Jesus and the apostles by the Jewish world of that age, and they would be successful because of one specific man who would make it possible: Judas, an apostle!

Jesus knew full well how the apostles would all be affected by these trials before them; how that Judas would prove traitor; how

that Peter would deny him; how that all the others would forsake him at the time when he needed them most of all; how they would all become completely dispirited because of his shameful death.

In this foreknowledge, how foolish was the boast of each one that he was greater than the other! Each needed to exercise the greatest care, lest he fall completely away. Jesus therefore warned them: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mat. 18:8-9; Mk. 9:48).

Jesus warned the apostles that they must ruthlessly exclude out of their lives those things that would draw them away, even at the expense of pain or loss. He was not referring to literal hands, feet and eyes, of course, but things and objects represented by these members of the body that are most active in foolish actions. Most people would do anything to preserve their limbs or their eyes, but Jesus taught that there was an even greater need. His teaching was similar to that of the Law, for under the Law, the Israelitish people were taught to "cut off" their nearest and dearest relations, should they seek to draw them from the true worship (Deu. 13:6-11).

That remains a duty to this day. In 1Cor. 12:14-15, 21, 27, these terms are used for ecclesial members, and Christ's teaching means that no member of an ecclesia is to be endured if he sets at nought the precepts of Christ, no matter how highly prized he might be by the body of believers (1Cor. 5:1-5, 12-13; 1Tim. 1:20; Tit. 1:11; 3:10). Though this entails pain and loss, it is the better way. It may seem that an ecclesia is cutting off its very hand, foot, or eye; but that is much better than to allow **these members**, even if they are the most respected by others, to so continue to work so that the "head" is not obeyed (see Col. 2:19)! To be severed from the head is to commit spiritual suicide.

There is a personal application to remember also in these words. Hand, foot, and eye, symbolise the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes, and all this, wrote John, "is of the world" (1Jn. 2:16). A rigorous self-discipline is necessary, that we do not allow any of these lusts to so dominate us and lead us away from Christ, or cause us to stumble irrevocably out of the way of righteousness.

John's question had been: Shall we forbid those to teach who follow not us? Jesus' answer was, "no," but cut off those things, both in the world and in yourselves, that will cause you to stumble

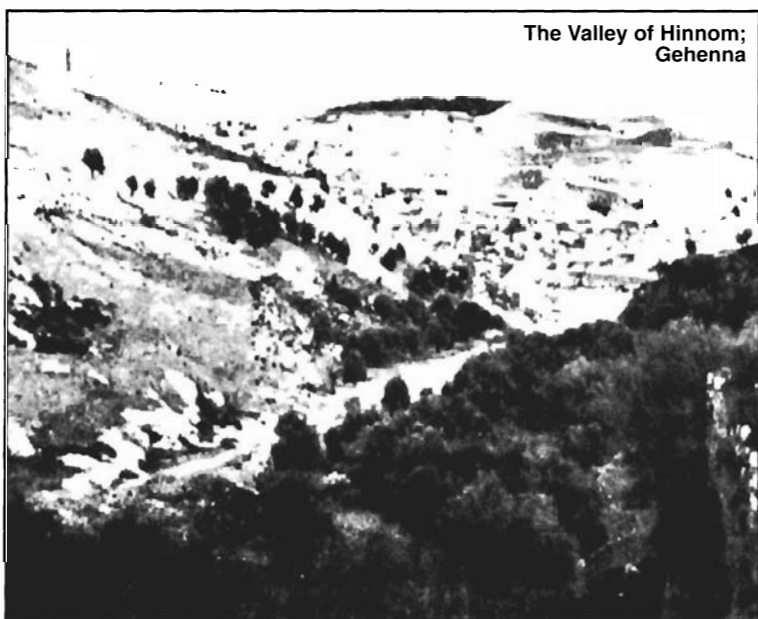
and fall, and consign you to hell.

But what did the Lord mean, when he said that those who did not cut off those members that offend, would be turned into "hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched?"

Many people imagine that this relates to a hell of fiery torments, and that the Lord was suggesting that the immortal souls of the wicked will be confined to such a hell as that. That is not the sense of the passage at all, and it is important to understand what is meant.

First of all, the word "hell" in this place, is the Greek *Gehenna*, which was the name of a valley just outside of Jerusalem, which was used like a great public incinerator for the rubbish of the city. A fire was kept constantly burning in this valley, and into it was thrown all the refuse of the city, and even the bodies of the worst criminals. To the Jews, therefore, Gehenna was synonymous with utter destruction, and to be consigned to Gehenna was to be utterly destroyed.

That is the sense in which the Lord used the term, because, actually, the punishment that awaits the wicked is death without hope of life beyond. Paul declared: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).



Secondly, the term “everlasting fire,” does not necessarily mean a fire that goes on for ever, for Jude uses the same term in relation to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which occurred 4,000 years ago. He wrote that the destruction poured out upon those cities provided an “example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). Sodom is not still burning today, and it is obvious that it did not burn for very long in the past, but the fire that consumed the city burned sufficiently long enough to entirely destroy it. That is what is meant by “eternal fire,” as Jude uses the term. It is eternal because what it burns is completely destroyed, never to live again.

Jeremiah used the term in the same way, describing the destruction that would come upon Jerusalem as “a fire that shall burn, and not be quenched” (Jer. 7:20; 17:27). The Babylonians set fire to Jerusalem, and it was not quenched until the whole city was consumed.

In like manner, when the Lord Jesus referred to the fires of Gehenna as being always burning, he was using a figure of speech, and stating that sure and certain destruction always awaits those who fail to measure up to the divine standards of righteousness.

That becomes more obvious when it is seen that he was quoting from a passage in Isaiah which applies to the judgment of the future Age. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the time when a new order will be established upon the earth, in which Jesus Christ will assume the supreme position of authority (ch. 66:22-23), and people will ascend from all parts of the earth to worship at Jerusalem, declares: “They shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Isa. 66:24).

He was referring to worshippers who will travel to Jerusalem in the coming Age, hoping to see the “King in his beauty” (Isa. 33:17), and to “worship before him” (Zech. 14:16). When they do so, they shall pass a most remarkable memorial. Ezekiel refers to it in these terms: “It shall come to pass in that day that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves [*the word in Hebrew means a Memorial, like a mausoleum*] in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea; and it shall stop the mouths [*as in the margin*] of the passengers, and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and shall call it The valley of Hamon-Gog [*meaning Gog’s Multitude*]” “...The name of the city shall be Hamonah [*The Multitude*] thus shall they cleanse the land” (Eze. 39:11-12).

A great memorial will be built on the east of the Dead Sea to commemorate the destruction of the Gogian host (Eze. 38) at the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Figuratively, he will appear in fire to accomplish that great judgment (2Thes. 1:7-8), and as the memory of it shall be kept constantly before mortal man, figuratively the fire is described as never being quenched, and the worms as never dying. This memorial will muzzle the “passengers,” the people passing through the land to worship at Jerusalem. The A.V. in Ezekiel 39:11 says that it shall “stop the noses of the passengers,” but there is no Hebrew word for “noses” in the original, and the phrase signifies that this memorial shall “muzzle the passengers.” It will silence them, being a salutary warning to them to restrain the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, lest a similar judgment come upon them (Rev. 20:7-15).

**The Need to Exercise Care Toward Themselves** Having warned his apostles as to what would happen if they did not change their ways, the Lord exhorted them to exercise the greatest care in both conversation and action. He said: “For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.”

In these words, the Lord Jesus taught his apostles what they must do if they were to please Yahweh in their sacrifices, and in so speaking he taught that the ritual of sacrifice is not necessarily pleasing to God. Solomon declared: “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to Him” (Pro. 15:8). Sacrifice is only acceptable to God if offered in the way that He desires. That is a fact we need to bear well in mind. We may imagine that we are sacrificing for Christ’s sake, but “imagination” is not enough; it must be in accordance with those principles set down in the Word. Cain desired to worship God, but God rejected his worship, because he wanted to go about it in his own way. Many people are “religious,” but they will not submit to the rule of the Bible.

That is just what the Lord was emphasising to his apostles.

And they would know what he meant, because they were used to the ordinances of sacrifice under the Law. They knew, for example, that salt was first sprinkled over every sacrifice for its purification, before it was consumed by fire upon the altar. This salt was styled, “the salt of the covenant” (Lev. 2:13), and identified it with the covenant of God. The Truth of God acts upon the hearts of men as salt upon the sacrifice. It is a purifier and a preserver; it gives a pleasant taste to that which we eat. And when a person becomes a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1-2) within the bonds of the covenant, and orders his life accordingly, his offerings will be pleasing to God in like manner.

Sacrifice, in the absence of a knowledge of the Truth, is useless in the sight of God, for “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6); and as salt is a purifier, we are called upon to “purify ourselves by obeying the Truth” (1Pet. 1:22).

A knowledge of the Truth, however, will introduce us to the fire of tribulation (Acts 14:22), a fire which purges, but does not consume (1Pet. 4:12-13). Both salt and fire act as a purgative and a preservative, and when the trials of life are met in the knowledge of the Truth, both will act in the same way.

That is why the Lord told his apostles: “Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, wherewith shall ye season it?”

The salt must retain its vigour, otherwise it is useless. So also with the Truth. It must remain fresh and active in our minds, purifying and cleansing our lives. It will then cause us to search, judge and discipline self. If it does not, it is not active, and it has lost its savour.

So Christ concluded by saying: “Have salt in yourselves, and have peace, one with another.”

It was a sharp rebuke. Why concern themselves as to whether one was greater than the other! Why be filled with envy and with jealousy one toward the other!

**The Need to Exercise Care Toward Others** At this stage in the conversation, the Lord brought the attention of the thoughtful apostles back to the little child still nestling in his arms: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you, That in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Mat. 18:10).

We must not mistake as to whom the Lord was referring. True, he had the little child in his arms, but earlier he had been careful to state that this little child represented those “little ones which **believe in me**” (v. 6), so that he was actually speaking of humble believers who show a childlike disposition of faith.

The attitude adopted by the apostles as they argued among themselves as to who was the greatest, would tend to belittle more humble believers who would not dare to assume positions of eminence. Jesus warned of the folly of this. He taught that their angels have access to the Father in the heavens, and can plead their cause. Therefore, though they may be despised on earth, it does not necessarily follow that they must be so in heaven!

The words of Jesus imply that believers are placed into the care of angels who assume a personal interest in their future (see Gen. 48:16; Exo. 23:20; Ecc. 5:6; 1Cor. 11:10; Lk. 15:10). These angels are “as ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14).

In this capacity, the angels form a link between heaven and earth. They overshadow the lives of believers, acting as agents for God and Jesus Christ (1Pet. 1:12; 3:22) in the development of faith. They are intensely interested in the welfare and salvation of those placed under their care, and are able to affect circumstances for their guidance, discipline and good (e.g., Dan. 10:13). Their work creates a very intimate and personal connection between God's "little ones" on earth, and the mighty Father and Son in heaven. David learned of the reality of their influence on his behalf, and wrote: "The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Psa. 34:7). Let us recognise this as a reality also, and remember that if we are prepared to serve God in all circumstances in the way He has laid down, and love Him as He desires us to do, that His love will be extended toward us in abundance, and His help will be ever



outstretched to assist us in all our trials.

The words of the Lord Jesus to the apostles, teach that God in heaven has appointed for us powerful Helpers who can assist us in our walk toward the Kingdom of God, and that Yahweh desires our salvation. Concerning disobedient Israel, whom He was forced to punish in order to save them, He declared: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Yahweh, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to make your latter end an object of hope" (Jer. 29:11).

Let us apply these words to ourselves, and remember that in heaven we have Those who are greatly interested in our welfare and ultimate salvation, and that if we fail to gain the Kingdom it will not be because of any lack of help on their part.

# *Parables and Teaching*



**A**S the Master continued his journey through the Land, he used the form of parables and stories to illustrate his teachings. By this means he was able to impress the minds of his hearers with the wonderful simplicity of his words, and yet provide the basis for the profound expressions of eternal Truth that he presented. The parables are sometimes called “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning,” because they use normal, everyday experiences to draw out spiritual principles. So the Master drew people about him to listen to his words and by that means to teach them about the work of salvation.

The apostles had seen how wholeheartedly the Gentiles accepted the Lord as he preached throughout the region of Decapolis culminating in the feeding of the four thousand — a company of predominantly Gentile peoples. Immediately following this, they witnessed how the Jews of Dalmanutha received their Messiah with chilling indifference and bitter hostility (see pages 112-114). In these experiences there was a forecast of the fact the Gentiles would receive the Gospel more readily than Jews. With these incidents fresh in mind, the Lord had taken the apostles aside to the region of Caesarea Philippi, where he had quietly instructed them concerning his mission, warning them that disgrace and death at the hand of the Jews awaited him in Jerusalem, although his ultimate glorification was certain. Then followed the transfiguration on the mountain top, the principle that the cross must come before the crown.

But with minds centred only upon glory, they could not accept the thought of public disgrace and death, and so failed to appreciate the significance of what he was teaching them, and of the need of such sacrifice. He found them quarrelling as to who among them would be greatest in the Kingdom, and so, back in the house at Capernaum, he tried to teach them a

*lesson in humility, pointing out that the greatest among them was the one who was prepared to serve.*

*Shortly after this incident, he left Capernaum for Judea in the south, travelling secretly through Samaria (Jn. 9:52), firstly to visit Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, and afterwards to conduct a public ministry throughout Judea.*

*In the Gospel records, the account of this ministry is given by Luke and John, but is entirely omitted by Matthew and Mark. Matthew 19:1 says that when Jesus had finished his teaching, he departed from Galilee, and came into the borders of Judea beyond Jordan. Mark 10:1 endorses this statement. But then both Matthew and Mark leap forward in their accounts, omitting much that is supplied by the other two writers. Therefore, we must interpose between the conclusion of Matthew 18 and the beginning of chapter 19, or between the conclusion of Mark 9 and the beginning of chapter 10, all that is recorded in Luke 9:51 to Luke 18:14, as well as that recorded in John chapters 7 to 11. During the course of this period, Jesus visited Jerusalem (as recorded by both Luke and John), then returned to Galilee, to finally travel down through Perea to Jerusalem once again, at which time he was crucified.*

*All four Gospel records join at the point where he was about to visit Jerusalem for the last occasion. Matthew and Mark, however, omit some six to seven months of the Lord's ministry, the details of which are supplied by Luke and John. Our present chapter tells the story of what happened during that period of time, so that they will be more concerned with the records of those two Gospel writers, to the exclusion of Matthew and Mark.*

*It was a most difficult time for the Lord, for public opinion had hardened against him. It was a Period of Opposition (see page 11) when the leaders of the people, and particularly those in Judea, were intent upon destroying his influence.*

*Thus the Lord had to move in fear of his life.*

*Nevertheless, with supreme faith in Yahweh his Father, he went bravely and steadily onwards in his public ministry, trying to help those who would hearken to him, and constantly training the apostles for the work they would be called upon to perform.*

*Throughout this sad and difficult period of his ministry, the Lord Jesus exhibited a confidence that was born of his faith. The prophetic words of Isaiah 50:7-9 express it: "Yahweh will*

*help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, Yahweh will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; and the moth shall eat them up!"*

*Despite this confidence, however, the Lord was consumed with anxiety that his mission should be brought to a successful completion. He declared: "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Lk. 12:50).*

*Meanwhile, the attitude of his enemies was one of growing hostility. John records: "The Jews sought to kill him" (Jn. 7:1).*

*In these three references we have his confidence, his anxiety, and the opposition he had to endure.*

*Jesus succeeded in spite of this environment because of his faith. He knew that his ministry would end in public disgrace, and that he would be executed in a shameful manner. But he looked beyond these trials to the glory that he realised would ultimately be his, if he faithfully performed his Father's will. Therefore, as the writer to the Hebrews reminds us: "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).*

*And he adds the exhortation: "Look unto Jesus!"*

*If we do that, and constantly have the example of the Lord Jesus in our spiritual vision, we, too, will find the means to conquer sin and trouble, and to reach forward to a joy and a glory that shall be ours. For, declares the Lord, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias" (Rev. 3:21-22).*

*As we follow the record of the Lord through this most difficult period, let us learn the lesson of his life, and apply it in our individual circumstances. Let us repeat and apply the words of Paul: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!" (Phil. 4:13).*



## Chapter 1

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### PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

*In order to give point to the lessons he was impressing upon the apostles, the Lord delivered unto them two parables. The first parable, that of the lost sheep, draws attention to the work of his first advent, when he came to save that which was lost. The second parable, that of the Unforgiving Debtor (Mat. 18:23-35), was uttered on the same occasion, but relates to his second advent. In this first parable, he shows that he had sacrificed to save others, and in the second one, he shows that he would condemn those who failed to do likewise when they had it in their power to do so. The full power of these two parables will be better appreciated when it is seen that they were spoken at the same time and are complementary one to the other.*

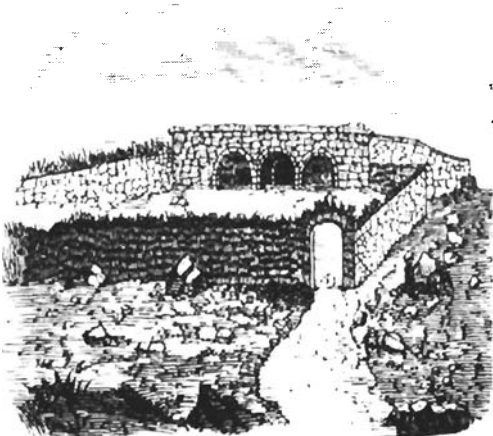
**W**ITH the little child still in his arms, and with the twelve thoughtful apostles standing around him (that is, if Peter had by this time returned), the Lord told them the parable of the lost sheep.

A shepherd had a flock of a hundred sheep. But at the end of the day, when he came to carefully count them, he found only ninety-nine were present.

Where was the hundredth?

It should have kept close to the shepherd, but obviously it had strayed; no doubt following its own inclinations.

But the cause of the straying did not concern the shepherd so much as the fact of it. It was considered a shame and a disgrace for a shepherd to lose any of the flock; so much so, that if he was at all negligent in the matter, he had to make good the cost of the lost sheep, or produce



evidence showing that it was not his fault (see cp. Gen. 31:38-41).

The honour of the shepherd was at stake if he did not keep the flock intact, and this shepherd, being conscientious, determined that he would do everything in his power to recover the lost sheep.

Leaving the ninety-nine sheep well protected on the mountain-side, he went to great trouble to retrace his steps, seeking everywhere for the straying sheep. He was intent upon restoring it, and filled with anxiety lest he should not succeed; and therefore, it was a great relief of mind to him when, at last, he came upon it in some lonely by-path.

Jesus declared: "He rejoiced more in that sheep, than in the ninety-nine that went not astray."

Of course, Jesus did not mean that shepherds rejoice more with straying sheep than those that keep close to them, but rather the shepherd rejoices in his own skill and care in finding and restoring the straying sheep than in the comparatively easy task of leading those who never stray. He rejoices in the restored sheep because it keeps the flock intact.

In like manner, taught Jesus, it is not the will of the Father that any of His "little ones" should be lost, and for that purpose, Jesus came to seek the straying sheep and restore them to the fold.

And as those twelve men had been appointed apostles, they, also, must dedicate their lives to that end, and not be dominated by thoughts of self.



## Chapter 2

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### HOW TO RESTORE STRAYING SHEEP

*Uncomfortably, one of the most frequent causes of “little ones” straying from the fold is through personal animosity and grievances within the flock. The Lord now provides practical advice regarding methods of restoring such sheep.*

**N**OW should the apostles, as shepherds, go about restoring stray sheep? If your brother transgresses against you, reasoned the Lord, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone (Mat. 18:15).

#### **First Make A Personal Effort**

In other words, first try the effect of private, gentle, and friendly admonition. In this they were to recall the love that God had already shown toward them, and to manifest a similar quality of forgiving and self-sacrificing love to others (cf. Rom. 5:8-11; 1Jn. 4:10, 19). To manifest such consideration for others, is to imitate the Father's love to us, and to do this is to show a measure of spiritual maturity (see Mat. 5:48).

Let us reflect toward others, the benefits we have received from Yahweh. As He has manifested patience to us, and as we have constant need to plead His mercy and forgiveness, let us extend the same loving thought and forgiveness, to others. In that way, we will be like the shepherd going forth to find the lost sheep on the lonely mountain slopes, to restore it to the fold.

#### **Seek the Assistance of Others**

But what if the erring brother refuses these approaches in love? In that case, instructed the Lord, “take one or two with you, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.” This is what the Law of Moses instructed (Deu. 19:15). These witnesses should plead with the erring brother, to change his ways, and confirm what action should be taken to restore him to a right mind and ways.

#### **Enlist the Support of the Ecclesia**

But what if the case is so bad, and he is so obstinate as to refuse to hearken even to this deputation of brethren seeking to restore him? Patience still has to be exercised, even as did the

shepherd when he tramped his lonely way over the difficult mountain track, in the gathering gloom, to seek the straying sheep. The matter should be officially placed before the ecclesia that, in love, the full weight of ecclesial endorsement might be brought to bear upon the erring brother.

However, the objective always in view must be to restore and not condemn, and every effort must be expended with patience and care to that end. The idea is to bring the errant back to the path of righteousness, and not merely to demonstrate to others the measure of his sin, or the strength of your case.



Of course, there is no guarantee that even these methods will restore every straying sheep. In his parable of the Lost Sheep, the Lord had made that abundantly clear by saying concerning the searching shepherd: "*If so be that he find it.*" What about those who absolutely refuse to be moved by every approach in love?

Only one thing remains.

Let him be treated as "a heathen man, and a publican," a tax-gatherer!

These were people with whom Jews would never associate. Such obstinate sinners, therefore, are to be rejected from the flock, as unworthy of association therewith (1Tim. 1:20).

### **Seek Divine Co-operation**

Having given these words of instruction, Jesus then added a warning that has been sadly misunderstood by many. According to the A.V. he declared: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mat. 18:18).

This has been taken to mean that whatever the congregation forbids or permits will be endorsed by God, and on such an interpretation as this, the Roman Catholic Church claims infallibility for all it might teach or do, even though what it does today might contradict its own doctrine or action of yesterday!

That is not what Jesus meant, of course.

The words, as they stand in the A.V. signify that whatever attitude the apostles adopt toward others on earth, will be adopted

by God against them, so that the judgment they administer to others will be directed also to them. This emphasised the need for consistency, reminding them that they would be judged as they judged others.

But an alternate rendition of the passage, contained in the C.B. William's translation of the N.T., seems to make the true meaning much clearer. According to this translation, the words should be rendered: "I solemnly say to you, whatever you forbid on earth, must be already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth, must be already permitted in heaven."

In treating offenders, therefore, we must be assured that the alleged offence is an offence against heaven, against the Word of God, and not merely an imaginary offence against some barrier that we ourselves have erected. It is possible for us to demand of others, a way of life or attitude of mind, that God has never demanded. As a matter of fact, the Pharisees were doing that in the days of Jesus (Mat. 23:4).

Our duty is to set before men the things that God has revealed that He desires of them, and to encourage them in the performance of these things. We have no right to fall short or go beyond this. Our duty, therefore, is first to see whether an alleged offence violates what God has "loosed" or "bound," and not some mere man-made law.

### **Make it a Matter of Prayer**

Having emphasised the need to seek for straying sheep, and having given some practical advice as to how this should be done, the Lord concluded by directing the apostles to one aspect of the work that should not be overlooked.

God should always be drawn in to the counsels and efforts of those who seek to reclaim others (Jas. 5:15; 1Jn. 5:14-17). Jesus declared: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mat. 18:19-20).

To what was the Lord referring? How could he so confidently say the Father would do whatever they agreed to ask in his name? Is the Lord limiting the scope of divine worship to two or more, so that an individual cannot approach the Father on his own?

The answer to these questions will be obvious when we recall the subject matter of the Lord's discourse. He is discussing the method to be adopted in reclaiming erring brethren. First, there must be a personal approach. If that fails, the one concerned is advised to take others with him and renew the approach. But the greatest care needs to be adopted. First these brethren need to

discuss the matter between themselves, and finally decide that the grievance is as reported. They will then agree that the sin is a forgivable one (for there are sins that go beyond this — see 1Jn. 5:16), and they will place the matter before the Father through prayer, in the name of the Lord Jesus, praying the Father that He will forgive the sin of their brother, and endorse the action that they are about to do.

Jesus thus exhorted the apostles that the greatest care, tact, and consideration should be shown the erring brother in such cases, and that, before “the witnesses” go before him, the Father should be brought into the counsels of all, that His blessing might rest upon the work of reclamation.

### **How Often Shall I Forgive?**

Whilst the Lord had been discussing these matters with the apostles, Peter had returned to the house, and had joined the little company surrounding Jesus, in time to hear him expounding on the matter of forgiveness.

Immediately, with typical impetuosity, he broke into the conversation: “How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?” he asked. “Till seven times?”

Peter doubtless thought he was being very generous in thus speaking, for it was a maxim among Jews to forgive only thrice, and perhaps he waited for the commendation he felt sure he would receive. Instead, he heard these words: “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven!”

The apostles were doubtless taken aback by this unconstrained generosity, but they need not have been. Had they not asked their Lord to teach them to pray, and did they not learn to say: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” How often would they pray thus? Once every day? How often then must they forgive others!

But there is a significance in the number that Jesus gave Peter, that is not apparent on the surface, for it is exactly the same number that the boastful, vengeful Lamech used when he expressed the fierce, implacable spirit of revenge that moved him. Lamech declared: “If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Lamech seventy and sevenfold.”

Jesus taught: “I say not unto thee, Forgive until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven!”

The way of Lamech is the “way of Cain” in which men perish (Jude 11); the way of Christ is the “way of righteousness” that leads unto Life Eternal.

To impress his meaning, Jesus told the apostles the story of the Unforgiving Debtor.

## Chapter 3

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### PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING DEBTOR

#### **The Story of the King Who Forgave**

*This parable is closely connected with that of the Lost Sheep given on the same occasion. The former parable illustrates the work of the Lord Jesus at his first advent, and indicates how his servants should imitate him in their acts of mercy; the second parable takes us to the second coming, and reveals the fate of those who having benefited from the forgiving love of God in Christ, refuse to extend the same privilege to their erring brethren.*

A certain king decided to take account of all his affairs. Among the items that were brought to his notice was a large debt of some millions of dollars, that one of his servants owed him.

The servant was brought before the king, and ordered to pay without delay. But he had no money to pay back even a token amount of the debt.

Roughly, the king ordered that he be sold into slavery, together with his family, and that all his goods be seized.

But the servant in humility, fell upon his knees, and earnestly besought the king for mercy. "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all!" he cried.

The king paused. There was no possible hope that the servant should be able to pay such a huge sum, but his humiliation, his plea for mercy, his stated declaration to try and make restitution, moved the king. He felt very sorry for the servant, and decided to help him.

Generously the king freely forgave him the debt. The servant could hardly believe his ears. What good fortune was his!

Full of appreciation and thanks for the kindness of the king, he hastened from the court, determined never again to be found in such a state of need.

The merciful king, who forgave his servant such a large debt, is a type of the King of heaven who "pitieth His children," who "remembereth that we are dust," and who "removeth our transgressions from us" (Psa. 103:12-14). How joyful we are to remember that mercy, realising that in His love He freely forgives such a heavy debt of transgression as would bring us into hopeless slavery to the grave.

## **The Story of the Unforgiving Debtor**

But the servant was not like his master. He had left the court a comparatively wealthy man, freely forgiven of a debt, the crushing burden of which would have destroyed him.

But he, too, had a day of account, and found a fellow-servant who owed him a few cents. The money had been owing for some time, and evidently every plea for payment had been in vain. Therefore, coming upon the debtor, the forgiven servant took him by the throat, and in unrelenting anger and animosity, began to throttle him, demanding that he pay the trifling sum.

Fearfully the debtor fell down at his feet, and tearfully he kept beseeching (as the Greek text has it) his creditor, saying: "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all!"

They were familiar words, with this great difference: that this debtor could have made good his promise, whereas the other could not!

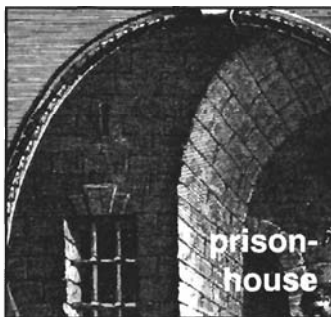
But there was no mercy manifested now! No spontaneous and unasked for forgiveness, such as he himself had experienced from the king.

No! Instead there was a demand for payment! The forgiven debtor insisted upon being paid what was his own. And when that was immediately impossible, he flung his debtor into prison, till he should pay the money.

## **The Story of the King Who is Just**

But others heard of what had been done, and could see the injustice of it all. Some went to plead the cause of the imprisoned debtor to the king, and when he heard what the servant had done, he was filled with wrath. The very generosity of his nature\* aroused his anger against the unforgiving debtor whose miserable parsimony was thus revealed. Such compassion as he had revealed to him should have been reflected in his attitude toward others.

In anger, he commanded the servant to be not only flung into prison, but to be delivered unto the



\* The amount of money represented in this sum has been variously stated as approximately \$12,000,000! The king was generous in both allowing such a debt to accrue, and in forgiving such a huge sum. The amount owing by the fellow servant to the forgiven debtor was but a few cents. This indicates the extent of the claim that God could press against us in comparison with those things we can press against our fellows. Let us remember this when we "apply Mat. 18" in times of dispute!



tormentors\* until he could pay the debt. As the debtor had no hope of doing that, he was consigned to endless imprisonment.

The Lord pointed the application of the lesson which is so obvious, by saying: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts [*and not merely by word*] forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Let us ever remember these words and apply them, for otherwise, every time we utter the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," we are virtually signing our death warrant!

Let us ever bear in mind that the God whom we serve is not only abundant in mercy and goodness, but is also just. Let us do what Paul exhorts: "Behold the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22).



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\* The word in Greek is *basanistes*, and signifies a jailor who examined by torture, and who cruelly endeavoured to extort the debt, or induce the relatives of the debtor to come to the aid of their relation whom they saw placed in a state of such pain and misery. The term speaks of the agony of regret that will be experienced at the Judgment Seat by those who have failed to fulfil the Lord's desire and reflect to others the love he has shown to them.

## **A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels.**

### **AUGUSTUS, FIRST OF THE EMPERORS**

His name means *August* or *Honourable*, a title added to his original name of *Caius Caesar Octavianus* as a compliment to his own greatness. The month August, previously known as *Sextilis*, was named after him, so that every August commemorates the Emperor whose decree sent Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem (Lk. 2:1)! On the assassination of Julius Caesar, BC44, his will directed that his grand-nephew, Octavius, assume the title of Caesar. For a time Octavius ruled jointly with two other regents, but in BC31 he became sole ruler, and assumed the title of Emperor, being the first of the Roman rulers to do so. As Emperor Augustus, he reigned until his death in AD14, in his 67th year. Although Augustus did not like the Jews, he favoured them in policy, and requested that sacrifices be offered daily in the temple in Jerusalem at his expense. He was friendly with Herod in Judea, recognising that in him he had a valuable ally. Caesarea Philippi and Caesarea by the Sea were built in his honour by Herod. Augustus was captivated by the personality of Herod the Idumean though he viewed the executions of his relations with astonishment and horror. He is reputed to have said that he would rather be “one of Herod’s pigs than one of his sons!”

### **BARABBAS, THE MURDERER WHO ESCAPED**

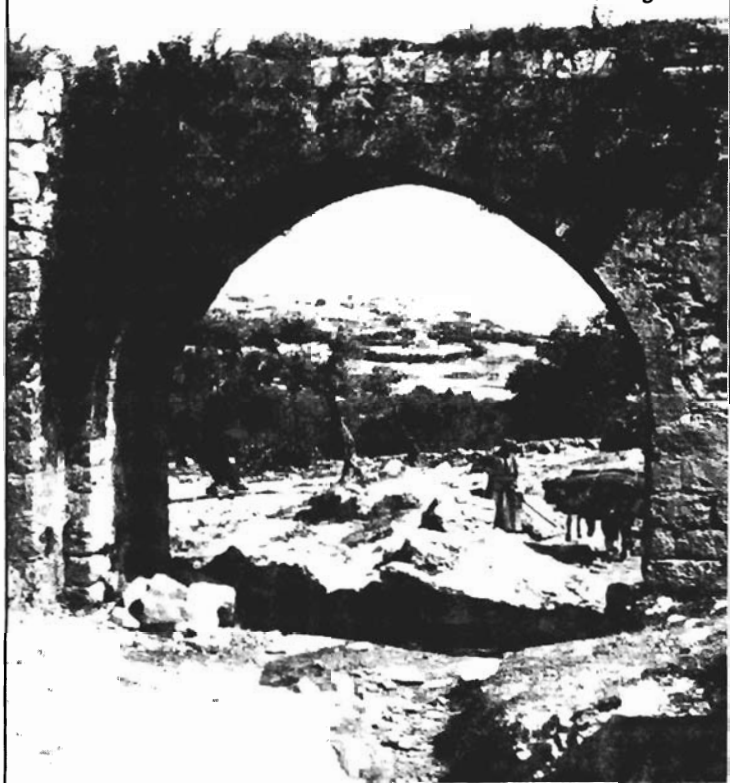
Barabbas signifies, *Son of a Father*, but he was preferred before the Son of The Father. Jesus told the Jewish people: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning...” (Jn. 8:44). It was therefore appropriate that they should prefer that Barabbas be released rather than the Lord Jesus, even though Pilate pleaded with them that they should let Jesus go free (Mat. 27:16-26), for their feelings were all of the flesh. Barabbas was a Zealot, and had been condemned to die because of sedition, murder and robbery (Lk. 23:19; Jn. 18:40). But he gained his freedom at the expense of Jesus, thus typifying the work of redemption.

It was the custom of the Roman Governor to release a prisoner at Passover time, that he might go out free to celebrate the feast that speaks of deliverance, and Pilate saw in this custom an opportunity to escape responsibility for the execution of Jesus. He gave the Jews a choice: Whom should he release, Barabbas or Jesus? It appears he was convinced that the Jews would be forced to ask for Jesus, because if they dared ask for

Barabbas, the rebel, to be freed, it would reveal their anti-Roman sympathy for the Zealots, and would incite the hostility of the Government. Pilate thus reasoned as a politician, but he erred, because he did not reckon with reckless Jewish hatred and bigotry.

Thus Jesus was condemned and Barabbas set free. What an experience for Barabbas who was languishing in his cell, reconciling himself to a painful, terrible death. How stupefied he must have been to hear the tramp of the guard outside his prison, and then learn the news that he was to be freed! The thief and murderer had escaped, but the Lord died. That is how the seed of the serpent treated the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). We can only hope that Barabbas learned the lesson of his escape, and used the unexpected opportunity to render appropriate service unto Yahweh.

*The city of Samaria with ancient ruins in the foreground*



## Chapter 4

### AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

*At this festival, crowds converged on Jerusalem from all over the Roman world, so that the city became the scene of great bustle and activity. On all sides were seen the strange costumes of foreign Jews presenting a colourful contrast against the familiar garments of the local people. The harsh accents of these “foreigners” were heard amidst the variety of tongues spoken even within the confines of Palestine. For the arriving visitors hospitality had to be sought and found; guests had to be received and welcomed; all things required for the week of festivity had to be prepared. Above all else, the booths, or tabernacles, had to be erected, and they were found everywhere — in street and square, in court and on housetop, in the city, out in the open fields and slopes of Olivet. It was a scene of excitement, of gaiety, and of joy; but as a sullen contrast to the very happiness of the occasion, there stood the fierce castle of*

*A n t o n i a ,  
frowning down  
upon the  
t e m p l e ,  
undecked and  
aloof of all that  
was taking  
place about it.  
This castle  
housed the  
Roman guard,  
the symbol of  
f o r e i g n  
domination  
over the city,*

*the token that the true deliverance had not yet come. The Jews should have recognised this, for their teachers taught that the Feast of Tabernacles yet awaited its complete fulfilment. They saw the seventy bullocks offered during the course of the seven day, as typical of the seventy heathen nations converted to Truth. They viewed the ceremony of the outpouring of water as typical of the outpouring of the Spirit. They recognised the lighting of the four huge candelabra in the Court of the Women which shed their light over all the city, as the symbol of the shining forth of divine Light*



**Feast  
of Booths**

**O**N this occasion, there was not only the normal joyous attitude that usually accompanied the Feast of Tabernacles, but in addition, a suppressed sense of excitement and expectation among the people.

Some six months had passed since many of Jesus' disciples had left him because of his hard sayings in the Synagogue at Capernaum (Jn. 6:66). Previously they had desired to take him by force and make him king (Jn. 6:14-15), but soon many came to hate him, and were fed in that hate by the pernicious scandals circulated about him by such as the Pharisees.

### **Disputation About Jesus (Jn. 7:10-13)**

Everywhere people were whispering about Jesus, and looking for him. They did so secretly because of their fear of those in authority (Jn. 7:13). Thus, on all sides, murmurings could be heard. The remarkable miracles and staggering claims of this strange prophet of Nazareth had swept the nation. Certainly he was not one whom they could ignore. Would he be at the Feast? Nobody knew, not even his half-brothers. They doubtless **listened to** the rumors circulating throughout the city, with growing **irritation against** Jesus.

"He is a good man," claimed some as they remembered his miracles and acts of kindness.

"Not at all!" scoffed others. "He only deceives the people!"

So the city was divided, and in a state of suspense as to what would happen should Jesus put in an appearance.

But for the first two days of this seven days' festival, he made no public appearance in the city.

### **Jesus Teaches in the Temple (Jn. 7:14-29)**

On the third day (Jn. 7:14), however, Jesus presented himself at the temple, and standing in a public place began to teach the people. What astonishment his appearance must have caused! Here was the one concerning whom all the rumors had been circulated! What would happen now? Many at the Feast knew of the determination of some of the Jews to kill Jesus (Jn. 7:1), and they must have wondered as to what the outcome would be as they saw him so courageously proclaiming the purpose of God to them.

It was a challenge to those who had condemned him and proclaimed their intention of killing him. Let them stand forth now and refute him if they could; let them put into action the threats they had secretly uttered against him, if they would!

Jesus taught the people. And as they heard from his lips a glorious exposition of Yahweh's Word, and as they felt the impact of its power and appreciated the beauty and wisdom of that which he presented to them for their intellectual comprehension, they wondered in

astonishment at him.

And why should they do that? Because they saw, not the Son of God, but the Carpenter of Nazareth; because they heard a man whose very accent demonstrated that he came from backward Galilee, and whose very language demonstrated the simplicity of his education. In wonder they forgot their earlier murmurings, and questioned the reason of it all.

“How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” they enquired of one another.

And back came the answer, an answer that reveals the real source of true wisdom which is available to all, though not quite in the same way as the Lord received it: “My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?”

Here was forthright teaching if ever it was presented! On the Feast of Tabernacles, the Law of Moses was read in the hearing of the people every day, so that it was fresh to their ears! And yet they knew that some of their leaders were prepared to break the Law by putting Jesus to death!

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Deu. 18:18).

Already they had unwittingly given endorsement to the fact that Jesus fulfilled the terms of this prophecy in that they had said: “How does this unlearned man know how to expound the Scriptures in such fashion?”

### **The Lord Explains His Accusation (vv. 20-24)**

This truth irritated the people. They had heard of rumors circulating concerning a plot to destroy Jesus, but they took exception to the way in which he involved the whole nation in the accusation by stating, “Why do you go about to kill me?”

His words angered them. Heatedly they denied his charge, accusing him of being mad. “You have a devil,” they declared; “who goes about to kill you?”

But Jesus answered: “I have done one work, and you all marvel! Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers, and you, on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made

a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment!"

The specific miracle that had caused the Jews first to wonder and then to hate was the healing of the impotent man on the sabbath some six months earlier (Jn. 5:8-10). It had obviously been circulated that Jesus was a deceiver of the people because he had broken the sabbath by the act of healing. But now Jesus showed how foolish was such reasoning. Obviously, and this could not be disputed, the healing act had come from God, and if that were so, how could it be claimed that God broke His own law?

Further, the law itself gave precedence for such action. Did it not insist that every boy child should be circumcised on the eighth day of his life? It did! But what if that eighth day happened to be a sabbath? Which law should be maintained? Was the sabbath to be broken, or the law of circumcision put aside? The answer of the Law was that the law of circumcision took precedence over the sabbath law!

There was a very good reason why it should be so. The sabbath law prefigured the millennium of rest, when Christ and his glorified followers will reign over the mortal peoples for 1,000 years. But this will terminate at the end of the epoch, to be replaced by the perfect conditions to follow when mortal flesh is finally swallowed up of life, and God shall be all in all (1Cor. 15:28). Thus flesh will be finally cut off that the full glory may be manifested. Therefore, as the sabbath anticipated the coming seventh millennium of rest, so the day of circumcision (the eighth) prefigured the final glory.

Thus the law of circumcision took precedence over the sabbath day. But the Jews condemned Jesus because he made a man "whole," or physically and spiritually cured him, on the sabbath day. Where lay the difference between that and circumcision? So he called upon them to "judge not according to appearance," but in the light of true righteousness.

**The People Moved  
By His Teaching**  
(vv. 25-27)

The people were moved by the forthright, bold and clear exposition of the Lord. It was in such contrast to the teaching of their spiritual leaders, and the craven way in which they conducted themselves in the face of his fearless faith. The people resident at Jerusalem, who knew of the hostile attitude of the leaders toward Jesus, particularly wondered at his boldness (Jn. 7:25).

"Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?" they asked. "But, lo, he speaks forth boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Have the rulers come to believe that this is the very Christ? [*see Diaglott*]. But we know him whence he is; but when Christ comes, no man will know whence he is!"

They thought they knew, for they believed that he was the son of

Joseph (Lk. 3:23). They did not understand that he was the Son of God.

**Jesus Proclaims His  
Divine Origin  
(vv. 28-29)**

Jesus was moved with indignation at the attitude now adopted by the people. They should have acknowledged that no man could do the miracles he did, and that, therefore, God did them through him! In fact, even the Pharisees had secretly admitted, some two years earlier, that he was undoubtedly a man come from God, for no man could do the things that he did, except God be with him (Jn. 3:2). Therefore, the Jews did know from whence he came. Raising his voice, Jesus cried aloud to the people: "You both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but He that sent me is true, Him ye know not. But I know Him: for I am from Him, and He hath sent me!"

The people knew very well that the Lord Jesus could not perform the miracles he did without the presence of God; but they rejected his testimony because, in spite of all their religious exercises, they were actually ignorant of the true facts of God's revelation: they did not really know His character or perceive Him in truth (Jn. 4:23-24).

But the Lord's indictment, true though it was, made the people mad with rage. Those who previously had openly declared, "Who goes about to kill you?" now sought to lay hands upon him. But though they seethed with indignation, and would have liked to kill him, "his hour had not yet come," and for the moment, he escaped their wrath.

The people were now hopelessly divided. The thoughtful among them considered the words of the Lord, and recalling the wonderful works that he had performed among them, said unto those who rejected him: "When Christ comes, he will not do more miracles than these which this man has done, will he?"

**The Leaders Seek  
To Arrest Jesus  
(vv. 30-32)**

The Sanhedrin, dominated by the Pharisees and chief priests, and holding frequent sessions in their hall of meetings, close by the temple, were kept informed of all that Jesus did and said, and of the public reaction to his teaching. They heard of the murmuring of the people, how that some were whispering arguments in his favor, whilst others were decrying him; they learned that "many of the people believed on him" (Jn. 7:31), and this knowledge angered them.

They determined to take him captive, and sent officers to seize him. But Jesus showed no fear, even though he discerned the guards lurking in the background. In fact, he boldly challenged them. "For yet a little while I will be with you, and then I go to Him who sent



me. You will seek me, and shall not find me, and where I am, ye cannot come!"

The people completely failed to understand what he meant. He was, of course, speaking of his impending death, resurrection, and ascension to the Father, but they knew nothing of it. In addition, he was making reference to his present relationship with God, and warning the Jews gathered at Jerusalem for divine worship, that so long as they remained in their present attitude of mind, they could not attain unto a true relationship with Yahweh. Jesus did not say, "Where I *will be*, you cannot come," but "Where *I am* you cannot come!" He was even then in "the bosom of the Father" (Jn. 1:18; 3:13), a term signifying complete communion, or fellowship, with God. It was impossible for the Jews to attain unto such relationship so long as they remained in the state of unbelief that characterised them then, even though they were worshipping in the temple.

Meanwhile, the people wondered at the meaning of his words and discussed them among themselves:

"Where is he going, that we will not find him?"

"Perhaps he is off to the dispersion among the Greeks, to teach them!"

"What does he mean by saying, 'You will search for me but you will not find me'?"

"Yes, and what does he mean by his statement: 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"

So the people disputed among themselves, completely failing to understand the deeper meaning of his message.

**Jesus' Invitation to the Spiritually Thirsty** The day came to an end with the people confused as to whether Jesus was a true prophet or not. Many believed on him, whilst others remained in doubt. The leaders viewed him as a menace whose voice had to be stilled, for otherwise he would only cause trouble.

On each day of the Festival, a significant ceremony was conducted. At early morning, the people repaired to the Temple, and when the morning sacrifice had been laid on the altar, one of the priests went down with a golden ewer to the Pool of Siloam, and there, with great solemnity, he drew a supply of water, which was carried in triumphant procession through the water-gate into the temple. As he entered the temple courts, the sacred trumpets sounded a joyous blast, which continued till he reached the top of the altar slope, and there poured the water into a silver basin on the western side, while wine was poured into another silver basin on the eastern side. Psalms 113-118 (all prophetic of Christ's labors) were then sung, and when the refrain was chanted: "Oh give thanks unto Yahweh; for His mercy endureth forever," the people waved the branches they

carried in their hands.

Isaiah 12:3 was also chanted: "With joy shall we draw water from the fountain of salvation," and concerning this prophetic promise, the Jewish teachers taught the people that Isaiah's words related to the Messiah, and were to be interpreted as signifying, "With joy shall you receive a new doctrine from the Elect of the Just One."

It was the last day of the feast, known as the 'Great Day,' and the ceremony of pouring the water was evidently just completed. Perhaps the echoes of the chanting, together with the rustling of the branches held by the worshippers, had just died away, when suddenly Jesus stepped forward, and in a loud voice, instantly commanded attention.

"If anyone is athirst," he cried, "let him come to me and drink; he who believes in me, from within me, as scripture says, shall streams of living water flow!"

By making reference to the outpouring of Spirit which would be given to lead believers into all Truth, he was claiming that he was the fulfilment of the prophetic words of Isaiah, those words that the people had just been chanting.

The "Elect of the Just One" was in their midst, and proclaimed unto them a "new doctrine," as their rabbis declared he would. Now it was up to them to accept him and believe it.

The people watched and listened with mixed feelings. Some could instantly see the application of the words of Isaiah, and felt convinced that Jesus was the prophet that Moses had predicted would come. But others remained unconvinced. They could tell from his speech that Jesus was from Galilee, and they despised that part of Palestine.

"Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" they asked. "Does not scripture teach that Christ is of the seed of David, and will come out of Bethlehem?"

So Scripture was misapplied to defeat the Truth, and the people remained hopelessly divided. They argued among themselves, becoming increasingly angry as they did so. Some would have taken hold of Jesus, and violently ill-treated him, but they were prevented from doing so by something in his noble personality that held them back.

Muttering threats against Jesus, and heaping scorn on those who showed any sympathy for him or his teaching, these went their way. Even the soldiers sent to apprehend him were stopped from doing so by the majesty of his bearing, and the divine wisdom of his teaching. As they looked on from the shelter of the courts, or from among the listening crowds, they could not fail to hear his teaching, nor to be impressed by all they heard and saw.

## Chapter 5

### THE DIVIDED PHARISEES (Jn. 7:45-53)

*The public appearances of Jesus in the temple at the Feast of Tabernacles greatly irritated the Pharisees, and caused them to fear his influence. They decided to arrest him, and sent a detachment of temple guards for that purpose. But the guards returned without him, declaring the power of his teaching. This led to heated discussion among the Pharisees which served to show how divided they were within their own ranks, for some even among their number stood up in defence of Jesus.*

**T**HE temple officers, sent by the Pharisees to take Jesus, returned to their masters without him. "Why have you not brought him?" they were asked.

"Never man spoke like this man!" they replied.

Their attitude angered the Pharisees. "Are you also deceived!" they heatedly exclaimed. "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him? As for this crowd, with its ignorance of the Law, it is accursed!"

#### **Heated Discussion Within The Sanhedrin (Jn. 7:45-53)**

But there were some among their own number who were not so sure that the Sanhedrin was correct. They remembered the superhuman miracles that Christ performed, and the wisdom of his words. They were fair-minded men, even though the very education they received made them somewhat biased in favor of Judaism. Outstanding among their number was Nicodemus, that great teacher of the Sanhedrin, who had visited Jesus by night some two years earlier, and who, evidently, had never lost interest in the remarkable prophet from Nazareth (Jn. 3). His knowledge of the Law could not fault Jesus, and it distressed him to hear the angry, ignorant taunts of the Pharisees. But he was in a minority, and did not want to incur the wrath of his fellows. However, as some of them castigated the officers sent to take Jesus, he did venture a mild reproof: "Surely our Law does not condemn the accused before hearing what he has to say and ascertaining his offence?"

Swiftly the other members turned on him. It would never do to be divided among their own ranks. They must stand shoulder to shoulder in their opposition to Jesus. They also knew that Nicodemus was a man of no mean ability in the Word. They therefore attempted to

crush him by an appeal to the very Word that they knew he delighted in so much.

“Are you a Galilean also?” they contemptuously demanded, “Search and look; for out of Galilee arises no prophet!”

How wrong were those lordly Pharisees! Some of the greatest prophets came from the area of Galilee. Jonah came from Gath-hepher, in Galilee. Elijah came from the northern provinces, as did also Nahum and Hosea. And, particularly Isaiah’s Immanuel prophecy specifically mentions Galilee as the place which should see the great Messianic light (Isa. 9:1-2)!

But there is no ignorance as impenetrable as that which will not admit truth; no blindness so dark as that which refuses to see. The leaders were intent upon destroying the influence of Jesus, and were prepared to murder him, if necessary. So they swept aside the timid protest of Nicodemus, and full of an indignation that they justified to themselves, they angrily turned on their heels and left the council chamber, each for his palatial home.

As the day had come to its end, Jesus also left the temple, but having no home to which to go, he repaired to the Mount of Olives, as was his custom.



***Feast of  
Tabernacles  
in modern  
Israel***

## Chapter 6

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### THE SINNING WOMAN AND THE COMPASSIONATE SAVIOUR

*Whilst Jesus was at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, he frequently visited the temple to mingle with the people, and to teach them the truth of God's Word. He became a familiar figure there, and usually surrounded by groups of people who listened with rapt attention to the golden words of truth that flowed from his lips. On one such occasion, however, his labor of love was disturbed by the action of some Scribes and Pharisees who, dragging a frightened, dishevelled woman into the precincts of the temple area, forced her into the very centre of the group listening to Jesus. Roughly interrupting his discourse, they loudly and crudely accused the woman of adultery, and triumphantly turning on the Lord, asked him what form of punishment should be meted out to her. It was a most unseemly thing to do; a wanton outrage on decent feelings, a brutal violation of the principles of mercy, let alone justice, for though they dragged her before the Lord, they had not brought her companion in crime with her! Actually, they were not interested in principles of morality, but only in embarrassing Jesus. If the Lord ordered that she be condemned to death by stoning according to the Law of Moses, he could be brought before the Roman authorities on a charge of urging unlawful murder. If he failed to condemn the woman, it could be said that he countenanced the sin of adultery, or, at least, was not prepared to uphold God's Law. Jesus, however, handled this difficult and delicate situation with consummate wisdom and characteristic compassion, for he was able to help the woman without weakening the point of God's Law, nor condoning the fact of sin.*

*Some ancient manuscripts of John's Gospel exclude this incident, and therefore it has been rejected by some as spurious. Others, however, have come to its defence, pointing out that other manuscripts, equally authentic, have included it, and, in addition, the incident has been quoted from very early times as genuine. Certainly the character of it, and Jesus' treatment of the problem is consistent with the whole Gospel record, and therefore reads as though it is thoroughly genuine. It is, moreover, consistent with the circumstances immediately preceding and following it, for John 7:32 declares that the leaders of the people were out to trap him, and John 8:15 records the Lord's indictment of them, in that they*

*“judged after the flesh.” This incident fits naturally into the background suggested by these verses.*

**D**ESPITE the hostility that the leaders of the people showed toward Jesus, and their determined attempts to entrap him, the Lord courageously defied them by publicly teaching in the temple. It irritated the Pharisees to see him there, thronged around by a crowd of people intent upon listening to the wonderful words of exposition that he provided them from the Word of God.

They determined to destroy his influence.

**A Disturbance in the Temple** On one such occasion, a number of Scribes and Pharisees forced their way through the group surrounding the Lord, and roughly interrupted him in his discourse. They had with them a woman, whose dishevelled appearance and frightened manner indicated her shame and fear.

The people looked on startled. What was the meaning of it all?

One of the Pharisees addressed Jesus: “Rabbi,” he said insultingly, “this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the Law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what do you say?”

The question, so crudely stated, was very hypocritical. As Jewish writers have admitted (see Josephus), the marriage-vow, so strictly enforced by Moses, had been completely relaxed by these very men who now posed this question. Divorce and adultery were both so common at that time that the punishment for the latter as prescribed by the Law of Moses had long been waived.

Those Pharisees were not at all interested in the Lord’s answer to their question, but were only out to embarrass and incriminate him.

How could his answer to their question do that?

Firstly, if he were to insist upon Moses’ Law being observed, the woman would have to be put to death by stoning, and that would indicate a recommendation of violence and revolt without real examination of the circumstances of the matter. On the other hand, to refuse to do so would be seen to disregard the Law of Moses, which Jesus taught should be kept.

The jubilant Pharisees could clearly see the predicament in which Jesus was placed.

Whatever his answer might be they felt that they would catch him! If he ordered the execution of the woman, they would hurry off to the Roman authorities and claim that he was inciting revolt. If he said the Law of Moses was to be relaxed, they would condemn him before the people.

They had no compassion for the woman taken in a sin which they,

in fact, condoned; no thought of making a better person out of her. They cared naught for her feelings! They sought only to vent their hatred on Jesus.

**Jesus Writes on the Ground** Meanwhile the woman listened with fear and shame as the Pharisees proclaimed the judgment of the Law against one caught in the sin of which she knew she was guilty. Like a hunted animal she looked at those about her, but saw only a circle of curious faces, largely indifferent to her fate.

What would it be?

So far the man whom her accusers had addressed, had not given a reply. He remained silent whilst they continued to loudly demand that he give answer to their question. Nor could she see his face, for he had stooped down toward the ground and was writing in the dust.

What a strange thing to do! Why did he do it?

Jesus was, in fact, fulfilling the Law of Moses, and doing something that the high priest himself should have done.

What did the Law demand?

In circumstances when such an accusation was made against a woman, the Law of Moses prescribed a most curious procedure.

The accused was subjected to what was called a trial of jealousy (see Num. 5:11-31). The woman was brought before the priest, and the accusation was formally made. The priest then took "holy water in an earthen vessel," and mixed some of the dust of the floor of the tabernacle with the water. The woman was then solemnly "set before Yahweh" by being formally placed before the tabernacle, and the priest, holding in his hand the bitter water that would cause the curse, charged the woman with an "oath of cursing." He then wrote the curses in a book, blotting them out with the bitter water of which he then made the woman to drink. The guilt or innocence of the woman was revealed by the effect this would have upon her (Num. 5:27-28). If she were guilty, she would immediately reveal all the external signs of bearing fruit without doing so; if she were not guilty, she was restored to her original position of privilege with her husband.

What was the purpose of this strange law?

Firstly, it was designed to keep people chaste in Israel.

Secondly, it stood on record as a warning to the nation which is represented in Scripture as Yahweh's Bride (Isa. 54:5). As a nation in the days of the Lord, Israel exhibited all the external evidences of producing fruit to the glory of Yahweh (having the temple, the priests, the formalised worship established in Jerusalem), but did not do so (Mat. 21:19). In the national sense, she was like a guilty woman condemned under the Law, who had been forced to drink the bitter water of cursing.

In the person of the Lord Jesus there was the counterpart of the

high priest, bearing in the earthen vessel of his human nature the holy water of Truth, and facing the rulers of the nation, whilst he wrote the curses against it in the dust of the ground. Jesus, was, in fact, fulfilling the prophecy uttered by Jeremiah against the adulterous nation: "O Yahweh, the hope of Israel, all that forsake Thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken Yahweh, the fountain of living waters" (Jer. 17:13).

The antitypical Jeremiah, the real Man of sorrows, was now writing in the dust of the ground the curses against guilty Judah, the evidence that showed the nation to be completely adulterous and doomed to the punishment decreed by Moses.

The foolish Pharisees did not realise that in condemning the woman they were condemning themselves! The Master later prophesied that they would lose the great privileges of their calling, and that the kingdom of Israel would be given to others, the true believers (Mat. 21:43).

**The Leaders Disgraced** For the moment, those Pharisees did not understand the meaning of the Lord's action. They saw only the bowed figure, writing in the dust. They became impatient for him to answer the question they demanded of him. They mistook his silence for defeat, and noisily pressed him to reply.

"What are we to do with her?" they demanded.

At last the Lord lifted his face and steadily looked at the Pharisees about him. "He that is without sin among you, let him be the first of you to cast the stone," he replied (see Diaglott).

Their noisy demands were silenced when they heard that reply. It was required of the principal witness that he throw the first stone, and in consequence it was called "*the* stone," an expression that Jesus now used (see Deu. 17:7).

How foolish those Pharisees now felt! They had forgotten that the Law demanded that the accuser become the executioner. They were caught in the very trap they had set for the Lord. Now *they* had to determine whether the Law of Moses be carried out, or whether they waive it for the sake of Gentile law!

And meanwhile, with no further comment, the Lord turned again to his writing on the ground.

Their eyes turned toward the spot, and they could read the curses of the Law which he was faithfully recording in the "book of earth" before him. They were there, publicly, on the floor of the temple area, for all to see and read.

Those leaders realised that they were guilty of the very things that the Law condemned.

Now the tables were turned with a vengeance.



Jeremiah had declared that “all they that forsake Yahweh shall be ashamed,” and they shall be found “written in the earth” (Jer. 17:13).

There was the evidence before them!

Convicted by their own conscience, they crept ignominiously away, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last, until the Lord was left with the woman in the midst of the silent, wondering spectators.

**“Go And Sin No More!”** The group of people looked at the bent figure of the Lord. The trembling woman stood before him with face bowed to the ground. The Pharisees had all shamefacedly slunk away feeling as sinful as the woman. And now the Lord straightened himself, and looked at the woman herself.

“Woman,” he asked, “where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?”

Without accusers the case could not proceed, so in these words, as well as in his whole action, the Lord showed that he was upholding the Law of God.

“No man, Lord,” answered the trembling woman.

“Neither do I condemn\* thee,” replied Jesus. “Go, and sin no more!”

She was obviously truly repentant, and because of that the compassionate Saviour of humanity, told her to profit by her mistake, to let it be a lesson and a warning to her. She could go, but she must sin no more.

Gratefully that woman left the temple, thanking Yahweh for the mercy revealed through the Messiah whom she had met.

How thoughtful it must have made many of the onlookers. Here was a man who could show mercy without relaxing the Law; who could be firm and kind at the same time; whose pity did not make sin more flagrant nor blunt the point of true exposition and exhortation.

Truly he was the Word made flesh and dwelling among them.

Adultery is a thing of darkness and of evil, but he was the Light of the world, revealing sin for what it is, but also making manifest the way to forgiveness and salvation for those who are truly repentant, and desire to serve God in truth.

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\* The Lord's statement does not suggest that he condoned the sin. The Greek word for “condemn” is *katakrino*, which signifies “to pass sentence.” In the absence of witnesses, the Lord would not pass sentence, but warned her to avoid sin in the future. Her freedom was her opportunity to redeem herself.

## Chapter 7

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### THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (Jn. 8:12-20)

*During the Feast of Tabernacles it was the custom of the Jews to light four huge candelabra which stood perched up high in the court of the women in the temple in Jerusalem, and which were tended by long ladders that gave access to the flaring lights. From their elevated position, they shed their radiance over all the city. The large lamps were lit as memorials of the “pillar of fire” by which Yahweh had led His people in the wilderness. On the last evening of the feast, however, these lamps were not lit, and darkness reigned instead. This gave Jesus the opportunity to draw attention to himself as the true Light of heaven, the counterpart of that divine illumination of glory that had led Israel in the wilderness, and had given them light in darkness.*

**T**HE incident connected with the woman taken in adultery had interrupted the discourse that Jesus had been delivering to the people. Now that it was over, and the principal individuals had all gone their way, the Lord continued his instruction.

During the week of the Feast, the city had been bathed in light from the huge lamps set up in the court of the women in the temple complex, but with the end of the celebrations these had not been relit.

So darkness fell over Jerusalem, and its impact was felt more powerfully by the very contrast to the light and joyfulness of the preceding week.

This fact provided Jesus with an opportunity to press home to the people the need of illumination of the divine truths he was able to give them.

**Jesus' Divine Origin** “I am the Light\* of the world,” he declared. “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of Truth.”

\* The Greek word for “light” is *phos*, from whence is derived the word “phosphorus,” signifying “lightbearer.” Contrast the word that Jesus used in regard to himself in John 8:12, with that applied to John Baptist in Jn. 5:35. He described John as “a shining light,” but the word used is the Greek *luchnon*, which describes a portable handlamp fed by oil, burning for a time and then going out. The use of these two words describes the great difference between the work of John and that of Jesus.



The divine Light in the wilderness by night had guided Israel as a shepherd would his flock (Psa. 78:52-54; 80:1-2). As the good shepherd, Jesus is the manifestation of his Father in that regard, the counterpart of the Light in the wilderness, the manifestation of which was promised by the predictions of the prophets (Isa. 9:2,6; 42:6; 60:1). Those who follow him as divine Light shining in darkness, will themselves, reflect the same light (Phil. 2:15-16; Eph. 5:8).

But Jesus' claim was angrily repudiated by the Pharisees.

"You bear record of yourself," they retorted, "but your witness is not true!"

Smarting under the defeat that some of their number had suffered when they had challenged the Lord with the case of the adulterous woman, these Pharisees now invoked the Law against Jesus. The Law demanded that a claim should be vindicated in the mouth of at least two witnesses (Deu. 19:15), and, indeed, Jesus himself had earlier acknowledged the need of a confirmatory witness (Jn. 5:31). Now they asked Jesus to produce this evidence to confirm his claims.

In answer to their charge, and in support of his own testimony, Jesus invoked the witness of his Father, and claimed both a divine origin and destiny. In doing so, he did not take up the defensive position normal with an accused person standing trial under an allegation of guilt, but assumed the authoritative stand of an ambassador sent forth by the King, who is due to return to Him with his report. Already he had presented his credentials to the Pharisees (Jn. 5), and they had rejected them. Now, with authority, he spoke:

"Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true; for I know whence I came and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. You judge after the flesh; I [*for the moment*] judge no man. And yet if I judge [*as he will, one day*], my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is written in your Law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me!"

In this reply, the Lord showed how much greater he was than his accusers. He claimed God as his Father, and declared that he spoke and acted with His authority. Though for the time he did not judge, when the time came for him to do so, God would endorse all that he

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Light is luminous emanation enabling the eye to discern true form and colour. But it requires an organ adapted for its reception (Mat. 6:22). Where that organ is absent or impaired, light is useless. Spiritually considered, natural man is in this stage (1Cor. 2:14). On the other hand, believers are called "sons of light" because their spiritual vision is clear and unimpaired (Lk. 16:8). One of the great themes of John's Gospel is the proclamation of Jesus as the "true light" (Jn. 1:9). The word for "true" signifies that which is real, genuine, or substantial in contrast with that which is shadowy or symbolic (cp. Heb. 8:2; 9:24). Jesus is the "true light," being the reality of the typical light that shone in the wilderness, or appeared over the mercy seat in the Most Holy.

did. The Law demanded the corroborative witness of at least two *men*, but he was able to advance the witness of *God* in support of his claim, and this was demonstrated beyond all doubt by the miracles he performed.

The Pharisees could offer no effective answer to the Lord's reply, and so they resorted to mere evasion.

"Where is your father?" they scoffed, implying that Joseph was the Lord's real father, who presumably, had since deceased.

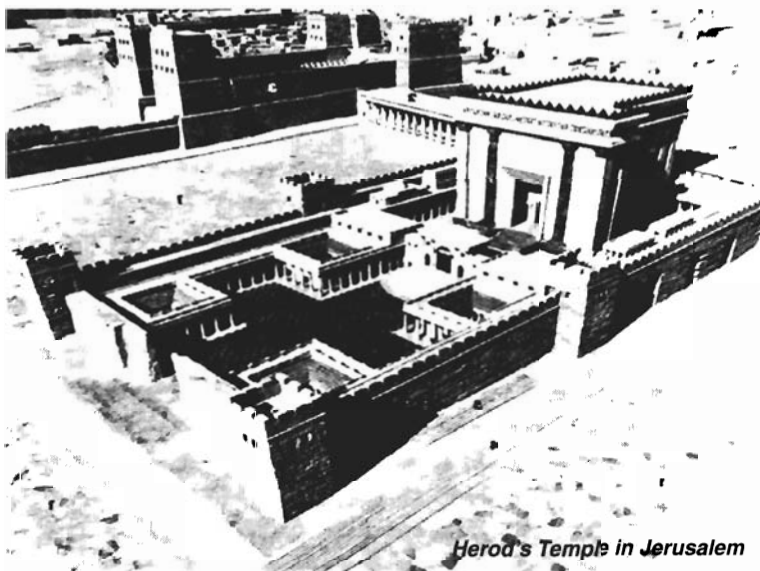
"You neither know me, nor my Father," Jesus replied. "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also!"

He thus plainly told them that with all their pretensions to knowledge, they knew not God!

His words made them furious. They would have liked to have laid their hands upon him and done him some physical injury, but something held them back; some nameless fear that they could not express. The record says, "And no man laid hands upon him for his hour was not yet come."

This discourse took place in the court of the women, at a spot styled "the Treasury." This was one of the most public places in the temple area, for to it came most worshippers to place their offerings in the thirteen brazen chests that had been set up to receive them. It was not far from the Hall Gazith, where the Sanhedrin met. Thus in full view of the people, and close to the very headquarters of his enemies, Jesus castigated the Pharisees.

No wonder, they were furious!



*Herod's Temple in Jerusalem*

## Chapter 8

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### HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY WORSHIP (Jn. 8:21-59)

*Previously it had been the Pharisees who had been angered by the teaching of the Lord, whereas, on the other hand, many of the common people listened to him with pleasure. But in his next discourse, Jesus antagonised many of the latter as well, for he told them of the need of true worship of the Father, and plainly warned them that they were not manifesting this.*

**J**ESUS now addressed the common people. The Festival of Tabernacles was over, and many of them were making preparations to leave Jerusalem for their respective homes. He used that fact to impress a spiritual lesson.

"I go," he declared, "and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sin; for where I go, you cannot come!"

Jesus was speaking as the Messiah of Israel. The time would come when the people would seek the Messiah without realising that Jesus was he, and would die in their sin, because they did not accept him when he came. And the reason was because they "could not come" where he was going.

Where was he going?

The answer is, to the Father (Lk. 19:12; Jn. 16:5; 17:13). He was about to ascend into the presence of his Father physically, but it is possible for a person to ascend there spiritually or figuratively by reaching to a higher way of life (Col. 3:1). However, in the state of mind in which the Jews were then found, it was impossible for them to do this, and therefore he said, "Where I go, you cannot come" (see also Jn. 7:34).

The Jews, however, failed completely to understand what he meant.

"Will he commit suicide?" they asked among themselves. "What does he mean by saying, 'Where I go you cannot come!'"

To the Jews there was no worse death than suicide. Tradition plunged self-murderers into the deepest hell (see Jos. *Bell*, 3:14), and the Jews wondered whether Jesus meant that he was about to destroy himself. Perhaps they thought that the constant antagonism and pressure of his enemies had caused him to become unhinged in mind.

**"You Are  
From Beneath"**

But Jesus answered: "You are from beneath; I am from above: you are of this world; I am not of this world. It is for this reason that I declared unto you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe

not that I am he, you shall die in your sins!”

Jesus had earlier taught Nicodemus that a man must be “born from above” if he would discern the things of the kingdom of God (see Jn. 3:3, mg). Now he was teaching the Jews that same truth. They must bring God into their lives, and allow themselves to be moved by His Truth, if they would be saved. If they did this, it would induce them to understand that Jesus was the Messiah, and cause them to seek to him for salvation. But they failed to comprehend this, for they were from “beneath,” in that, the wisdom and understanding they manifested was fleshly and earthy (Jas. 3:14-17), whereas that which he revealed was heavenly and spiritual, being derived from divine revelation. If they would be his disciples they must be begotten from above by the Word of Truth (see 1Pet. 1:23), and separate themselves from the course of this evil world. Jesus’ true disciples did that, and were acknowledged by him as being “not of this world” (Jn. 15:19; 17:6).

But the people, absorbed with the things of this world, found it increasingly difficult to understand what he meant.

“Who are you?” they asked.

“I told you this at the beginning,”\* replied Jesus. “I have many things to say and to judge [or blame] of you: but He that sent me is true: and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him.”

This statement was entirely beyond their comprehension. They simply could not understand that he was speaking to them of the Father in heaven, and claiming that all that he was, did or said stemmed from Him, and that therefore he was God manifest in the flesh (Mat. 1:23; 1Tim. 3:16). They looked at him in puzzled silence, a silence that Jesus broke with words of solemn portent, for he could discern that their failure to understand this doctrine of God-manifestation would lead to but one end ultimately — their rejection of him, and his crucifixion. So he continued:

“When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I am he [i.e., the Light of the World, the Son of God, the manifestation of Yahweh], and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; inasmuch as I do always those things that please Him.”

The Greek word rendered “for” in this declaration of the Lord (Jn. 8:29) signifies that which rests upon an obvious fact, so that we have rendered it “inasmuch as.” Jesus stated that his righteous character testified to the indwelling presence of the Father.

And the people were impressed by his words. They did not know

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\* He had claimed to be the “Light of the world,” the manifestation of the Father. As he was the personification of divine Light, they should have hearkened unto him, and followed him.

what he meant by his reference to a “lifting up,” but they could hardly fail to be impressed with the honour he was paying the Father, declaring that all he was, came from Him. Who else but God could perform the miracles he did? Who else but Yahweh could be responsible for such perfect wisdom, such insight of knowledge and understanding as he revealed? And was not his righteous character a testimony to the indwelling influence of the Father? In Jesus they saw one who *did* the will of God perfectly, who pleased Him in all his ways, and who was a living personification of the divine Character.

Many were impressed with this personal witness. Some believed “on” him, though others merely believed him.\*

### “The Truth Can Free You!”

Jesus clearly discriminated between the different classes facing him in the court of the temple. He could tell the difference between

those who were convinced, and those who imagined that they believed, but who mistook a momentary impulse for a deep-seated conviction. Addressing these latter, he declared: “If you abide in my word, then are you my disciples in truth; and you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free!”

These words were designed to impress upon those who believed him, and who imagined that they were his disciples, as to what they must do if they would be saved. But his words only angered them. What did he mean by saying that the Truth would free them? Were they not all free men? The inference of his words irritated them.

“We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man,” they boasted, “Why do you say, You shall be made free?”

What a reply! How passion can blind men to facts! Here were Jews claiming they were never in bondage, and yet the tall Tower of Antonia, which housed the Roman Guard in Jerusalem, overshadowed the temple itself! Had they forgotten the slavery which the nation experienced in Egypt? What of the frequent periods



\*Notice John’s careful discrimination between the two classes. The R.V. renders John 8:31 as “those Jews which believed him,” in contrast to those who “believed *on* him” in v. 30. The former were only partially convinced, not fully comprehending all that he was saying and claiming. Jesus declared that he “did nothing of himself” (Jn. 8:29). Thus, all was derived from Yahweh. His words (Jn. 14:10; 7:16), deeds (Jn. 10:37-38; 14:11; 5:17), and character (Jn. 4:34, 5:30; 6:38) were all manifestations of the Father who strengthened the Son that He might be revealed in him (Isa. 11:1; Psa. 80:17). As such this constitutes the impress of the divine seal, revealing that he was God manifest in the flesh (Jn. 6:27).

of bondage during the period of the Judges? What happened to them when they were taken into captivity to Babylon? Of what nationality was the Governor of Jerusalem at that very moment? Those foolish, blind Jews, forgot the facts of their history, and prided themselves on a freedom they did not possess, and, in addition, completely forgot that they were naturally under bondage to the Law and to the flesh.

Jesus warned them that this attitude of mind only demonstrated that they were the slaves of sin, and as such, would be ejected from the house of God unless they sought the freedom he could provide.

“Truly, truly, I say unto you,” he replied, “Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin. And the slave abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham’s seed; but you seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and you do that which you have heard from your father!”

Those Jews who believed him had claimed that they were free, and therefore in no real need of the Messiah, but Jesus had replied that they were members of a nation that sought to kill him, and therefore were dominated by the flesh which constituted their true “father.”

“We have Abraham to our father!”

But Jesus rejected that claim. If they were true sons of Abraham, they would reveal his faith, and manifest his deeds. They did neither, and so he declared: “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. You do the deeds of your father.”

### **“You Are of the Devil!”**

With increasing indignation the Jews listened to the Lord. They were insulted by his words, and angrily replied: “We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God!”

It is true that Yahweh had proclaimed Himself to be the Father of Israel (Exo. 4:22), but that imposed a responsibility upon the people to manifest the family characteristics of Yahweh (Mal. 1:6); and this they did not. Therefore, with irrefutable logic, Jesus answered: “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. Why do you not understand my speech? only because you cannot comprehend my teaching. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you delight to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the Truth, because there is no truth in him. When anyone speaks the lie, he speaks out of his own heart: for he is a liar, and the father of it. But because I tell you the truth, you believe me not.



Which of you can convict me of sin? But if I proclaim truth, why do you not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (Jn. 8:42-47).

The Jews did not love God because they did not love His Son. They did not love His Son because they did not comprehend his teaching. They could not comprehend his teaching because they were dominated by the flesh to the exclusion of the Truth. In fact, they were the "seed of the serpent" (Gen. 3:15; Mat. 23:33). The serpent, in Eden, became a murderer through the lie it propounded to Eve, which resulted in them eating of the forbidden fruit, and coming under the domination of sin and death (Rom. 5:12). Since then, sin's flesh has dominated mankind, causing men to repeat the original lie in a different form. That is what Jesus meant by the words recorded in John 8:44. There is no word in the Greek for "he," so that it can read: "When anyone speaketh the lie." Thus the Lord made reference to those who repeat the lie taught at the beginning. What lie is that? It is the rejection of God's Word. When anyone does that he speaks "out of (Gr.: *ek*) his own" fleshly heart, and not according to Truth, and in doing so, reveals himself to be a true son of his father, the flesh.

On the other hand, none could convict the Lord Jesus of sin, even though he possessed the same nature as all mankind. Why was that? Because he was a true son of God, and God dwelt in him. The Jews, therefore, constituted the seed of the serpent, whilst he was the seed of the woman (i.e., son of God), and there was enmity between them, as it was predicted there would be (Gen. 3:15), so that they refused to heed his words.

By now the Jews had become completely impatient with him. Angriily they derided him as an enemy of the State and a madman. "Did we not say truly that you are a Samaritan, and have a demon?" they shouted.

To claim that a person was possessed "of a devil" (demon), was the current way of saying that he was mad. This was a charge that the relations of the Lord had thrown against him on an earlier occasion (Mat. 12:46; Mk. 3:31; Lk. 8:19; Jn. 7:3, 5), so that it is little wonder that the ignorant crowd did likewise.

But why call him a Samaritan? Because Samaritans were enemies of Israel, and the Jews doubtless considered the Lord to be unpatriotic, or at least unsympathetic, to their national interests. Perhaps, also, they had heard of his earlier association with the Samaritans to whom he had preached the Truth.

Be that as it may, the charge of being a Samaritan did not concern him, so he did not even trouble to answer it, but the oft-repeated charge of being mad reflected on His Father, and the glorious gospel he was proclaiming, and therefore demanded that he refute it.

"I have not a demon," declared Jesus, "but I honour my Father,

though you dishonour me. I do not seek mine own glory; there is One that seeks for His glory to be manifested, and will judge those who refute to do so! Truly, truly, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see\* death!"

**"Before Abraham Was, I Am!"**

With growing indignation and hatred the Jews listened to the Lord. Who did he think he was? Did he imagine that he was greater than their father Abraham? They pounced on the final statement of the Lord, and distorting what he said, tried to ridicule him.

"Now we know you are mad," they declared. "Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and you say, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Are you greater than our father Abraham who is dead? Remember, also, that the prophets are dead! Whom do you consider yourself to be?"

Whom did Jesus consider himself to be? Let the Jews themselves answer that question, for did not the very miracles he performed testify as to who he was? Did not God honour him by manifesting such power through him? Therefore, Jesus answered: "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honours me; of whom you say, that He is your God. But you do not know Him, though I know him. And if I should say, I know Him not, I would be a liar like you! But I do know Him, and I keep His commands. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad!"

Here was an amazing statement, and one the Jews failed to comprehend. How did Abraham see the day of the Lord and be glad? Only in faith. As Paul later wrote, he, with others "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off..." (Heb. 11:13).

The day to which the Lord made reference, is the future day of glory, when Abraham will be raised from the dead, to see universal honour paid to the Lord Jesus, his glorious Son (see Lk. 13:28-29). This will be the day that will make that grand man of faith "glad" — not that dark day of crime, 2000 years ago, when the faithless nation that sprung from this faithful man, crucified its Messiah. Abraham's spiritual vision saw into the future, and rejoiced in all that he saw. He himself, declared: "In the Mount of Yahweh it shall be seen" (Gen. 22:14), anticipating the fulfilment of his hopes.

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\* The Greek word rendered "see" (*theoreo*), signifies to "view with attention, to studiously consider." The person who keeps the sayings of Jesus will not be concerned with the fact of death, will not view it with attention as the end of all hope, but will look beyond it to the glory ultimately to be revealed. The words of Jesus are literally rendered: "shall certainly not behold death forever." The Jews misrepresented the Lord in their answer, and claimed that he said that his disciples shall never "taste" of death (v. 52). This is not the case, however, and Jesus did not say what they declared he did.

But now the Lord was subjected to scorn, and ridiculed.

“You are not yet 50 years old, and have you seen Abraham?” the Jews mockingly enquired. It is a testimony to the manner in which this young man of 33 had aged with the cares laid upon him that they imagined that he could be fifty years of age. With dignity the Lord answered: “Truly, truly, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am!”

This was the last straw as far as the Jews were concerned. Mad with rage, completely misunderstanding his meaning, they took up stones to cast at him. These were possibly some of the material then lying about in connection with the work of restoration of the temple which was still proceeding. But the Jews did not consider the sanctity of the place or the person. They were determined he must die, and tried to get him into a corner where they might stone him to death. But the Lord “hid himself,” probably in the crowd, and passing through the midst of them, left the temple for the time being.

***Was Jesus both divine and human?***

*He was human as to the substance of which he was made; but divine as to the source from whence he came; the Spirit, of which he derived his wisdom; and the pattern of the character which he possessed (See Heb. 2:13; Jn. 6:38; Lk. 2:40; Jn. 1:14).*

**What Did Jesus Mean?**

The words of Jesus were misunderstood by the Jews when he uttered them, and have been misunderstood since. Many have imagined that he was using the divine Name of God, applying it to himself, and claim that this is evidence of the theory of the Trinity.

That is not so, however, for the divine name is really *Yahweh*, “I Will Be,” and not “I Am” as rendered in the A.V. of the Bible. Moreover, that divine Name was not given until after the time of Abraham (Exo. 6:1-3), whereas the Lord declared: “*Before Abraham was, I am.*”

The words “I am,” are a translation of the Greek *eimi* which is translated, “I am he,” in Jn. 8:24, 28. In Jn. 9:9, 22, 35; 8:37; 10:24-25, “I am he” signifies “I am Christ.” Christ’s statement was made on the background of Jewish disputation as to who he was. This disputation commenced when the Lord was faced by a tempter in the wilderness of Judea with the challenge: “If thou be the Son of God...” and continued until the Lord was later confronted by the high priest at his trial. Some claimed that no one would know the paternity of Christ (Jn. 7:27), and therefore Jesus (whom they claimed to be the son of Joseph) could obviously not be the Messiah. Others drew attention to the fact that the Christ is the son of David, and Jesus was a descendant of David (Jn. 7:42-43). In John 8:12, Jesus himself claimed that he was the manifestation of *Yahweh*, and therefore the

Son of God in contrast to the Jews who rested on the fact that they were sons of Abraham! He was greater than Abraham therefore, for he was from the beginning. In what sense can this be said? In the sense in which Jesus claimed it when he said: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (v. 56), that is, in the sense of promise. The Lord's place in the divine programme antedated that of Abraham for he was "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1Pet. 1:20).

Notice that Jesus did not say: "Before Abraham was, I was;" but, "Before Abraham was, I am." He is the manifestation of He who was before Abraham, for "God was manifested in the flesh" (1Tim. 3:16; 2Cor. 5:19). Jesus spoke the words of God with His full authority and identification (Jn. 3:34; 14:7-9), for in all things he was and is at one with the Father.

In all this discourse with the Jews, the Lord Jesus exercised the greatest patience. He never descended to reviling, but with dignity set forth the Truth in direct and powerful fashion. Thus the wonderful words of 1Peter 2:22-23, in which the example of Jesus is mentioned, seems to be a comment on this very discourse in the temple area.

## A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

### BARTHOLOMEW, THE GUILLESS

Bartholomew signifies *Son of Tolmai*, and is not really a name but a patronymic. It appears only in lists of the apostles (Mat. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:14; Acts 1:13) whereas the name of Nathanael is not given therein. It is obvious, therefore, that Bartholomew and Nathanael are one and the same; the former representing his family name, and the latter being his personal name.

Nathanael means *The Gift of God*, and references to him under this name are found only in John's record (ch. 1:45-49; 21:2). Jesus described him as a genuine Israelite in whom there was no guile (Jn. 1:47). He owed his introduction to Jesus to his friend Philip, but required personal proof before he would accept him as the Messiah. Nathanael was a student of the Word, and with Philip was waiting for the Messiah, so that he had his hopes realised in a most unexpected manner, and he found the Christ in a place he little expected would reveal him (Jn. 1:45-46). His first reaction had been: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But when Philip invited him to "Come and see," Nathanael went with his friend to be instantly convinced of the claims of Jesus, and to acknowledge that he was both Son of God and King of Israel.

Nathanael, therefore, was prepared to submit to evidence, and his faith pleased the Master, and secured for him the promise of further blessings to come (Jn. 1:50-51).

Thus the guileless Bartholomew, or Nathanael, reveals several traits we need to emulate:

- *He was a student of the Word of God.*
- *He was waiting for the manifestation of Christ.*
- *He was prepared to hearken to the evidence concerning Christ, and carefully weighed it.*
- *He accepted the sure test of Truth and the sure cure of prejudice.*
- *His faith rejoiced the Lord Jesus, and secured for him the promise of greater blessings to come (Jn. 1:50-51).*

### BARTIMAEUS, THE PERSISTENT

His name means *Son of Timaeus* or the *Unclean* or *Defiled*. He was one of the two blind beggars that Jesus healed as he was leaving Jericho (Mk. 10:46; Mat. 20:29-34), and he evidently acted as the spokesman for them both (Mat. 20:30).

His persistence was rewarded, for though at first Jesus took no heed of his cry for help, his continual plea finally brought response. So completely did the Lord ignore him when he commenced to call, that the people rebuked Bartimaeus, calling upon him to hold his peace. He refused to do so, however, and made public his need and his confession of faith, by repeatedly crying: "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." Thus the *Son of the Beloved* was appealed to by the *Son of the Defiled*, and the appeal was not in vain.

It is significant, however, that Jesus made Bartimaeus stumble across to where he was standing (Mk. 10:49), rather than himself walk over to

the blind man. It teaches that personal effort is necessary to obtain the benefits of divine grace. A valuable lesson was thus taught the apostles who were dramatically shown the power of persistent prayer, and the need of personal effort. Bartimaeus had a great need, and therefore was more persistent in calling for relief. Let us recognise our true needs, and seek that strength that will be granted unto us if we exercise the privilege of prayer, aided by personal effort (Phil. 4:13).

### **BOANERGES, THE ANGRY**

This was the name that Jesus gave to James and John on account of their impetuosity (Mk. 3:17). The name means *Sons of Thunder*, or of *Rage*. These *Sons of Thunder* desired to shoot out lightning against the churlish Samaritans who refused hospitality to Christ (Lk. 9:54-55), and were rebuked because they did not realise that the time of such judgment had not then come. They finally learned the lesson that Jesus sought to impress upon them, so that some of the most beautiful words in exposition of divine love were later penned by John, one of the erstwhile "sons of thunder." Let us learn the same lesson, and discriminate wisely in our actions and language in relation to the things of God.

### **CEPHAS, THE STONE**

Cephas signifies rock or stone, and is the Aramaic form of Peter, the surname given to Simon (John 1:42).

### **CLEOPAS, THE DOUBTFUL**

His name means "the glory," and a great privilege was granted him, for he was one of the disciples on the way to Emmaus to whom the risen Christ appeared and expounded the Scriptures (Luke 24:18). Yet we know so little about him that his true identity is in doubt. Some think that he was Peter, and that Cleopas is a variation for Cephas. Others identify him with Cleophas, the husband of one of the Marys (John 19:25). In that case, it is likely that he was the same person as Alphaeus (Mat. 27:54; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15).

### **CYRENIUS — THE CONTROVERSIAL**

Cyrenius (whose full name was *Publius Sulpicius Quirinius*) is mentioned in Luke 2:2 as being Governor of Syria when the census was conducted that sent Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem at which time Jesus was born. He was a favourite with Tiberius, and on his death, AD21, he was buried with public honors by the Senate at the request of the Emperor.

However, historical records indicate that Cyrenius was made Governor in Syria in the year AD6 and it was therefore claimed that Luke had made a mistake in the statement contained in Luke 2:2, or else some corruption had entered the text. The Governor of Syria at the birth of Christ was said to have been Sentius Saturnius. Further investigation however, has indicated that Luke was correct, and that Cyrenius was probably twice Governor of Syria, and "by very striking and satisfactory arguments," the date of his first appointment is given as from BC4 to AD1. (See Unger's Bible Dictionary).

## Chapter 9

### CURING THE MAN BORN BLIND (John 9)

*The Gospel of John records eight outstanding “miracles” of the Lord, described as “signs” (Gk: semeion), which tell in sequence the purpose of Yahweh through His Son. We have listed these “signs” in vol. 5, page 207, and a glance at the list will show how one “sign” builds upon another. The first three signs are outlined in volume 5, and the next two are described in volume 6, pages 61, 69 and 205. They are as follows—*

1. *WATER INTO WINE (Jn. 2:1-11) — Teaching that there is joy in the service of the Lord incidental to accepting the invitation to the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:8).*

2. *THE RULER'S SON CURED (Jn. 4:46-50) — Showing that Christ alone can cure those who are spiritually dead.*

3. *THE IMPOTENT MAN MADE STRONG (Jn. 5:1-15) — Revealing that Christ will strengthen those who recognise their helplessness and respond to his offer to help.*

4. *FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND (Jn. 6:1-14) — Demonstrating the ability of the Lord to nourish his followers with spiritual food sufficient for their needs.*

5. *CALMING THE STORMY SEA (Jn. 6:15-21) — Manifesting the need of faith to rise above all the storms of life.*

6. *CURING THE MAN BORN BLIND (Jn. 9:1-38) — Pointing to the way in which Christ can open our eyes to the richness of the inheritance in him.*

*Notice the gradation of ideas expressed in these miracles that John selected as outstanding signs. **First:** the invitation to the marriage supper; **second:** elevation from the bed of death (cf. Col. 3:1); **third:** strengthened to walk firmly before him; **fourth:** provided with nourishing, sustaining food; **fifth:** cared for amid the storms of life; **sixth:** eyes opened to the richness of inheritance in the Truth.*

*The miracles of Christ were designed to teach important principles of Truth, and were not merely done to demonstrate his power to cure physical ills.*

**L**EAVING the temple, with its angry, vengeful worshippers, the Lord, accompanied by his disciples, passed out into one of the streets of Jerusalem.

They came upon a blind man seated by the roadside, begging for alms from the passers-by. He was well-known to the people, for he had been seen in that position day after day, for many years. They

knew that he had been born blind, doomed from childhood to a life of darkness. But now they had a question to put to the Master.

“Rabbi,” they said, addressing Jesus, “who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?”

It was a question born of error and ignorance.

### **Why Was He Born Blind?**

His pathetic appearance aroused the interest and curiosity of the Lord’s disciples. Many Jews then imagined (as many Gentiles do today) that a person’s suffering is a sign of personal sin committed. In their question, therefore, those with Jesus (the description “disciples” not only includes the twelve, but also those following him, as in Jn. 6:66; 7:31) were repeating a prevailing superstition, and so enquired whether the blind man was so afflicted because of some sin in his parents, or he himself, had committed.

But how could they imagine that it was possible for the man, even from birth, to suffer for his own sin?

However, at that time, the false doctrine of the transmigration of souls, which was Egyptian in its origin, had been incorporated into Grecian mythology, and superimposed upon Jewish thought and belief, as the historian Josephus shows. The erroneous teaching of the immortality of the soul had become one of the “traditions of the Pharisees” against which both Christ and Paul warned (Mat. 16:6, 12; Tit. 1:14). Consequently, the superstition existed among the Jews, that sins committed in “earlier existence” were atoned for by punishment when the “soul” was supposedly reborn in a new body!

The doctrine is completely wrong and dishonouring to God, and the disciples who posed the question were voicing a current pagan superstition which the Lord quickly refuted. “Neither this man has sinned, nor his parents, that he should be so born,” he replied, “but that the works of God should be manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world!”

The “day” of which he spoke was the period during which he, the true Light of the Jewish world, shone in the midst of prevailing spiritual darkness.

It was the time of Jerusalem’s merciful visitation (Lk. 19:42-44), and therefore for Jewry “the day of opportunity” (2Cor. 6:2). But the prophets had predicted that “the sun would go down over the prophets, and the day would be dark over them” (Mic. 3:6).

That time of complete darkness for Jewry was shortly to come. The nation would then be as blind as the man sitting by the wayside begging!



## The Amazing and Significant Cure

The brief discussion between the disciples and the Lord took place in front of the blind man who must have listened with amazement at what he heard. Such terms as “day,” and “sun,” and “light,” were merely words to him; he had never experienced what they meant in visible reality.

Then Jesus did a strange thing.

He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointing the eyes of the blind man with the clay, told him to go and wash in the pool called Siloam.

It was a strange way to effect the cure, and yet a most significant way. The spittle coming from the mouth of the Lord can well represent the teaching that he spoke, whereas the clay can represent the flesh, which is described as earthy (1Cor. 15:48). As dirt mixed with spittle becomes easily pliable, so does flesh when mixed with the voice of Truth. Figuratively, therefore, Jesus had anointed the eyes of the blind man with such eyesalve as only he can provide (see Rev. 3:18).

But why then wash in the Pool of Siloam?

The water of this pool would wash away the last traces of the clay, and cause the man to see clearly! The water of Siloam represents divine teaching, and points to the need of such for the purposes of cleansing (Psa. 119:9). It opens our eyes to what is required, and reveals the need for baptism to “wash away sins” in forgiveness (Acts 22:16).

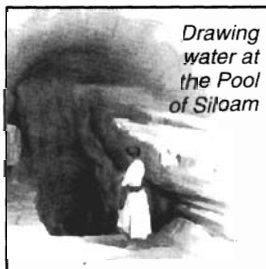
Jesus selected the pool of Siloam, not because there was any virtue in the water as such, but because this pool represented something that was important and significant to thoughtful Israelites.

The name Siloam means *Sent*, and the pool was thus described because its waters flowed out from under the temple eastward into the city.

Jesus thus made a play on words, for to the disciples he had said: “I must work the works of Him that *sent* me;” and to the man he had commanded: “Go wash in the pool called *Sent*.”

The water of this pool flowing from the most Holy Place in Jerusalem out to the people, fittingly symbolised the teaching of Jesus which was as a well of water that proceeded from the Father to the people (Jn. 7:16, 38; 14:10). This teaching is capable of giving true sight to the spiritually blind, and of washing away all semblance of the “clay” of fleshly thinking.

Jesus, as the bearer of this divine truth, had been “*sent*” with the authority of the Father, as John Baptist had likewise been *sent* (Jn.



1:6). As such, he was an apostle (“one sent”) of Yahweh, bearing a divine commission (Heb. 3:1).

The blind man showed remarkable faith in the Lord’s words, for he immediately obeyed his injunction, and proceeded to the Pool of Siloam to wash his eyes. What caused him to do this? His subsequent conduct reveals that he was a man of outstanding discernment in spite of his physical deformity; but it may also have been possible, though we are not told, that when the Lord anointed his eyes with the wet clay, he began with difficulty to see. Certainly, once he had washed in Siloam, he saw clearly.

### **Astonishment of the Blind Man’s Friends**

Completely cured, the blind man made his way joyfully home. He was met by some of his neighbors who viewed him with astonishment. They knew him only as the beggar blind from birth, but now they saw that he could see.

At first some doubted whether it was really the same man.

“Is not this he that sat and begged?” they asked.

“Indeed it is so!” was the reply of a few.

“He only resembles him,” rejoined others.

But the blind man joyfully declared: “I am he!”

“How were your eyes opened?” some asked him.

“A man called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight!”

His friends and neighbors



were dumbfounded. Though they did not know it, the blind man was actually preaching to them the gospel!

They could not dispute the evidence before them; yet the explanation was so astounding as to be unbelievable.

“Where is Jesus?” they asked.

“I do not know,” answered the cured blind man.

But such an amazing cure had to be further investigated. It indi-

cated that a person of unquestionable power and authority was in their midst. He must be a prophet. Perhaps he was the long-expected Messiah! The people felt that the matter should be reported to the leaders of the nation.

### **Antagonism of the Pharisees**

Recognising how deep-seated had been the affliction of the former blind man, his neighbours prevailed upon him to go with them to the Pharisees and reveal how the amazing miracle had been performed.

The cured blind man was only too delighted to do so, and to speak about the power of Jesus. How astonished and disappointed he must have been to observe with what hostility his news was received! His affliction had shut out from his sight the jealous antagonism of the Pharisees to the work and influence of Jesus. He saw it now for the first time, and wondered at the extent of bitterness such a miracle of mercy could evoke!

The Pharisees recognised that a miracle of such magnitude testified to the superhuman power of Jesus, and comprised a seal of his authority. Only a man come from God could do such miracles, as one of their number had already declared (Jn. 3:2). But their sole ambition was how they could counteract such a testimony. They cast about for a way in which they could minimise its significance, and with pleasure learned that it had been performed on the sabbath day. This gave them opportunity to attack Jesus. Consumed only by personal hatred of him, they did not consider that the miracle had been performed by God's power, and that in standing in judgment on Jesus, they did so on the Father.

In a spiritual sense, their eyes were as tightly closed against the light as had been those of the blind beggar against the natural light of the sun. To gain time, and to think out the best way in which to destroy Christ's influence, they *called upon the blind man to repeat to them what had happened.*

Again the amazing story was told. "He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see!"

It was as simple as that!

It was just as simple as it is for men to open their eyes to the truths of God's Word, and find forgiveness of sins through baptism.

But the fact that the miracle had been performed on the sabbath gave the Pharisees the opportunity of accusing Jesus of wrong-doing. "This man is not of God," they contemptuously exclaimed, "for he does not keep the sabbath day!"

But even the Pharisees were not all agreed upon that, for there were fair-minded men among their ranks, like Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, who were not prepared to remain silent in the face of

such obvious injustice.

“How can a man that is a sinner do such a miracle?” they asked.

There was no answer to that statement!

Some, therefore, believed, and others continued to mock. In view of their divided attitude, the Pharisees recalled the man once more.

“What do you say of the one who caused you to see?” they enquired.

The answer was simple, direct, and without doubt. “He is a prophet,” declared the once-blind man.

The answer angered the Pharisees who opposed Jesus. They taught that prophets, like priests, were exempt from the sabbath law when engaged upon the work of God (Mat. 12:5), so that this declaration completely annulled any charge of sabbath-breaking such as they had suggested.

### **The Fears Of The Blind Man's Parents**

The antagonistic Pharisees realised that if such a notable miracle could be proved, their opposition to Jesus could not be rightly sustained. There was but one thing they could do: cast doubts on the truth of the man's account.

So they called before them the parents of the formerly blind man, to warn them that it was important to learn the truth of the matter, because those who claimed that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. They formally put their question to them: “Is this your son who was born blind? If so, how is it that he now can see?”

But the parents of the man were cowards. They feared the threat of the Pharisees that any who confessed that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. They did not want that to happen to them, and therefore evaded the question.

“We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind,” they answered. “But by what means he now sees, we know not; or who has opened his eyes, we know not! he is of age; ask him: he can speak for himself!”

### **The Courageous Testimony Of The Blind Man**

Once again the blind man was called before the council, and in the name of God, the Pharisees wickedly tried to put the answer they wanted into his mouth. “Give God the praise,” they declared. “We know that this man is a sinner.” In so speaking, they claimed that God would be praised if the man also confessed that Jesus was a sinner, and that he did not cure him through God's power.

But unlike his parents, the blind man was no coward. Moreover, he was equal to the test imposed on him, and more than a match for the Pharisees with all their so-called learning and authority. Boldly he

answered them: "Whether he be a sinner I know not:\* one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

There was no answer to this statement, but to gain time, they asked the cured man to tell them how his sight was restored. But the man was becoming impatient. He could detect their hypocrisy, and could sense their unfair antagonism. He knew that they were not really interested in the cure, but only interested in convicting his benefactor in some way. So he replied ironically: "I have told you already, and you did not take heed. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you desire to become his disciples?"

The Pharisees looked upon the man before them with loathing. How dare this poverty-stricken wretch stand in judgment on them! They knew him as a blind beggar sitting in the dust, to whom at times they may have flung a few miserable coins! What right had he thus to speak to them, they who were the leaders, the aristocracy of Israel? They reviled and taunted him (but see Mat. 5:11).

"You are his disciple," they shouted at him. "But we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; but we do not know from whence this fellow is!"

The cured man looked at them with contempt. He felt ashamed at the hypocrisy that these leaders of the nation revealed. He could see that they were blundering around in spiritual darkness, far more intense than the physical darkness from which he recently had been delivered. Not only so, but their darkness was self-inflicted. Sarcas-  
tically he addressed them: "Why, this is a marvellous thing, that you know not from whence he is, and yet he has opened mine eyes. Now we know that God does not hear unbelievers,\* but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He heareth. Since the world began, was it ever heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind? If this man were not of God, he could do nothing!"

It was a brilliant and devastating reply from a man, formerly blind from birth, who had never had the opportunity available to the Pharisees, of studying the Scriptures for himself. It revealed that he had occupied the hours of darkness, not in wasteful self-pity, but in meditation upon the things of God that he had heard. In his blindness

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\* The words "or no," in the A.V. (Jn. 9:25) should be eliminated as in the R.V. The man was not in any doubt as to whether Jesus was a sinner; he knew that he was not, as is evident in v. 31.

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\* A "sinner" in the terms of the conversation signifies an unbeliever (see also Gal. 2:15). The world is divided between saints (believers) and sinners (unbelievers), all of whom sin, but the former only are heard of God. We have therefore rendered the expression of the blind man as "unbelievers." The Pharisees claimed Jesus was a sinner, or unbeliever, because he did not keep the sabbath, suggesting that this indicated a lack of belief in it.

he “saw” more than those about him with all their sight! The Pharisees, though they could see, had allowed the lust of the eyes to dominate them to the exclusion of the things of God, whilst he, cut off from the privilege of sight, had made the most of his limited ability in devotional exercise toward Yahweh.

The Pharisees now were filled with rage against the man before them. It was degrading to their towering ego to be so addressed, particularly when the truth of what the man said was so apparent. They had no effective argument to refute what he said, and therefore descended to abuse. Angrily they retorted: “You were altogether born in sins, and do you think to teach us?”

They ordered that he be excommunicated from the synagogue, and dismissed him from their presence. Saddened, he left the council, deeply hurt at the shocking lack of spiritual discernment on the part of the leaders of the people, and at their haughty, hypocritical bearing.

**The Lord Ministers to the Blind Man’s Need** Lonely and disconsolate, the healed blind man made his way through the city, condemned to be shunned by his fellows, as one who was not fit to join with them in worship. But the Lord heard of his plight, and sought him out.

“Do you believe in the Son of God?” he asked him when he had found him.

“Who is he, Lord, that I might believe in him?” enquired the healed man, grateful for what Jesus had done for him, and recognising that he spoke with the authority of God.

“You have both seen him, and it is he who now speaks with you,” declared the Lord.

The man had no doubt about the matter. “Lord, I believe!” was the fervent confession of faith that followed.

Jesus had told his disciples that this man had been born blind that “the works of God should be made manifest in him.” He had certainly manifested the works of God by his conduct, for he was:

- Obedient to the decree of the Lord;
- Faithful in testifying to others of him;
- Courageous in his witness to truth;
- Submissive to the instruction of the Lord;
- Earnest in his devotion.

In this miracle, as a sign, he represents those who are prepared to open their eyes to divine truth. Man is naturally born blind in a spiritual sense, and must be subjected to the illumination that the Truth alone can provide. God has provided us with the means of seeing truth, and He has provided the Truth as well. But we must use that ability of discernment that He has provided us, and use it to His glory.

This the blind man did, and doubtless a wonderful future awaits him at Christ's coming.

### **The Pharisees Are Condemned**

Meanwhile, the Lord Jesus publicly testified against the Pharisees. As the Light of the world, he made manifest the hidden things of darkness, and showed how just was the judgment about to fall on guilty Judea. With this further evidence of Pharisaic hypocrisy brought to light, he openly indicted the Pharisees, some of whom were present when he met the cured blind man. He warned them: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind!"

Those Pharisees present felt that this was a reflection upon them.

"Are we blind also?" they enquired.

"If you were blind [i.e., ignorant], you would have no sin [that is, your sin would be excusable]," replied the Lord. "But because you say, 'We see!' your sin is obvious!"



## Chapter 10

### THE ALLEGORY OF THE DOOR — THE GOOD SHEPHERD (John 10:1-9)

*Arising out of the action of the Pharisees in excommunicating the man Christ had healed (Jn. 9:34), Jesus publicly condemned them in two discourses which are popularly known as the parables of the Door and the Good Shepherd. They are not true parables, however, neither are they described as such. The word “parable” in John 10:6 is a translation of the Greek word “paroimia,” not “parabole” as used elsewhere. A parable is a short narrative with a hidden meaning, but this is not a narrative, rather an explanation of figures of speech, and is better described as an allegory. In the other places where “paroimia” is used it is translated as “proverb” (Jn. 16:25, 29; 2Pet. 2:22). So here we have two of the Lord’s proverbs or allegories.*

**I**N the allegory of the door (vv. 1-9), the Lord used as illustrations, the customs of his day relating to sheep-farming. They were not the same as those of modern times, particularly in Australia. In Jesus’ day, shepherds led their sheep for shelter to a fold presided over by a porter, or guard. Presenting himself at the gate, it would be opened for the shepherd by the porter, and the sheep would enter, to mix with any other flocks that he had already taken in for shelter, for sheep were so trained in those days, that they knew the voice of their shepherd, and would answer instantly to his call.

Shepherds obviously used the gate to enter the fold, and led their sheep thereto, whereas thieves and robbers would try to get secretly into it by devious means. Their object, of course, was to rob the flock, not to protect it!



#### **The Allegory Of The Door — vv. 1-9**

Jesus’ reference in this proverb to thieves and robbers, pointed directly to the Pharisees who were destroying, instead of protecting the flock of Israel. They were not true shepherds at all. They refused to bring the sheep into the fold by the way of the door, for Jesus was the door, and they wanted only to kill him. Thus Jesus declared: “He



that entereth in by the door is a\* shepherd of the sheep” (Jn. 10:2).

Then, later: “I am the door of the sheep.”

A true shepherd, therefore, is one who leads the sheep to the Lord Jesus. The Pharisees were not doing this, and therefore revealed that they were thieves and robbers, only out to spoil the flock!

To a true shepherd, the porter will open the door of the fold (v. 3).

If Jesus is the “door,” who is the “porter” that opens it?

The answer is: Yahweh. “We have an example of this in Acts 14:27: “When they [*Paul and Barnabas*] were come, and had gathered the ecclesia together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”

As shepherds under the authority of their employer, Paul and Barnabas had led men to Christ, and God had opened the way, as the “Porter,” for them to be incorporated within the fold of His ecclesia.

The point of Christ’s allegory is that true shepherding consists not in merely leading men, but leading them to Christ. In the world, these shepherds led believers to the point of baptism; within the ecclesia their leadership must consist in displaying Christ’s teaching and character before those who have accepted him, that they might follow the example thus presented.

The “sheep” come to trust those leaders who so faithfully guide them, and “knowing their voice,” will willingly follow their lead. They impose implicit confidence in them; but the sheep do not respond to those whose voice they do not recognise.

Thus in his allegory, the Lord taught the need of those who would be shepherds, to come to know intimately the sheep in their charge, and to so care for them that they, in turn, come to know the shepherds.

The Pharisees who had assumed leadership over Yahweh’s flock did not answer to the character of shepherds. They were but ‘thieves and robbers,’ as the Lord declared.

### **The Allegory of the Good Shepherd** — vv. 10-18

To press home the responsibility that leaders should assume, and to show how remiss the Jewish elders were in that regard, the Lord continued with an allegory of the good

shepherd. To understand his teaching better, we must consider what was required of a shepherd.

A shepherd, in the days of the Lord, had to endure much for the sheep, living frugally, accustoming himself to hardship, braving all extremes of climate, giving



\* This is how this verse should read (see *Diaglott*), not according to the A.V. “the shepherd.” Jesus was not at this time referring to himself, but to all who constituted shepherds of the flock (1Pet. 5:3-4).

first care to the flock. He knew little of the joys of companionship, except for the animals about him which he guarded resolutely in time of danger.

These features illustrate the attitude of the Lord Jesus in the work that His Father sent him to do.

As for sheep, they are noted for their affection (2Sam. 12:3), docility, meekness and submissiveness (Isa. 53:7; Jer. 11:19), their helplessness when left to themselves (Isa. 53:7; Jer. 11:19), and their need of guidance (Num. 27:17; Eze. 34:5; Mat. 26:31). Sheep were only safe when they listened to the voice of the shepherd, and when they recognised and followed that voice (Psa. 77:20; Isa. 63:11-12; Psa. 80:1; Isa. 40:11). Straying sheep wander into great danger, for they have no defence against the wild beasts that attack them.

In *The Land And The Book*, Thompson gives a graphic account of the work of the shepherds in the Middle East, which fittingly illustrate the words of the Lord Jesus in his allegory of the Good Shepherd. He writes: *"The shepherd goes before [his sheep] not merely to point the way, but to see that it is practicable and safe. He is armed in order to defend his charge; and in this he is very courageous... Some sheep always keep near the shepherd, and are his special favorites. Each of them has a name to which it answers joyfully; and the kind shepherd is ever distributing to such choice portions which he gathers for that purpose. These are the contented and happy ones. They are in no danger of getting lost or into mischief, nor do wild beasts nor thieves come near them. The great body, however, are mere worldlings, intent upon their own pleasure or selfish interests. They run from bush to bush, searching for varieties or delicacies, and only now or then lift their heads to see where the shepherd is, or, rather, where the general flock is, lest they get so far away as to occasion remark in their little community, or rebuke from their keeper. Others, again, are restless or discontented, jumping into everybody's field, climbing into bushes. These cause the good shepherd incessant trouble. Then there are others, incurably reckless, who stray far away and are utterly lost. I have repeatedly seen a silly goat or sheep running hither and thither, and bleating piteously after the lost flock, only to call forth from their dens the beasts of prey, or to bring up the lurking thief, who quickly quietens its cries in death."*

It is said, that sheep know the voice of their shepherd so well, that even though two flocks may be mixed together, the individual sheep will respond to the voice of their shepherd, and separating themselves from the rest, will make their way to the side of the shepherd when he calls them by name.

All these characteristics of shepherds and sheep help to give point and significance to Christ's allegory.

But why did Jesus style himself the "good shepherd"?

The word “good” is a translation of a Greek word *kalos*, which signifies that which is in complete harmonious perfection with what is required; that which is well adapted to the need of the circumstances.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd because he provides every need and requirement of a shepherd who cares for his sheep. We can follow him with complete assurance that he will lead us through death to glorious eternal life beyond, by a resurrection such as he experienced.

As the Good Shepherd, he fulfilled the prophecy of Ezekiel 34:23, “I will set up one shepherd over them [*Israel*], and he shall feed them, even My servant David (better rendered: “My servant, the Beloved”); he shall feed them... That they may have more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10).

He was a “good” shepherd because he was able to accomplish that which he came to do. On the other hand, he decried the Pharisees as thieves prepared to kill and destroy, because they had sought to crush the influence of the man born blind by casting him out of the synagogue, and they also had it in their hearts to kill the Lord Jesus through envy.

He described them as “hirelings,” men interested in their own material profit, and indifferent to the welfare of the flock. They assumed the position of shepherds without accepting any of its responsibilities. In the face of danger they would desert the sheep, leaving them to their fate, whilst they fled to secure their own safety!

On the other hand, as the good shepherd, he not only knows his sheep, and is known by them, but willingly laid down his life for them (Jn. 10:14-15).

Moreover, he warned them that Gentiles were about to be invited to join the flock, to the exclusion of such as they, and that together with Jewish believers, in him, they would constitute one flock and one fold. He declared: “Other sheep [i.e., Gentile “sheep”] have I, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (Jn. 10:16).

It was appropriate that Jesus should make such a declaration at that time, for as we have seen, the Feast of Tabernacles had recently concluded. During the Feast, some seventy bullocks had been offered (Num. 29:12-40), answering to both the seventy families that had gone into Egypt (Gen. 46:26), and the seventy divisions into which the nations of mankind were arranged by God (Gen. 10:1; 11:5; Deu. 32:8). The Feast of Tabernacles was also associated with the full ingathering of the harvest (Deu. 16:13-15), and in type pointed forward to the full ingathering of the Gospel harvest.

The allegory relating to the “other sheep” showed that both Jewish and Gentile “sheep” would be brought within the “one fold” by the offering he would make, and these would constitute the full ingathering.

It was also significant that shortly after this feast, and this discussion with the Jewish leaders, Jesus should send forth seventy disciples to preach in the surrounding districts (Lk. 10:1).

But by what means would his sheep be gathered into the “one flock” and “one fold”?

By the price he would pay for them!

And what was that?

The sacrifice he would offer.

So he declared: “Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (Jn. 10:17-18).

This is a most important statement, showing that Jesus willingly submitted to what his Father commanded.

His Father required that he lay down his life in such a fashion that would enable Him (the Father) to raise the Son from the dead with perfect justness.

That is what the preposition “that” in this verse signifies. It is a translation of the Greek word *hina* which signifies “to the end that,” with the emphasis on purpose, design and result. Jesus therefore taught that he would lay down his life with the purpose, design and result that he might take it up again. He had been taught that the way to eternal life was through death, and therefore he must submit to death if he wanted to live! The commandment that he received of the Father was to lay down his life in such a manner that, for God to be just, He had to raise him again from the dead (Jn. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; Rom. 3:25; Acts 2:24).

Though Jesus’ offering was a voluntary one, it was nonetheless commanded of the Father. It was voluntary inasmuch as none compelled it, but it was commanded because God required it!

Some find this confusing and contradictory. They should not do so, however. Has not God “commanded all men to repent” (Acts 17:30)? Do all men do so? Does He compel any one to do so? He does not. But those who voluntarily submit to His command, He will suitably reward. In this sense also, the Lord voluntarily submitted to his Father’s command. He did not resist it, but willingly put himself out to conform thereto.

As a result, he received “power” to take it again. This does not mean that Jesus raised himself from the dead, as some foolishly teach, but it means, as the word in the Greek clearly shows, that he had the right, or authority, to lay down his life in voluntarily submitting to death (and therefore not as an act of suicide), and he had the right to receive it again. He no more raised himself from the dead, as some teach, than he took his own life, but he could truly say of himself: “I

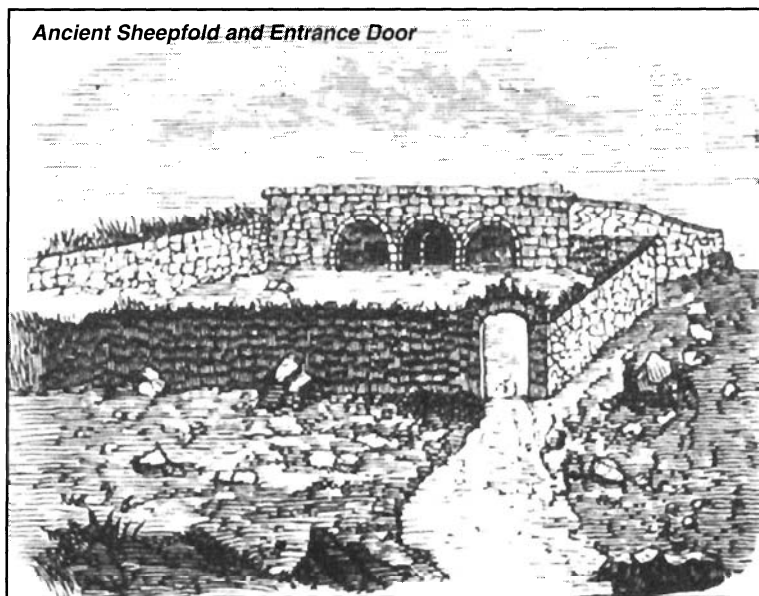
have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” His life was taken from him by others, and given back to him by his heavenly Father (see Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30).

The powerful teaching of the Lord Jesus at this time caused further division among the Pharisees (Jn. 10:19). Men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea found themselves brought increasingly under pressure, and forced into a position in which they had to declare themselves. They could appreciate the force of Jesus’ words, and were, perhaps, unwillingly coming to realise that their own teaching was at fault.

Others of their number, however, closed their eyes tightly against the Truth. Scornfully they repudiated the teaching of the Lord: “He has a demon [i.e., he is mad!],” they mocked, “Why listen to him?”

But some, like Nicodemus, were not put off by such idle words. “These are not the words of a madman!” they exclaimed. “Can such open the eyes of the blind?”

There was no answer to that statement, but still the blind among the Pharisees were not willing to open their eyes to these plain facts.



## Chapter 11

### SEVENTY PREACHERS SENT OUT

*The allegory of the Good Shepherd followed immediately after the termination of the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:37), and the next incident John records occurred at the Feast of Dedication some two months later (Jn. 10:22). At this point, Luke takes up the theme of the Lord's life, and shows how the time was occupied in the province of Judea, and about Jerusalem. This area had been largely neglected by the Lord previous to this time, but now occupied his attention. In chs. 10:1 and 13:22 Luke records the incidents of this period omitted by the other writers.*

*During the Feast of Tabernacles, seventy bullocks were offered in sacrifice, pointing to the full ingathering not only of Israel but also of the Gentiles. Jesus had hinted at this ingathering of Gentiles, when he said: "Other sheep have I, that are not of this fold..." (Jn. 10:16). Meanwhile, and in order that Judea might have the opportunity of embracing the Truth in him, he sent out seventy disciples to preach throughout the province. It was appropriate that this number should be used following the Feast of Tabernacles, for it pointed the lesson that Jewry's opportunity was fast running out.*

**A**T about this time, Jesus appointed seventy of his disciples, that they might go throughout the land to preach the gospel message to the towns and villages. Like the twelve sent previously, they were sent two by two, but, apparently, they were sent to parts that the apostles had not previously visited. The apostles had labored mainly in Galilee, but these seventy seem to have preached in the cities of Judea to the south.

They were forerunners of Christ's own preaching efforts in that part (v. 1), and he sent them out as laborers into the harvest.\*

#### **Jesus Teaches Them How To Preach — vv. 1-16**

But first he instructed them how they should go about their duties: "The harvest truly is — plentiful," he declared, "but the laborers are few; pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." They were thus first to seek God's blessing on their efforts before they were to proceed with their preaching. They were also to seek the co-operation

\* See pages 48-53, where we discussed the similar instructions given to the twelve.

of others, beseeching the Father's blessing on them likewise. There was an even greater urgency for this at that stage than when the Lord had sent the twelve out on an earlier preaching campaign, for but little time remained to his crucifixion, after which the Gospel would be preached to the Gentiles.

So seventy instead of twelve were now sent out. "Go your ways," the Lord instructed them, "Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor shoes; and salute no man by the way..."

They were to give themselves entirely to the work in hand, and not allow matters of every-day life, nor friendly association, to detain them. All this was similar to the instructions given the twelve when they were commissioned (see *Story of the Bible*, pp. 48-53), but there was a notable exception! The twelve were forbidden to go into the "way of the Gentiles" and the "cities of the Samaritans," and had to restrict their preaching efforts exclusively to Israel after the flesh. Not so the seventy! They were limited by no such restrictions. They could preach to all and sundry, both Jew and Gentile. Thus their ministry illustrated the words just previously spoken by the Lord Jesus in the allegory of the Good Shepherd, when he declared, "other sheep have I, that are not of this fold... there shall be one flock and one fold" (Jn. 10:16).

Apart from this, however, the instructions that he gave the seventy in the work of preaching were similar to those delivered unto the twelve.

They were first to offer "peace" (divine fellowship) based upon an acceptance of Truth to those in whose homes they stayed during the work of preaching (Lk. 10:5). In return, those who accepted this great

*There is an interesting parallel between the seventy preachers sent out by Jesus, and the organisation of Moses, as well as the subsequent work of preaching the Gospel.*

*Moses organised the nation under twelve leaders (Num. 13), and seventy assistants (Num. 11:16, 24), and Jesus did likewise with his followers, showing that the principle was Israelitish in character. He had his twelve apostles, to whom were promised rulership over the tribes in the Age to come (Mt. 19:28), and after they had been sent out, he sent "other seventy also" to aid in the work. The apostles were sent exclusively to Israel, and commanded to avoid the Gentiles, but no such prohibition was placed upon the seventy. The preaching of both groups foreshadowed the then future work of preaching after Christ had ascended into heaven; for the labors of the twelve were more directly concerned with Israel after the flesh, whereas those who came after, carried it into every part of the world.*

boon at the hands of Christ's qualified preachers, should supply the messengers with necessary provisions. The seventy, however, were to accept "such things as are set before you" (v. 8), without complaining no matter how modest or humble such things might be, and not seek to enrich themselves through the Truth they taught. In fact, they were giving much more than they received, for in return for the hospitality that would be offered them, they were to "heal the sick that are therein," and expound the things of the Kingdom of God (Lk. 10:9).

On the other hand, should the proclamation of the Gospel of Peace be met with hostility, they were to wipe off from their feet the very dust of such a city. This was a symbolic gesture indicating that the city was in a state of defilement because of its obstinate refusal to be cleansed by the Word of God. Thus, they were to solemnly warn the people of the consequences of such an attitude, for, "the kingdom of God is come nigh" (v. 11).

Jesus knew, and the disciples were learning, that the heart of man is hard, and that he often refuses to hearken to the message of divine goodness. Many wonderful signs had been shown in cities like Chorazin and Bethsaida, yet the people had refused to repent, leaving but one thing for God to do: judgment had to be poured out upon such places.

So the seventy were sent out with this commission, and they were told: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me!"

A terrible responsibility, therefore, rested upon those people who, seeing the signs performed by the seventy, and hearing their expositions of Scripture, they dared to reject the message of salvation presented to them. In despising such a message, they despised the words of Jesus and of God by whose authority they spoke. In consequence, divine judgment will fall on such despisers of the Word (Acts 17:30-31).

**The Seventy Return  
From Preaching**  
— vv. 17-21

In due time\* the seventy preachers returned from their mission. They were delighted with the reception they had received. They had found great power in the name of the Lord Jesus, so that even those mentally affected (those oppressed of "demons;" Lk. 10:17) had been healed and had become submissive to their teaching.

And the Lord rejoiced with them. "I beheld satan as lightning falling from heaven!" he declared.

What did he mean?

The answer is indicated by the context, for three verses earlier he had spoken of Capernaum being "exalted to heaven," by resisting his

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\* There is no indication how long they took. Luke 10:17 could be parenthetical.



teaching. The Jewish leaders, therefore, constituted the satan, or adversary, to which he referred. They were ejected from their positions of authority in AD70, when the Jewish State was overthrown; and this was typical of what will happen to Gentiles in authority today.

The power of God, manifested through His servants, will topple worldly rulers from their seats of authority and power, so that suddenly they shall be no more!

Turning now to the seventy, Jesus showed that in their preaching they had been granted special protection (Lk. 10:19), but that their rejoicing should not be in such success which was visible to all, but rather in things that were not visible as yet, and could only be perceived with the eyes of faith.

The satan — the ruling powers of the day — were to be ejected from their high positions, and the vacancy thus formed is to be filled by the Lord's servants.

**A Prayer of  
Thanksgiving  
— vv. 21-22**

As Jesus observed the enthusiastic and joyful countenances of his seventy disciples, he rejoiced with them in spirit, and poured out a prayer of thanksgiving unto the Father, in that He had revealed the things of Truth “unto babes” rather than to those who were so wise in their own conceit that they had not the humility to accept them.

These things are revealed only through the Son of God who manifested the Father unto those who were prepared to accept his testimony. In so doing, he removed the veil, or covering, of spiritual blindness so as to expose to open view what was hidden to man\* (Lk. 10:22).

He then turned, and addressed his disciples personally, impressing them with the great privileges that discipleship conferred upon them.

“Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see,” he declared. “For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.”

How true are these words! The disciples had been greatly privileged to be in the company of the Lord Jesus, and to hear his wonderful expositions of Scripture. They had seen in him the very one for whom the fathers and prophets of Israel had hoped. They, therefore, were greatly privileged.

But so are we! For today we see wonderful things also. We see the

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\* The word “reveal” (Lk. 10:22) is translated from the Greek *apokalupto*, and signifies “to remove the veil or covering, so as to expose to open view what before was hidden.” In the life and character of the Lord Jesus there was manifested the Name of the Father (Jn. 17:6) such as had never before been revealed unto man.

signs in the world that speak of Christ's second advent, and as we look into the pages of the Gospel records, we can listen to the very words that he spoke to his disciples. We can, therefore, rejoice in even greater measure, in that we see the indications of his near return about us from day to day. Let us heed the message of the times, and the words of the Lord, and, seeing in him a manifestation of the Father, strive to reflect in our lives the glorious characteristics which we behold in him, that we might be accounted as members of the Family of God.

## **A Dictionary of Personalities of The Gospels.**

### **CHUZA, THE MODEST**

Chuza is said to signify "Modest," and is described as the steward of Herod Antipas. His wife, Joanna, gave personal service to the Lord Jesus (Lk. 8:3), indicating that some even of the high officials of the land were attracted to the Lord's teaching and ministry.

Chuza is sometimes identified with the nobleman of Capernaum whose son Jesus healed (Jn. 4), and it is suggested that his wife personally ministered to Christ out of gratitude for what he had done for her son. The word "nobleman" signifies "royal officer," and thus can be identified with the steward of Herod. For further details see comments in vol. 5, pp. 266-268 on "The Nameless Nobleman."

### **GABRIEL, HONOURED MESSENGER OF YAHWEH**

Gabriel's name is compounded of the two Hebrew words, *El Gibbor* (*Warrior of God*), translated in Isaiah 9:6 as "mighty God." As such, his name is identical with one of the titles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Gabriel was sent to explain to Daniel the significance of the visions that he saw (Dan. 8:16; 9:21), in the course of which he indicated the time periods of Christ's first advent, and the work he would accomplish (Dan. 9:24-27).

Appropriately, he was given the honour of announcing to Zacharias the impending birth of John Baptist, and to Mary the impending birth of the Lord Jesus (Luke 1:11, 26). In the course of this, he described himself as one who stood "in the presence of God" (Luke 1:19). He thus occupied an honoured position in heaven, and was given the honour of announcing the greatest event of all history upon earth.

Gabriel was one of the innumerable "ministering spirits" of the heavens, sent forth "to minister for them who are heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14). As the title "archangel" indicates, and Gabriel's description of himself shows (Luke 1:19), there are gradations of rank among the angels of heaven, and it is obvious that Gabriel enjoyed a status higher than some of the others. He was given particularly important work to perform (see Dan. 10:20-21).

## Chapter 12

### THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke 10:25-27)

*The story of the Good Samaritan provides parable, precept and prophecy. It arose out of the question put to the Lord Jesus: "What shall I do to inherit Eternal Life? Whilst it reveals that there must be a practical manifestation of Truth in action, it also hints at man's natural state, and reveals the means of redemption.*

*The parable introduces us to a man who had been descending from Jerusalem, which means "Vision of Peace," to Jericho the "City of the Curse." He seems, in this story with a hidden spiritual meaning, to represent mankind which has departed far from God, and has been robbed and wounded by sin. Both priest and Levite, as representatives of the Law and Sacrifice (figurative of a deteriorated and enfeebled form of religion that has no power to save) passed him by. But one decried as a Samaritan (see Jn. 8:48), having compassion, came to his help with oil and wine (cp. Isa. 55:1). After his practical manifestation of divine kindness (Tit. 3:4), he who had been restored to health and sustained through the provision made by the Samaritan, was called upon to likewise manifest these characteristics of grace and truth in action (Jn. 1:12-16).*

*Whilst teaching these profound truths, the parable also shows that the Jewish interpretation of the Law was wrong, for according to their own traditions, love and acts of kindness had to be extended to Jews only, in spite of the Law's injunction to the contrary (Exo. 23:9; cp. Lev. 19:18 with 34; Exo. 23:4-5; Deu. 22:1-4). The Law was designed to lead Israel to Christ (Gal. 3:24), and to cause them to see in the poor and the stranger in their midst whom they were called upon to help, a picture of themselves (Rom. 7:24). Instead, their interpretation of the Law gave them a wrong conception of their own importance (Rom. 10:2-3), so that their eyes were blinded to the fact that they were as the wounded, unconscious man, perishing by the roadside!*

**S**HORTLY after the seventy had returned to him from their preaching tour, the Lord Jesus was teaching the people, when he was interrupted by a question from a man in the audience. He was a lawyer (Lk. 10:25), so styled because he was acknowledged as qualified to interpret the Law of Moses, and, in this case, one well known to the people.

This prominent lawyer took the opportunity of challenging Jesus,

hoping to embarrass him before the people.

**What Shall I Do?** “Master,” he enquired, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The question and mode of address were respectful enough, but, in fact, they were the mere veneer of politeness, designed to hide the real purpose of the interjection.

In his own mind, the man thought he knew the answer. He was not seeking instruction, but rather trying to put the Lord to the test before all the people, hoping that Jesus might be seen at a disadvantage.

Perhaps he thought that the Lord would immediately launch into a dissertation on eternal life, which would have the effect of setting the Law completely aside.

If such were the lawyer’s intentions (and the word “tempt” in its Greek form suggests this, for it signifies “to try exceedingly”), he did not succeed with the trap he was setting. Jesus was too wise in all his guilelessness to be taken in like that!

“What is written in the Law?” he asked the lawyer, “What do you read in it?”

This was no problem to the skilled lawyer. Instantly he replied: “You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with your whole strength, and with your whole mind. Also, your neighbor as yourself.”

His answer was excellent. It showed that he had studied the Law with considerable insight as to its true meaning. He had correctly linked together two commandments of the Law, that are not found together in the Old Testament records. The first is recorded in Deuteronomy 6:5, and the second in Leviticus 19:18. On a later occasion, Jesus himself, in answer to a question as to what is the greatest commandment in the Law, gave a similar reply, linking these two commandments together, and stating: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mat. 22:40).

But excellent as the lawyer’s doctrinal concept of the Law may have been, it failed in one essential feature: he did not correctly apply the principles he had so beautifully expressed.

Academically, his exposition could not be faulted; but in practical demonstration, it was sadly wanting.

The Lord revealed this by his next statement:

“You have *ANSWERED* right,” he said. “This *DO*, and you shall live!”

The latter part of this statement is a quotation from Leviticus 18:5, so that he was again directing the lawyer to the way in which the Law revealed that life could be obtained.

The Law revealed the way to life eternal. But who has ever fulfilled all the requirements of it? No one (Rom. 3:10), except the Lord Jesus. And he only attained unto life eternal by rendering a

perfect obedience which brought him first to the cross, and to death (Phil. 2:8).

Did the Law demand this? Yes, indeed, the Law exhibited the principle that man must die in order to live! This was revealed in the rite of circumcision, the killing of the passover lamb, as well as the various sacrifices that had to be offered for different reasons. And as the Lord Jesus was the antitype of all sacrifices under the Law, it was necessary for him to die, even to fulfil the Law!

In his sacrificial death, the Lord Jesus acknowledged and taught that the way of life is through death. It was only the sacrificial offering of his life in total obedience to his Father's will, even unto the death on the cross, that ensured for him resurrection to life eternal (Heb. 10:6-12; Jn. 10:17).

The Law illustrated that in the absence of the Redeemer, it was helpless in the face of sin. On the other hand, a man of faith, seeing in the sacrifices the foreshadowing of the redeemer to come, recognising in the Law the divine Will, and acknowledging his own shortcomings, could seek and receive forgiveness of sins through belief in the coming Redeemer who would fulfil all requirements (Heb. 9:15).

The Jewish leaders of Christ's day imagined that he was setting the Law aside, whereas he was magnifying the Law, and making it honorable (Isa. 42:21). But they, with their cold formalism, failed to recognise what the Law required of them, and were blind to the spiritual lessons it was intended to teach. They did not realise that the Law revealed them all as sinners, and therefore death-doomed, unless they sought the Redeemer that the Law itself foreshadowed.

Therefore Jesus directed the clever lawyer to the words of Moses: "This *do* and you will live!"

The lawyer instantly recognised his predicament, and to justify himself before the people, he turned to the Lord who was calmly and thoughtfully watching him, and enquired: "And who is my neighbor?"

Thus was revealed clearly his attitude of mind. He was evidently satisfied that he loved his God sufficiently, and was only interested as to how the Lord would interpret the second portion of the commandments.

### **The Parable**

This incident gave rise to the parable of the Good Samaritan — a parable that revealed how lacking the Jews were both in their understanding of the doctrinal significance of the Law, and its practical application in life.

The Lord told the story of a man who was travelling down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He thus traversed a very lonely track of some twenty miles (thirty kilometres), providing a continuous descent of some 3,600 feet (1097 mts). This can well typify the fall of man from

his original “very good state,” to the curse that was placed upon him. The road winds its way through barren, cave-pitted limestone hills which were then the haunts of brigands and thieves.

Along that lonely road, people usually travelled in companies for protection; but this man was on his own, and was an easy mark for any robbers lurking thereby.

About halfway on his journey, he was attacked, and though he resisted, he was overpowered by thieves who, battering him into a state of unconsciousness, stripped him of his clothes, robbed him of his money, and left him half-dead on the roadside.

The hot sun beat down pitilessly from above on the crumpled figure of the traveller, who was seemingly dead.

Soon a priest came along that road. He was returning from Jerusalem, on the way to Jericho where many of the priests had their dwellings. He saw the apparently dead man on the wayside, and considered the problem. The Law, which he professed, commanded that he should love his neighbor, but it also taught that contact with a dead body brought defilement, and rendered a priest unfit for service. If this man were dead, however, he was past help, and to be personally defiled for such a reason seemed to the priest to be quite unnecessary.

So, quickly averting his head, he passed by on the other side, leaving behind the still body of the unconscious traveller.

Soon another man approached, easily recognisable by the distinctive garments he wore as a Levite. With startled eyes he saw the wounded man, lying motionless as one dead.

What should he do?

He paused to look at him; probably to see if the wounded man had any claim on him for help. But having been stripped of his Jewish robes, the Levite could easily conclude that the victim was a foreigner. Under such circumstances, according to his understanding of the Law, it was neither needful nor advisable to contract defilement by assisting him. So he likewise passed by.

Finally a Samaritan came along the lonely road. Samaritans were hated by the Jews, and they, in turn, hated Jews. But a short time previously, Jesus had been contemptuously decried as a Samaritan (Jn. 8:48), because he did not observe the doctrines of the Pharisees who, with their formalism, actually robbed the Law of its true spiritual meaning (Mk. 7:13).

So, in the parable, the Samaritan represents the Lord.

As a Samaritan, this traveller was unfettered by the pharisaical constraints of such man-made laws, as prevented the priest and Levite from helping the wounded man. Therefore, when he saw him lying



helpless, and apparently dead, by the roadside, he did not pass him by. Instead, he was moved with compassion at what he saw, and immediately set aside all barriers that might normally have existed. Not being governed by false teachings regarding the Law, he naturally did what the Law commanded (cf. Rom. 2:14-



15), and carefully examining the man, saw that he was only unconscious. He therefore tended to his needs, binding up his wounds, helping him with oil and wine, and tenderly placing him on his own beast, he conveyed him to an inn where the injured traveller could receive the care he needed, until he had fully recovered.

How like the work of the Lord Jesus, who was prepared and fully equipped to minister unto all that were in need!

He, too, was a man of compassion (Mt. 15:32); offers oil and wine without money (Isa. 55:1), and he, too, as a manifestation of the Father is prepared to figuratively "bind up the wounds of those in need" (Psa. 147:3).

On the morrow, when the Samaritan was about to depart, he paid the fee of the inn-keeper, and declared: "Attend to him, and if you are put to any extra expense, I will refund you on my way back."

The price he paid was sufficient. It was two pence, or two denarii, the equivalent of half a shekel. That was the redemption money paid under the Law (Exo. 30:12-13). It seems definite therefore, that in the figure of the Samaritan, the Lord was illustrating his own work of redemption in providing for the needs of death-doomed humanity.

In that light it is of the utmost significance, that the Samaritan declared that he would return again, to repay his servants' loving service on behalf of those whom he has laboured to save!

The parable certainly points to the two advents of the Lord Jesus. He came first, to "bind up the wounds" of those nigh unto death through sin; he comes the second time to reward those who have faithfully carried out his precepts. He taught that he will recompense them at the resurrection (Lk. 14:14), and judgment (Mt. 25:31-46) when he comes again. Thus will be fulfilled the assurance of Proverbs 19:17, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto Yahweh; and that which he hath given will He pay him again."

**Who Was Neighbor?** The parable finished, the Lord then turned to the man standing before him in front of all the seated, curious people. "Now which of these three do you think was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves?" he asked.

There was but one answer: "He that showed mercy on him!"

"Then go, and do the same," concluded the Lord.

Did the mind of the clever lawyer at that point turn to the Law that so clearly endorsed what Jesus taught? We do not know; but we do know what the Old Testament Scriptures teach: "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6). Again, "O man, He hath showed you what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to humble yourself to walk with your God?" (Mic. 6:8). And again, "The stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lev. 19:34).

The Law and the Prophets, therefore, taught the lesson that the Lord impressed upon the lawyer, namely, that the same love and kindness as Yahweh had manifested towards them when they were strangers in Egypt, should be passed on to all mankind without stint, whether they be strangers or Israelites.

The Samaritan looked after the physical needs of the wounded man by the roadside; but the lesson of the parable does not limit the doing of good to such actions. The things he did are as tokens of those spiritual truths that any person educated in the Word of God can minister to his fellows. The greatest kindness that we can render our neighbors is to draw their attention to the redemption that is found in Christ Jesus. The "wine and oil" which we can minister to best help others is the gospel message, but our acts of kindness need not stop there, but should be revealed in practical methods as well. So Paul taught: "Do good unto all men; especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). "Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

Notice how Paul emphasises that practical manifestations of kindness are but a reflection of that kindness that we receive from God as revealed in the Gospel. Paul taught: "The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Tit. 3:4-5). Peter wrote: "Hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1Pet. 2:21).

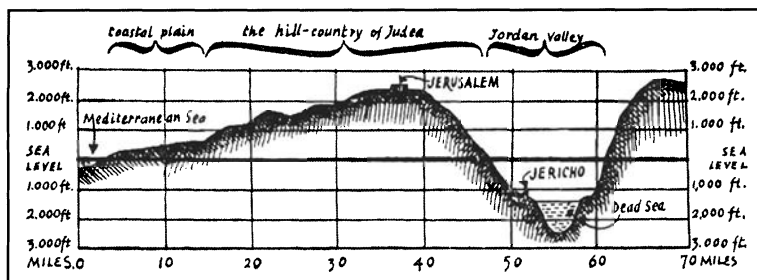
Think again upon the parable of the Good Samaritan. The priest and the Levite had it in their power to help the man, but they did not do so because their love of self, induced by a wrong interpretation of Scripture, blinded them to the true requirements of God, and the need of those in want. The Samaritan was not so affected, and was able to help the man according to his ability so to do. Whose example shall we follow?



**Modern Jericho**



**Journeying Through  
Bandit Territory**



**Graph showing the comparative  
levels of Jerusalem and Jericho**

## Chapter 13

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### MARY AND MARTHA A CONTRAST — Luke 10:38-42

*Mary and Martha lived at Bethany, not far from Jerusalem (Jn. 11:1). It is therefore obvious that the Lord was in the vicinity of Judea at this time, endorsing the suggestion we have made on page 203 that the events of Luke 10:1 to 13:22 took place in Judea. These are incidents omitted by the other Gospel writers.*

**T**HE Lord Jesus had a great affection for the household of Martha, and apparently often made his way to the home that they occupied in Bethany, a small village a little over a mile from Jerusalem, close to the Mount of Olives. There he found relaxation from the strain of daily preaching the Word of God, a place of rest for his body, wearied from the long hours of bearing with the demands and challenges of friends and of enemies, as well as all the problems that he had to encounter and solve as he made his way among the people.

The house belonged to Martha, though it was known also as Simon's house (Lk. 10:38; Jn. 12:1; Mat. 26:6; Mk. 14:3), and from this we conclude that Martha was a widow. However, Mary, her sister, dwelt with her, and so did Lazarus her brother, and the three provided very congenial company for the Lord.

So, on this occasion, when the Lord visited Bethany, he made his way to their dwelling. He received a cordial welcome from Martha, who felt honored to have such a guest in her home, and immediately busied herself about preparing a meal for him and those who undoubtedly were in his company.

#### **Mary's Choice; Martha's Anger**

Whilst she was thus engaged, Mary, who was also present, sat at the feet of the Lord, and hearkened to his discourse upon the Word of God. This caused a natural resentment in Martha. She, too, was interested in the teaching of the Lord Jesus, and would have liked to listen to him. But, there is a time and place for everything, and just then the meal had to be prepared. Moreover, for such a guest, special preparation was thought necessary.

Mary, still absorbed at the teaching of the Lord, did not even notice how busy her sister was, bustling in and out of the room to get things ready.

It irritated Martha to see Mary so obviously inactive, indifferent to the immediate requirements of the coming meal, with her thoughts far

removed from the humble home in which they dwelt.

At last, Martha's irritation got the better of her, and she spoke sharply to them all: "Lord," she burst out, "Is it nothing to you that my sister has left me to do all the work alone? Come, tell her to lend me a hand!"

The Lord looked up at the angry woman. Here were precious things of Truth being expounded from the lips of one who would only be with them for a few more months, and yet Martha had not the good sense to see that his teaching provided "meat and drink" of far greater importance and value than that which she was preparing. Indeed, she had to learn the lesson that the twelve had once been taught (Jn. 4:32).

His attention being drawn to it, the Lord took in the whole scene. Martha had gone far beyond the simple needs of a meal. She, in her love of the Lord, had aimed at giving him something lavish. She was "*cumbered about much serving*" This was a danger against which the Lord had warned in his parable of the good seed, for the "cares" of this would can choke the seed (Lk. 8:14), so that no fruit is brought forth to perfection.

There was no need for Martha to be "cumbered with much serving!" A simple meal was all that was necessary. Jesus would have found much more joy in Martha sitting at his feet and hearkening to his word, than in seeing her bustling about to prepare an elaborate meal.

Though Martha did not realise this, her action implied that the meal was more important than the message! In her anger, Martha thought nothing of breaking in on the Lord's discourse and crudely interrupting him; for she desired that her ego be satisfied, in that due regard should be paid to the food she was preparing.

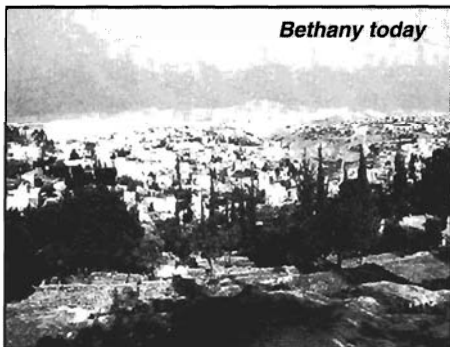
In short, she could not discriminate between the relative importance of the two types of food then being dispensed in that house!

How easy it is for us to

***19th century Bethany by  
the Mount of Olives***



***Bethany today***



fall into a similar error.

How frequently we will set aside the necessary food of the Truth in order to serve the flesh.

Martha's motives were excellent. She recognised the great privilege that was her's in that Jesus had honoured her house with his presence; and she desired to express her love of him in the best way possible; but she was not thoughtful enough to realise that to serve Christ in a manner that he would appreciate, she had to sacrifice her own desires.

In his rebuke, the Lord treated her with kindness and tact. "Martha, Martha," he said kindly, "you are over-anxious and agitated about many things; but one thing is absolutely necessary; Mary has chosen that good thing, which must not be taken from her."

The food Martha was preparing went beyond what was needful, and therefore, in slaving over it she would deprive Mary of that which is essential. Jesus had emphasised the need for careful thought in such things on an earlier occasion, when he told his disciples: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take no anxious thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Mat. 6:33-34).

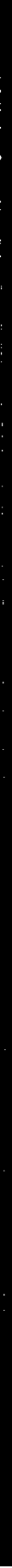
So Martha was taught the lesson that Israel had to learn, a lesson we all need to learn. Moses declared: "Yahweh humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh doth man live" (Deu. 8:3).

Did Israel die of starvation in the wilderness? No, they did not! Why was that? Because Yahweh fed them daily with manna! But what if they had refused to heed His Word and leave Egypt? Then they would have perished in the land of plenty!

Thus a tremendous lesson was impressed on Israel, on Martha, and on us. Let us seek the "good thing" that Mary desired.

To summarise and contrast the ways of Martha and Mary, consider the following:

- Martha chose things that perish, and bring care; Mary chose that which brings lasting peace.
- Martha's choice brought trouble; Mary's choice brought good.
- Martha was occupied with "many things," none of which, nor all of them together, can satisfy; Mary's choice concentrated upon that one thing that is absolutely necessary.
- Martha was led by very exasperation to accuse not only Mary, but the Lord himself; Mary, on the other hand, honoured him. How often has the Truth been blamed in similar circumstances!



**T**HE Master embarks upon the important work of instructing the people, and particularly his disciples in the principles of God manifestation. He draws attention to individual and communal development, and shows how the people of God must be active in their devotions. He is approached by onlookers, some keen to learn of his teachings, others desiring to trap him in his words, and to bring ridicule upon his teachings. In all circumstances, the Master acted with grace and dignity, setting before the masses the wonderful words of Truth. This example is worthy of his people, so that in considering the following chapters we might be brought closer to the wisdom and joy of divine worship. Let us follow him, and listen to the words which came from his lips, for therein are the paths of life.

## Chapter 1

### THE VALUE OF EARNEST PRAYER

*Again a disciple requested of the Lord instruction in prayer. This question had earlier been put to him by one of the twelve (Mat. 6:5-15), but on this occasion it could have been advanced by one of the seventy. The answer was very similar, but now the Lord added the parable of the importunate man to illustrate the importance of persevering in prayer. The prayer epitomises Solomon's dedicatory prayer at the opening of the temple, and it is therefore fitting that the Lord should repeat it in the hearing of those who will constitute his spiritual temple (1Cor. 6:19). For additional comments on this prayer, see "Story of the Bible" vol. 5, pp. 297-298.*

**O**N the opposite slopes, just outside the eastern walls of Jerusalem, lay the Garden of Gethsemane. In the days of the Lord, it was overshadowed by the buildings of the temple. It provided a little sanctuary of refuge, of isolation and of quiet relaxation, where one could meditate upon the things of God.

It was a favored spot of the Lord for such purposes, and he "oft-times resorted" to it (Jn. 18:2). In fact, he was so often found there, that Luke styles it merely "the place" (Lk. 22:40).

It was probably there that the Lord retired shortly after the meal in Martha's house (Lk. 11:1), that he might pour out his heart in prayer to the Father.

The disciples observed the fervour of his prayer, and the obvious satisfaction and strength that he derived from it, and desired to share that experience. One of their number approached him with the request that he teach them to pray, that they, too, might be similarly refreshed.

And so, once again, the Lord repeated the simple, direct, satisfying petitions in a model prayer such as he had given the twelve on an earlier occasion.

**The Lord's Prayer**  
— vv. 1-4

**"Our Father which art in heaven."** These opening words reflect those of 1Kgs. 8:23-27 where Solomon prayed: "The heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee" (v. 27).

**"Hallowed be Thy name."** See 1Kgs. 8:28-30, "My name shall be there" (v. 29).

**"Thy kingdom come."** These verses acknowledge Yahweh's

authority in the land. See 1Kgs. 8:31-32.

***"Thy will be done in earth as in heaven."*** See 1Kgs. 8:33-34, "Bring them again unto the land" (v. 34).

***"Give us this day our daily bread."*** 1Kgs. 8:35-36 records: "When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain" (v. 35).

***"And forgive us our sins for we also forgive."*** 1Kgs. 8:37-40 has "Forgive according to our ways" (v. 39).

***"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver."*** 1Kgs. 8:41-50 records: "Thy stretched out arm (v. 42)... maintain their cause" (vv. 45, 49).

***"For Thine is the kingdom, power, glory."*** ...See 1Kgs. 8:51-53. Solomon prayed: "They be Thy people... Thine inheritance" (vv. 51, 53).

***"Amen."*** The concluding declaration, 1Kgs. 8:55-61.

In the Lord's prayer recorded in Luke 11:1-4, the concluding clauses which are found in that given to the Twelve recorded in Matthew 6:13 are omitted. The R.V. in Matthew, however, also omits, "For Thine is the kingdom, power and glory, for ever, Amen," as the words are not included in the best Greek manuscripts. Some believe that these words are not included because it perhaps became the habit of believers to add them whenever the prayer was recited, and that they were included in the margin of the Bible, and so gradually became incorporated into the text.

### **The Parable — vv. 5-13.**

The Lord then illustrated the power of prayer by a simple parable or comparison. He declared: "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight, and say to him, 'Friend, let me have three loaves; for a friend of mine travelling has come to my house and I have nothing to set before him.' And suppose he answers from within, 'Don't bother me; the door is locked, and my children are in bed with me. I cannot get up and give you anything.' However, if you persist in demanding help, though he will not give it to you out of friendship, he will certainly do so if you continue to worry him!"

Careful thought of the Lord's words will extract their full meaning. He represented the disciples as approaching a friend at

### **THE PRAYERS OF SOLOMON AND JESUS COMPARED**

*The glory of Solomon foreshadowed that of the Lord Jesus; and the temple which he had caused to be built, was typical of the temple of living stones to be erected by Christ (1Pet. 2:5). It is therefore appropriate that the divine prayer for Solomon's temple, should become the basis of the Lord's prayer for his temple.*



midnight with a request that appears unreasonable at such an hour. This is a most inconvenient time with man, but with God no time is inconvenient (see 2Cor. 6:3).

The demand for help is made because a friend has suddenly and unexpectedly requested assistance in the course of his travels. Thus the problem is one that has arisen unexpectedly. There has been no opportunity to make adequate provision, and the person himself lacks the means to provide the required help.

The request at such an hour is considered by the friend as unreasonable, for by then he, as well as his children, had been in bed for some time, and to satisfy it would only be possible at great inconvenience to himself and his family.

But, because of the petitioner's "importunity," and because of his urgent need and persistent demands, the request will be satisfied, if only to silence him!

In the A.V. it is said that the friend will help because of the "importunity" of the one knocking. Such importunity manifests itself in constant appeals regardless of time, place and person. The word is translated from the Greek, *anaideia*, which signifies "shamelessness," and therefore suggests an attitude that is lacking in personal pride.

If shameless persistence can win a benefit from a sleepy neighbour, then certainly earnest persistent prayer will receive an answer from the ever vigilant Father who never sleeps!

So the Lord Jesus exhorted his disciples to *Ask, Seek and Knock*. To *ask* is to pray for guidance and assistance; to *seek* is to work and so provide a basis for God to bless; and to *knock* is to manifest energetic, urgent, persistent request.

All is necessary for successful, powerful prayer.

The Lord continued: "What father among you, if asked by his son for a loaf, will hand him a stone? Or, if asked for a fish, will hand him a serpent? Or, if asked for an egg, will hand him a scorpion?"

In olden times, the round loaves of bread that were baked had a curious resemblance to the stones of the wilderness; such fish as perch or eels have a likeness to serpents; whilst the scorpion when it is curled up into a ball, looks like an egg!

But what true father would deceive his son with such gifts?

So the Lord continued: "If for all your evil, you know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father give the Holy Spirit from heaven to those who ask Him?"

The Holy Spirit relates to the Truth (see Jn. 6:63; Eph. 6:17; 1Jn. 5:6), and the greatest of all gifts is an understanding of that wisdom which is from the Father (Jas. 3:17; Jn. 3:3 mg; 1Cor. 2:13-15). If we approach God in prayer in order to obtain a better understanding of His precious Word, He will give this good gift unto us (see Jas. 1:5; Psa. 25:9).

## Chapter 2

### ENDURING THE CONTRADICTION OF SINNERS — Luke 11:14-28

*In summing up the wonderful example that the Lord Jesus manifested, the apostles wrote: "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb. 12:3). On many occasions, the Lord had to endure such trials, and a notable occasion was when he cured a poor demented person who was dumb. This one is said to have a devil (a demon), and concerning the significance of such statements as that, consider again our explanation in vol. 5, pp. 284-285.*

**A**S the Lord was teaching the people, there was brought to him a poor, demented, dumb man. Moved with compassion, the Lord healed him, and immediately the dumb man spoke.

The people were amazed at the ease with which the cure was effected, as well they might be.

#### **The Dumb Man Cured**

But some among them tried to spread the superstition that Jesus performed miracles, only because he was possessed by some power other than that of God. They declared: "It is by Beelzebub the prince of demons that he casts out demons."\*

When others heard that, they called upon the Lord to show them a sign from heaven to authenticate that the miracles he performed were of God.

How foolish men can be!

So the Lord answered them. He showed that if he performed miracles by anything but God's power, then satan's kingdom is divided and must surely fall, for he only used the power he had for good. On the other hand, if he did it with the "finger of God," then obviously the royal majesty of God's kingdom was present among them (see Diaglott).

What a significant expression Jesus used when he made reference to "the finger of God" as doing the miracles! The "finger" pointed a warning, directing attention to God's power among them, and the imminence of divine judgment if they did not heed.

It is significant that the magicians of Egypt used the same

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\* The discourse recorded in Luke 11:15-26 is very similar to that uttered under different circumstances on an earlier occasion (see Mat. 12:23-30, 43-45). For notes on this see vol. 5, pp. 393-398.

expression of the miracles of Moses (Exo. 8:19). The “finger of God” pointed a warning to Pharaoh, which he foolishly did not heed and so judgment fell upon that guilty nation.

If Jewry in the days of the Lord Jesus persisted in its folly, nothing would prevent the divine judgment from falling upon the guilty nation. “When the strong man in armour guards his homestead, his property is undisturbed, but when a stronger man attacks and conquers him, he seizes the property on which he relied and divides up the spoil!”

So declared the Lord enigmatically, but what did he mean?

The flesh was the “strong man,” enthroned in Jewry, fully armed and secure; but a stronger one, even God’s royal majesty, the Lord Jesus, was destined to overcome and destroy the strong man of the flesh, and occupy his position.

This was like a declaration of war against the principles of the flesh, and Jesus warned that in that war there can be no neutrals; all must declare themselves: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” The word “gathereth” is the Greek *sunago*, which signifies “to lead together; to gather together in one.” The words of Jesus, therefore, taught that it is not enough to be a soldier on his side, but his followers must be disciplined so as to walk in step one with the other (see 2Tim. 2:3; 1Thes. 5:14; Gal. 5:25; Rom. 6:13).

He went on to warn that it was useless ridding a man of evil unless the evil was replaced with good, otherwise the latter state of the man would be worse than the first.

The preaching of John Baptist had the effect of “sweeping the house, and garnishing it,” of cleansing the nation of much evil; but because the people neglected to hearken to the instruction of Jesus, and fill the cleansed house with good things, then stronger, more deadly “spirits” would take possession of the nation, and bring it to ruin.

**Who Are The Blessed?** Among the large company of people who — vv. 27-28

were listening to the Lord as he expounded the Scriptures, there was a woman of outstanding intelligence who carefully pondered the teachings of Jesus. She could discern that he was no ordinary man, and moved by emotion at all she heard and saw, she called out from among the crowd: “Blessed is she who bare you, and gave you nourishment as a baby!”

It was a dramatic interjection, and yet one that glorified the flesh. Earlier Jesus had declared that “the flesh profiteth nothing” (Jn. 6:63), and therefore he now sounded a note of warning.

“Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.”

he answered.

There is an interesting comparison between the emotional outburst of the woman, and the sober words of Christ. Her praising of the mother of the Lord anticipated the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church which worships Mary the mother of Jesus, calling her the Mother of God.

Mary, of course, knew nothing of such teaching, and, in fact, looked forward to the overthrow of all such brutal systems, as the Papacy (Lk. 1:51-55). She is described as blessed among women, but not in the way in which the interjector meant.

Those truly blessed are they who not only hear the Word of God, but do it!

### **A Sign That Condemned — vv. 29-32**

Meanwhile, the crowd gathered thick around the Lord. They were curious to hear him, but not anxious to do the things he taught. And the Lord warned them of their folly. He had done so previously to the Pharisees in Galilee (Mt. 12:39-42. See *Story of the Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 398-399, and he did so now to the people listening to him.

He told them that they desired a sign, but no sign would be given that generation, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. Jonah was swallowed up of the fish for three days, and then resurrected to provide a sign to the Ninevites.

This, similarly, would be the sign that Jesus would reveal to that generation, but whereas the Ninevites hearkened to the warning voice of the prophet, and repented, the Jews would not.

So the Lord contrasted this people of privilege with two examples of pagans who had heard and been converted: The queen of Sheba, and the men of Nineveh. The former listened to the wisdom of Solomon, and a greater than Solomon was then before the people of Judea; the latter listened to the wisdom of Jonah the prophet, and a greater prophet was now addressing them.

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But unlike the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites, the people would not properly heed.

**The Responsibility  
Of Becoming  
Light-Bearers  
— vv. 33-36**

The Lord's spirit was moved within him as he saw vast crowds listening to his discourse. They were captivated by his words, but more than that was required. They must not only be hearers of the Word, but doers as well (Jas. 1:22; Eze. 33:31-32).

He told them that there was an urgent need for them to publicly reveal the light of Truth that they were receiving, that others might be attracted to it. To that end, they must train their spiritual vision on to the light, and look at it steadfastly, and not with distorted sight.

He called upon them to "take heed" lest the light within be darkness (Lk. 11:35). This light within was their confidence in the Law. If this blinded their need to the Redeemer, then the light was darkness indeed. On the other hand, if they allowed the fulness of understanding to penetrate their whole being, they would themselves brilliantly show forth light in the midst of darkness, such as would cause others to be attracted to Truth (2Cor. 3:18; 4:6-7).

This teaching, now proclaimed in Judea for the first time, had earlier formed part of the Discourse on the Mount, delivered in Galilee.\*

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\* See these points discussed in vol. 5, p. 296.

## **A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels.**

### **CAESAR, THE MIGHTY**

Originally, Caesar was the name of the Julian family that ruled in Rome. Augustus (see page 174) adopted it as title for the Roman emperor, a practice which lasted two centuries. Eleven Roman Caesars ruled during New Testament times, but only four are named in the scriptures. Augustus (Lk. 2:1) gave the world taxation decree. John Baptist began his work in the fifteenth year of Tiberius' reign (Lk. 3:1-2). The famine predicted by Agabus happened during the reign of Claudius Caesar. Claudius also was the one who ordered all the Jews to leave Rome (Acts 18:2). It was to Caesar Nero that Paul made his great appeal (Acts 25:1-12). This Caesar subsequently set fire to Rome, and blamed it on the Christians, launching one of the worst periods of persecution that the early ecclesias experienced.

## Chapter 3

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### A DINNER THAT ENDED IN DISRUPTION — Luke 11:37-54

*During a discourse in his Judean ministry, the Lord accepted an invitation to dine with a Pharisee. This brought him closely into the company of these people who were his enemies, and who watched every move he made, with the object of criticising and condemning him. Their hypocritical attitude of mind called forth the strong rebuke of the guileless Lord Jesus, with the result that the meal ended in an uproar, and the Lord was driven from the house by the badgering Pharisees. Outside, a numerous company had gathered, perhaps attracted by the noise within, whilst those within doubtless heard the noise of the multitude outside!*

**A**MONG those listening to the Lord's discourse was a Pharisee who became curious to learn more of Jesus. It may have been that his interest was aroused by the recommendation of such as Nicodemus, or that the very teaching of Jesus, and the way in which many were following him, attracted him to act as he did.

#### **The Invitation**

He was not fully drawn to the Lord, nor had he the penetrating understanding of such as Nicodemus. Perhaps the recent discourse of Jesus had appealed to him, for the Pharisees (or Separatists, as their name signifies) would have agreed with the Lord when he reproached the people as being an evil generation, completely blind to divine Truth.

Be that as it may, he invited the Lord to dine with him. The word, dine, *aristao*, signifies the morning meal, a light repast usually eaten about noon.

#### **The Rebuke**

In due time, the Lord arrived at the home of the Pharisee. There were other Scribes and Pharisees present, having also been invited to dine, doubtless with the objective of personally meeting Jesus. The guests entered the house, and as was their custom, the Pharisees ceremoniously washed their hands in the prescribed manner, for their man-made laws demanded that this be done, else they considered themselves defiled (Mk. 7:4).

But the Lord (being by himself, for his disciples had not been invited with him), refused to bow to this man-made law, and to the astonishment of all, he made his way to the table without washing. He desired to make a point to those assembled, and had thus separated himself from the Separatists!

His action in so doing was noted by the other guests, and caused some eyebrow-raising on the part of the host and his company, though for the time nothing was said. They may have thought that some other action would follow, by which it would be seen that this Prophet of Nazareth was not upholding their laws and traditions.

Whilst at the meal table, they all reclined around the table in the manner of the times, politely partaking of the food. But the Lord sensed the hostile atmosphere, and read the condemning thoughts of those about him.

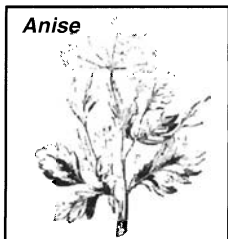
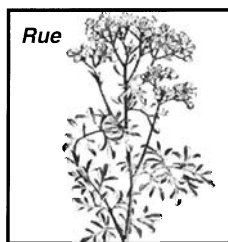
Suddenly he gave expression to his feelings.

The meal was progressing, and all the company except one, with their distinctive Pharisaic robes were assuming an hypocritical aspect of politeness and hospitality, whilst in their hearts they were condemning Jesus, when suddenly they were shocked to hear him openly reveal and condemn their thoughts with a most outspoken rebuke.

Seething with indignation at their hypocrisy, he declared: “You Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. You senseless men who think you can deceive God, did not He that made that which is without make that also which is within? As to the things within, give alms to those in need, and behold, all things will be clean unto you. Woe unto you Pharisees! You tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you Pharisees! You love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets! Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them!”

The company looked up startled and amazed! This was no way in which to repay hospitality! Moreover, they were not used to being so openly and vigorously denounced! They could not bear such frankness of expression.

But how true Christ's words were! What was the use of washing their hands to cleanse them from ceremonial defilement, if their hearts were evil? They were scrupulous in performing these externals, but their very formalism hid a heart that was hard, bitter, and



untouched by the teaching of God.

Otherwise they would have been kinder, and with hearts attuned to what God required they would do good to others, and this would have been clean in the sight of God (Jn. 15:3).

As it was, their evil minds were a contrast to the guileless excellence of the Lord Jesus, who, though he had deliberately omitted to wash his hands, was morally clean in the sight of God.

They were so punctilious in paying tithes of mint, rue, and herbs — things of small monetary value, yet they disregarded the need of a manifestation of judgment and love.

Notice, however, that Jesus did **not** exempt them from paying tithes, for these were commanded by the Law. He declared they should do this, **but** not leave the others things undone.

They loved to be looked upon as rulers, occupying the uppermost seats, delighting to receive greetings in the market places where the people bowed low to them. But they were as hidden graves, for their air of righteousness veiled by hypocrisy hid the corruption of their teaching and their deadly doctrines.

The guests listened to the powerful words of rebuke by which the Lord denounced them, but were so staggered by them, that for the moment they could not think of a reply. All they could do was to gaze open-mouthed at the indignant young man reclining at the table with them!

But a lawyer, a man skilled in the Scriptures, reproached him: “Master,” he said soothingly, “by so saying you are reproaching us also.”

The Lord fully agreed!

Turning to the lawyers, he publicly denounced them for the folly of their teaching which led men away from God. He heaped woe after woe upon their heads. He reminded them that they imposed grievous burdens for the people to bear, though they themselves would not touch them with their little finger. They did this by the oral law which imposed restrictions and penalties quite apart from the written law, though at the same time they claimed that they themselves were exempt from them.

They preserved and garnished the memorials of the prophets, and yet their hardhearted attitude proved that they were true sons of those who killed them!

Moreover, warned Jesus, they themselves would be the very ones who would slay and persecute his own disciples when the time came for them to go forth as prophets and apostles!

“You have murder in your hearts,” he warned them, “and therefore the judgment of Cain and of rebellious Israel will come upon your generation.”

Why had they reached such a lamentable state? Because their



faulty interpretation of Scripture had caused the key of knowledge to be lost, so that neither the “teachers” of the nation, nor the people themselves could have a place in God’s kingdom. The greater condemnation, of course, fell upon the teachers, for they prevented many from entering by closing the door of knowledge to them.

**Jesus Driven From The House —vv. 53-54** The Scribes and Pharisees had listened to the Lord’s indictment with indignation and anger. How dare he speak to them like that!

At last they turned on him bitterly and began to upbraid him. The guise of friendly courtesy was quickly thrown aside, as they poured upon him a flood of invective and abuse, hoping to extract some unwise statements from him to his own self-condemnation. But they did not succeed.

Thus the dinner ended in disruption, and the Lord gladly and hurriedly left such a corrupt environment to be met by a large company of people outside who was prepared to hearken to him, and whom he immediately began to instruct.

How it must have galled and angered the Pharisees, to hear him begin his discourse by calling upon the people outside the very home of one of their number, to “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy...” (Lk. 12:1).



## Chapter 4

### TEACHING OUTSIDE THE HOUSE OF THE PHARISEE — Luke 12:1-12

*Hurriedly the Lord had left the house of the Pharisee where he had been invited to dine, leaving behind him a company of irritated and angry guests who hated him for his plain speaking, and taunted and derided him as they urged him to go (Lk. 11:53-54). However, outside that very house, a great company of people had gathered, and in the hearing of the Pharisees, he began to publicly warn the people to beware of the teaching and example of these so-called leaders.*

**A**S the Lord left the home of the discourteous Pharisee, he found his path blocked by a great crowd of people who were awaiting him outside.

Foremost among them was the little company of his disciples, for they had not been included in the invitation Jesus had received, to dine at the Pharisee's house.

As he emerged, the people could see the angry faces of the Scribes and Pharisees, and could hear their taunts and insults, as they derided the Lord. This strange scene only made them the more curious, however, and they strove one with the other that they might obtain a better view of the earnest young prophet who so greatly excited their curiosity. They quietened down, however, as they heard him begin to address his disciples.

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy!" he warned them.

#### **"Beware Of The Leaven Of The Pharisees"**

The figurative meaning of his words was obvious, particularly with the scene then before them. Leaven is like yeast, which bakers mix in with dough to make bread. It works silently but effectively through the dough, aerating it, causing it to become puffed up!

How like the teaching of the Pharisees which permeated the nation at that time! Unfortunately, many of the common people followed the hypocritical example of their leaders.

Jesus declared that the leaven of the Pharisees (that which was working silently through the whole nation) was hypocrisy. The word means "play-acting." The Pharisees acted a part out of their true character. They assumed an attitude of piety and righteousness, but as the incident in the house had revealed, this was but a cover for their

self-righteousness. They were like actors on the stage, who then wore masks to hide their true identity, presenting a completely different image! Jesus knew that the sanctimonious attitude of the Pharisees was but a veneer hiding hearts filled with murderous intent. In the Greek, the word “hypocrisy” signifies “a reply; an answer,” such as actors spoke in the dialogues on the stage. The Lord described the Pharisees by this word, because their religious exercises and devotions, consisting of mere gestures and sound, were empty of real, genuine feeling. They were like actors reciting their parts, while as a class, they had no real love for Yahweh and His Word.

As the Lord stripped this veneer from off the Pharisees, he warned his disciples that there is a day of judgment coming when the same treatment will be extended to all. In that day, words of evil insinuation and invective (described by the Lord as those “*spoken in darkness*”) as well as those scandals whispered in secret (described by him as being “*spoken in the ear in closets*”) shall be openly revealed and condemned, that all might know the true characters of those who spoke them.

Jesus therefore taught: “There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. What you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and what you have spoken in the ear in the closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

That day of judgment will bring to light the “hidden motives of the heart” (1Cor. 4:5), and we will at last come to know ourselves as we are today known to God!

### **Be Fearless Before Men**

Having warned as to what the judgment will reveal, Jesus specifically addressed his “friends” or disciples (see Jn. 15:14), exhorting them to manifest a fearless and undivided loyalty to Yahweh who will assuredly care for all who do so. He declared: “I tell you, my friends, have no fear of those who kill the body, but after that can do no more; I will show you whom to fear: Fear Him, who after He has killed has power to cast you into hell. I tell you, fear Him!”

The Lord had just given an example of the attitude that he exhorted they should adopt. He had fearlessly denounced the Pharisees for what they were, even though he knew that they had murderous intentions towards him, and though he realised that one day, and that not far ahead, they would conspire to slay him.

He feared Yahweh, but had no fear of man! He knew, as the Proverbs declare: “The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in Yahweh shall be safe” (Pro. 29:25).

Man might crucify him, but God would raise him from the dead.

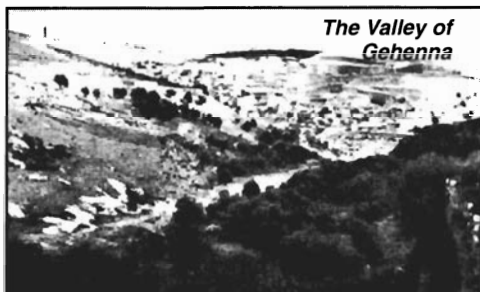
On the other hand, those who are defiant of Yahweh, and reverence Him not, will not only experience death, but utter destruc-

tion. God can both kill them and cast them into hell!

What is that “hell” to which the Lord made reference?

The word in the Greek is “Gehenna,” which signifies the *Valley of Hinnom*. This was a locality just outside the city of Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8; 18:16; Neh. 11:30) where the refuse of the city was burned, including the bodies of criminals.

Anything adjudged as being completely useless, and fit only for destruction was consigned to this valley, which became the rubbish dump for the city.



For that reason, the word gradually assumed a figurative meaning for utter destruction; and that was how the Lord was using it in the saying quoted above.

Some people imagined that the word describes a “hell” of everlasting torments, in which the souls of people are continuously burning in the flame of God’s anger, but such a teaching is a terrible blasphemy against the God of love, and has no basis in the Word of Truth. Through Jeremiah the prophet, Yahweh has declared that such literal burnings have “never come into His mind” (Jer. 7:31-32)!

In the normal course of events, the crucified body of the Lord Jesus would have been consigned to the literal Gehenna as a condemned criminal, but if such had been the intention of his murderers, the execution of it was overruled by God, and his body was taken down to be buried in the tomb of Joseph, to rise again three days later. This was actually prophesied by Isaiah, who declared of the Messiah: “his grave was appointed (Heb. *nathan*) with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death.” The leaders of Jewry intended that this man, claiming to be the Messiah, should be consigned to the valley of Gehenna, but his body was taken by a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, and put into a newly made grave.

Jesus had shown no fear of man in performing the will of God, and therefore Yahweh’s care constantly overshadowed him.

We will experience similar divine care if we are resolute in our determination to serve Him faithfully.

### **God Cares For His Children**

The people listening to Jesus had previously heard the Pharisees hurl threats at the Lord as he left the house, but now they heard him calling upon his disciples to calmly face up to opposition without fear, in complete assurance that ultimate victory would be won through the strength that is available from on high.

“Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?” he declared.

On an earlier occasion, he had declared that two sparrows are sold for a farthing (Mt. 10:29), and some critics of the Bible pick on this triviality to claim a contradiction. But both statements are doubtless correct, and whereas two sparrows cost a farthing, five could be purchased at a cheaper rate! That is called bulk purchasing!

The Lord taught that even birds of God’s creation, that are so cheaply esteemed by man, are provided for in His goodness.

However, carefully notice that the Lord declared that “not one of them is forgotten *before* God,” but he did not say “*by* God.” Many interpret the passage as though Jesus declares that God personally cares for every individual sparrow! That is not the meaning, and Jesus did not say that. All of God’s creation are provided “*before* Him,” or in His sight, because, in the ordering of creation, He did not overlook the basic needs of the most humble of His creatures, but in wisdom provided for all their needs.

With the disciples of the Lord, however, there is a much more personal care taken, as the Lord proceeded to show. He declared: “Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows!”

What did Jesus mean by those strange words? They constituted a proverbial saying expressive of complete safety (see 1Sam. 14:45; 2Sam. 14:11; Acts 27:34). Whilst God provides for the needs of all His creation, and showers His blessings on just and unjust alike (Mat. 5:45), He exercises a more personal care over the members of His family, so that they dwell in perfect safety in His sight.

That does not mean that they will not be subjected to trials and difficulties, but it does mean that in all these circumstances they can draw upon the help of God to fortify them and ultimately deliver them. The case of Jesus provides the example. His enemies crucified him in spite of the fact that God’s care was with him, but in due time, he was brought from the dead to the glorious victory of the resurrection unto life eternal.

A similar wonderful victory awaits those who remain faithful to God. Therefore, outside the house of the Pharisee from which he had been ejected, the Lord continued to teach the people: “I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me [*literally, “into me,” expressive of being truly IN him, or one with the Lord in mind and deed*] before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies me before men shall be denied before the angels of God” (Lk. 12:8-9).

What a wonderful privilege it will be to stand approved before the Lord Jesus, and to hear his words of commendation in the presence of the angels of heaven! They will be with him when he returns to judge

his servants (Mt. 16:27; Mk. 8:38), and will likewise hearken with joy to his words of praise on the behalf of those who have done well. They will see in the glorified disciples of the Lord, the consummation of their own efforts down the ages, as “the ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14). For, during that long period of time, they have overshadowed those who have been called to a knowledge of the truth, and have sought to help them attain unto the glory to which they have been called (see Gen. 48:16; Exo. 23:20; Psa. 34:7).

In view of the coming judgment, the Lord warned of the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Lk. 12:10), of which some of the Pharisees were guilty, and called upon his disciples to exercise no undue anxious thought as to what they might say if brought before magistrates and powers to witness to the Truth — but to always rely upon God’s Word and strength to supply an answer. If they became over-anxious in thought (the Greek word *merimnao* signifies anxious thought, and not merely “thought” itself as translated in the A.V.), they would appear before magistrates with minds tortured with doubt, through undue anxiety as to the outcome.

Minds so disturbed would never manifest the fearless confession of the Truth in Jesus as he required of his followers!

Jesus had just given an example of what he required in his disciples, in the fearless and forthright condemnation he had heaped upon the Pharisees in the very house in which he had been invited to dine.

**An Interruption:  
“Speak To My  
Brother ...!”**

As the Lord was expounding these words of authority and power, he was suddenly interrupted by an ill-timed question on the part of one of the company who had been impressed

by Jesus’ forthright presentation of truth.

Apparently this man had been defrauded by his brother in an inheritance that they should have both obtained, and he now demanded that the Lord give his attention to this triviality.

“Master,” he demanded, interrupting the Lord in his discourse, as though his request was a matter of universal importance, “Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me!”

How sadly the Lord must have looked upon the questioner! How hopelessly he failed to grasp the mission of Jesus, and that to which he was individually called! The Lord had given up everything to serve his brethren; he had sacrificed all claims of personal self-interest to that end. Later, a Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, learned of the extent of the Lord’s sacrifice, and wrote: “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich” (2Cor. 8:9).

Yet here was one of the Lord's followers, interrupting him in the important work of teaching the people, seeking to influence him to force his brother to give him his rights.

If God were to demand His rights from man where would any of us stand in the way of salvation? We are all dependent upon His mercy and forgiveness. As the poet has written: "In the course of justice, none of us would see salvation!"

To interrupt the preaching of the Lord with such a request was both thoughtless and ill-timed. It indicated that the question was born of covetous self-interest, and therefore Christ warned the man making it: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consists not in the abundance of things possessed!" (Lk. 12:15).

How important is that statement for the present generation! In this age of complete and wanton self-seeking, we need to etch such words on our minds. They can be fittingly joined with similar ones that the Lord had uttered earlier, during the course of delivering the Discourse on the Mount. He had then taught: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you!"

Have we the faith to live by that rule? Or are we completely dominated by self-interest and utter materialism? Let us remember that true happiness is not dependent upon the abundance of material possessions, but often the very reverse. It is found in seeking God's way, for that "has promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1Tim. 4:8).

Abundance of material possessions does not always provide the means of true happiness, but often the reverse, as it also brings care and worry; whereas the contentment of mind which the apostle Paul encouraged under all circumstances provided one with the ability to surmount any difficulty and look beyond any want. He declared: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

Paul learned the secret of life in that he came to discriminate between needs and wants. God has promised to supply all the former, and we need to show faith in Him to supply them to us; but He has not agreed to fulfil all our wants! The difficulty is that many people confuse "wants" with "needs," and see in the possession of houses, lands, motor-cars, washing machines and similar helps, the real "needs" of today. They should relegate these things to the subordinate position of mere "wants" and recognise as the only real "needs" the basic necessities of life, plus a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

To the man who had interrupted him with the request to command his brother to divide the inheritance, Jesus issued a warning regarding the dangers of covetousness.

### **The Danger of Covetousness**

Covetousness is the endless desire to have more and more of this world's goods, to the

exclusion of the things of God. In Colossians 3:5 it is described as modern "idolatry," because Paul recognised that men worship material wealth and success, and will sacrifice everything to obtain these things.

Consider what the Bible teaches concerning covetousness. David prayed: "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness" (Psa. 119:36).

Israel was condemned because of their sin: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him" (Isa. 57:17).

It will exclude from the Kingdom of God: "No covetous person... shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1Cor. 6:10).

It panders to self to the exclusion of the things of God: "The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1Tim. 6:10).

The exhortation of Scripture is: "Let your conversation [behaviour] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). "Covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3).

Israel was commanded not to covet by the tenth commandment, and commenting upon this, the wise teacher taught:

"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase; this is also vanity. When goods are increased, they are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?" (Ecc. 5:10-11).

There have been many godly men who have been also wealthy, but they received their possessions through God's blessing, and not



**"Thou shalt  
not covet"**



through a consuming urge merely to obtain in a covetous way. So Paul taught those who had gained wealth, to learn to use it in a way that would glorify God who had provided it: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy...” (1Tim. 6:17-19).

### **LEARN TO INTERPRET THE NEW TESTAMENT**

*The Lord's discourse outside the house of the Pharisee was not a series of disjointed statements unconnected one with another, but an argument from one statement to another. Notice the sequence in the following headings in Luke chapter 12.*

- Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees — vv. 1-3.
- Be fearless before God — vv. 4-5.
- God cares for His children — vv. 6-12.
- Beware of covetousness — vv. 13-15.
- The parable of the wealthy fool — vv. 16-21.
- Let faith conquer anxiety — vv. 22-30.
- Seek the things of the Kingdom — vv. 31-32.
- Be liberal toward God — vv. 33-34.
- Be vigilant and watchful — vv. 35-40.
- Christ will reward at his return — vv. 41-48.
- There is a need to purge sin — vv. 49-50.
- The Truth demands sacrifice, even dividing families — vv. 51-53.
- Why such divisions are inevitable — vv. 54-57.
- Meanwhile, let all repent — vv. 58-59.

## Chapter 5

### THE PARABLE OF NABAL THE WEALTHY FOOL — Luke 12:16-21

*To illustrate the sin and stupidity of covetousness, the Lord presented a parable of the wealthy fool who heeded neither God nor the lessons of life. The parable seems based on the circumstances of Nabal, contained in 1Samuel 25. Nabal's name means "fool" or "folly" (v. 25), the very description that Christ gave to the man in his parable. Nabal was prepared to accept the benefits that came from David's protection of his property until he had gathered in his plenteous harvest, at which time he felt that he had no further use for David, and contemptuously spurned him. With ample possessions (v. 2), amid his rejoicing friends (v. 36), he was confident as to the future — and yet he died suddenly and without warning (v. 38). Thus he never enjoyed the possessions he had received. He illustrated the significance of his name, for he manifested utter folly. A Bible fool is a godless person. The Psalmist declared: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psa. 14:1). But notice that the words "there is" are in italics indicating that they do not occur in the original Hebrew text. The phrase expresses the attitude of a religious man who acts ("in his heart") as though God does not exist. Thus his deeds (though not his words) proclaim that "There is no God for me!" The Psalmist elsewhere depicts the rich fool (Psa. 49:6, 11-13), and his pernicious influence (Psa. 73). On the other hand, though David became rich, he was not a fool, for he used his wealth unselfishly in the service of Yahweh (1Chr. 29:15-16).*

*To impress these lessons, Jesus spoke this most important parable.*

**T**HE Lord told the story of a rich man who looked out upon his ample possessions, and saw every sign of prosperity. He saw waving fields of corn, orchards of fruit trees, every indication of a wonderful harvest in his property. He rubbed his hands with pleasure as he thought of what this would mean to him in increase of wealth.

But he had no thought for the Provider of these benefits, nor did he consider for a moment, that apart from the rain and sunshine in their season, there would be no harvest at all!

He thought only of his own good fortune, and what he would do with this added wealth, even though he already had more than sufficient for his needs.

Notice the emphasis on himself, and his possessions: “What shall *I* do, because *I* have no room where to bestow *my* fruits?” he asked himself.

He pondered for a moment, and then made his decision. “This will *I* do: *I* will pull down *my* barns, and build greater; and there will *I* bestow all my fruits and *my* goods. And *I* will say to *my* soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry!” Open your Bible at Luke 12:17-19, and ring around in colour the repetition of the pronouns “*I*” and “*my*.” You will find that they are used eleven times in three verses.

But a message came to him that very night from God: “Thou fool, this night thy soul [*life*] shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have provided?”

“That is the fate of the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God,” declared the Lord as he concluded the parable.

### The Parable Considered

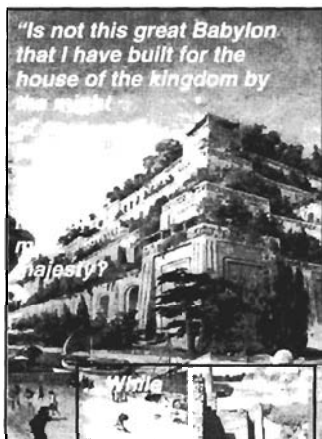
This is, indeed, a parable for these times, for, on every hand, the world is enacting the action of the rich fool, and is pulling down its barns and building greater! Like that of great Babylon, in which Nebuchadnezzar boasted so proudly, today is an age of great material opportunity, and the danger is that brethren can be unwisely caught up with the spirit of the age.

Notice that the rich fool became in turn a thoughtless fool, a self-centred fool, an ambitious fool, and finally a doomed fool.

All who fail to heed God’s will, go through these degrees of folly.

### The Thoughtless Fool

Jesus declared that the man “thought with- in himself...” In doing so, however, he overlooked one basic fact, namely that it was the ground that brought forth plentifully, and it only did so through God’s goodness. The fool failed to take into account that man is utterly dependent upon God for his harvests (Mat. 5:45; Acts 14:17), and should have rendered back to God a token of his increase as an act of gratitude in acknowledgment of that fact (Pro. 3:9).



*king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee"*

He failed to do that, and from being a *rich fool*, he became also a *thoughtless fool*. His thoughts were governed by a passion to hoard wealth. He became caught up with the “cares of this life” even though he had more than enough. He was dominated by a “love of money” (1Tim. 6:10) and the deceitfulness of riches (Mat. 13:22), and saw in the mere possession of material resources, an end in itself. This drove God from his mind. Though rich in material things he was spiritually bankrupt, for he had not learned the lesson of Proverbs 13:7-11, that “there is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing.” This rich man was, in fact, desperately “poor” (Rev. 3:17) because he was not rich toward God (Lk. 12:21; ct. Jas. 2:5; Rev. 2:9), and so Jesus, on another occasion, warned of the danger of riches blinding a person to the desirability of an inheritance in his kingdom (Mat. 19:23-24).

**The Self-Centred Fool** The rich fool asked, “*What shall I do?*” He did not ask himself what God would have him to do! Notice, therefore, that he has now become a self-centred fool. It was “*I*” and “*my*” that governed this man. His ground had produced plentifully, but Who had given the rain and sunshine? The rich man did not consider that! What should he rather have done? The answer is found in Pro. 3:9-10 and Mal. 3:8-11. In gratitude, he should have been rich toward God. Instead, he failed to take God into consideration; he was dazzled with the prospect of great wealth, and so became an ambitious fool.

**The Ambitious Fool** In itself, ambition is not an evil, but when indulged in at the expense of God’s requirements, it is! The fool in the parable wanted security for years to come, and his very attitude demonstrated his lack of faith. “I will pull down *my* barns, and build greater,” he boasted. He looked for the time when he could enjoy a life of ease and laziness. He did not say, “If the Lord will, I shall live, and do this” (Jas. 4:15). He saw before him an endless vista of plentiful harvests, and placed his confidence in these to provide him with what he wanted. In due time he would indulge his love of pleasure without acknowledging his debt to God for all that he had.

**The Doomed Fool** Finally, the *ambitious fool* became the *doomed fool* who did not live to enjoy his wealth. Nor is there any real enjoyment in such when a man lives without God. That very night death claimed him, and his wealth was snatched from him. Instead of his barns he had a burial; instead of comfort there was a coffin; instead of ease he met his end!

His fate illustrated the truth of Jer. 17:11, “As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches and not by

right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool!”

The Lord declared: “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Lk. 12:21).

We cannot over-stress the importance of this parable. It not only describes the fate of individuals who act like this rich fool, but of the modern world about us, and, for that matter, of an ecclesia that may imagine that it is rich when, in fact, it is “poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:16-21).

It is so easy to follow the process of *prosperity, thoughtlessness, self-centredness, ambition* and *doom*. But, though we are not ready for it, one day, suddenly and unexpectedly, Christ will be here, and the man, the world, and the ecclesia that has not prepared for that eventuality, will hear a similar condemnation as that heaped upon the wealthy fool.

The Psalmist declares of such: “Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness” (Psa. 52:7).

Let us avoid the pitfalls of the rich man who was so dazzled by money that he did not realise his desperate poverty!

## Chapter 6

### WHAT CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS SHOULD DO — Luke 12:22-40

*Following on the parable of the rich fool, Jesus taught his disciples what they should do and what they should avoid. They should [1] Avoid worldly anxiety; [2] Seek the Kingdom of God; [3] Manifest liberality toward God; [4] Remain alert and vigilant in the work of the Truth. Some of what the Lord said on this occasion is a repetition of his teaching in the Discourse on the Mount (cp. Lk. 12:22-31 with Mat. 6:5-33), and readers should refer to our comments on that section of the Story.*

**J**ESUS called upon his disciples to “take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.” By so teaching, he did not mean that they should squander any resources that they might have. His words do not mean that they should not exercise legitimate thought for the morrow.

**Let Faith Conquer Anxiety (Lk. 12:22-30)** The Greek word for “thought” in Luke 12:22 is *merimnao*, and signifies “anxious thought.”

A person of real faith will not be plagued with “anxious thought,” or unnecessary anxiety about such things, for he will ever bear in mind the exhortation of God: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” So long as he keeps close to God, God will care for him.

Jesus taught this lesson to his disciples, and called upon them to heed the parable of nature. He told them that the ravens neither sow nor reap; they do not store up harvests in barns, and yet they are fed. Are not Christ's disciples greater than ravens?

And what about the issues of life? Can mere thought extend it? Who, by taking thought, by the most meticulous planning, can “add unto the measure of his life” (as the Revised Version renders it). We do not know what the morrow may bring forth, or whether we will be living this time next week.

That being so, what is the value of over-anxiety as to what the morrow may bring forth.

The Lord pointed to the lilies of the field, and described the glory that God has given them. But tomorrow that glory has faded, and they are cast into the oven! That was not to be



the fate of the disciples, for the glory that God has designed for them is eternal. Therefore, recognising that God cares for them, they should put trust and faith in Him to supply their needs.

The Lord concluded this section of his discourse by declaring that Gentiles exercised unbecoming anxiety as to the future without seeking the help of Him who can govern the future, but his true disciples should recognise that the Father knows their needs and will provide. "Live not in careful suspense," he exhorted them (Lk. 12:29 mg.).

**Seek The Things Of  
The Kingdom  
(vv. 31-32)**

But whilst over-anxiety in mundane things is to be avoided, there is something for which Christ's disciples must seek, and that is the Kingdom of God. If they give their first thought and energy to gaining the kingdom, the Lord promised that God will add all necessary things unto them.

"Fear not, little flock\*," he declared, "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Notice that the word "seek" is used in both vv. 30-31. Followers of the Lord will receive the kingdom if they "seek" for it. The former declares that the nations of the world "seek" for material things now (v. 30); the latter states that the followers of the Lord should "seek" the kingdom of God. In the Greek Scriptures, these two words are slightly different. The word in the statement, "*seek* ye the kingdom of God" is *zeteo*, and signifies to search for a thing; to look for it. But the word "*seek*" in verse 30 that describes the attitude of the world, is an intensive form of the same verb, *epizeteo*, and indicates the earnest, continual seeking that Gentiles give to the acquirement of material possessions. They are more dedicated to that end, than are disciples of the Lord in gaining the kingdom!

**Be Liberal Toward  
God (vv. 33-34)**

The wealthy fool had stored up the riches that he had received from God, that he might relax in lazy comfort. But true disciples of the Lord must not so act. Instead they are to manifest a liberality in the things of God, and thus make their riches work. This provides an excellent investment for the future. The Proverbs (ch. 19:17) declare: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto Yahweh; and that which he hath given will He pay him again!"

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\* In describing his disciples as a "little flock," the Lord seems to have directed attention to the prophecy of Zech. 13:7 where they are so called. That prophecy showed that the shepherd was to be smitten and the flock scattered, and therefore indicated that there would be cause for fear. However, such anxiety could be calmed by reflecting upon God's intention to give them the Kingdom, and by putting all their trust and confidence in Him in the impending time of difficulty.

If we use our material resources in a way that God approves, we shall never lose them! We only loan them out to God who will then more than repay! Jesus taught his disciples that by so doing they built up treasure in heaven which would never fail, would never be stolen, and would never corrupt. He declared: "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

If a person puts all his store on the obtaining of material things now, his heart will be completely absorbed by them. He may call himself a follower of Christ; he may attend meetings and seek to worship God; but if he cannot see beyond the attainment of such wealth, and is not prepared to sacrifice it to serve Christ, his heart is centred upon these corruptible things that will pass away. On the other hand, if he has built up treasure in the bank of heaven, then obviously his desire will be to enjoy its riches, and his heart will be intent upon the establishment of the kingdom that will reveal them for him to enjoy to the full.

### **The True Passover For Jesus' Disciples**

The Lord also instructed his disciples concerning the attitude they should manifest towards his second coming: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."

Strange language this! What did he mean by it? We will find that it is profitable to take a little time and carefully analyse Jesus' meaning.

To have "loins girt about" is to be in a state of readiness to serve (Eph. 6:14; 1Pet. 1:13).

But the words seem to mean more than that!

The expressions used are those of the Passover (Exo. 12:11). In the celebration of this feast, the Jews ate it with their loins girt, and lamps were lit to illuminate the house. It is described by them as a "night of watching unto Yahweh" (Exo. 12:42) when the utmost vigilance had to be observed in readiness for the call to leave Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

The Passover, therefore, commemorated their deliverance from Egypt, when the first-born of that nation died. But those of Israel who had properly eaten the





lamb were saved by being taken out of Egypt.

In the days of the Lord, after the Jews had partaken of the passover meal, they opened their doors indicating they were ready to receive Elijah who was to announce that the Messiah, the promised Deliverer of Israel had come, and they were ready to receive him. The open doors thus represented Israel's open reception of the prophet and of his Messiah.

So Jesus taught: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord..."

This is how Christ's followers should keep the antitypical Passover. Though they may partake of the bread and wine as representative of Christ's passover weekly, they should daily manifest its principles in action, and be found in a watchful, vigilant state, ever ready to receive the Lord when he comes.

But, in the same context, the Lord also used the statement: "He will return from the wedding," and it may well be asked would this contradict the suggestion, that he was drawing a lesson from the keeping of the Passover.

On the contrary, this is a word that can be used for the Passover. The Greek word *gamos* is used both for the wedding feast, and for the feast which preceded it at betrothal. Espousal was a covenant which, under Jewish law, was considered as binding as marriage. It was apparently ceremoniously indicated by the groom placing his garment over the bride, and so claiming her as his own (Ruth 3:9; Isa. 61:10-11). In Ezekiel 16:8, the Passover is described as a betrothal feast. Yahweh is represented as spreading His skirt over Israel, and entering into a covenant with the nation. The reference is to the deliverance from Egypt; thus identifying the marriage or betrothal feast with the Passover of deliverance. Moses described the marriage covenant as the means by which a man "leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). That contract was also seen in the selection of Israel from Egypt that they might be united with Yahweh as "His wife" (Jer. 3:20).

In ancient times, marriage was arranged between the bridegroom and his father, who then negotiated for it on his behalf (Gen. 34:4). Usually a dowry was paid to the father of the bride, and a gift was given to the bride herself (Gen. 24:22; 34:21). Once the dowry had been accepted, the espoused girl was considered as the wife of her future husband (Mat. 1:18-19), and the same principles of separation and dedication existed between them, as did between a priest and Yahweh.

In his statement (Lk. 12:36), Christ is shown as joyfully returning from the Passover espousal feast. As Bridegroom, he has paid his dowry to the Father, and presented his gift to his Bride. And, in return, the Father has negotiated for the marriage, and so made it

possible (Rom. 8:3; 2Cor. 11:1-2). In the saying before us, the Lord represents himself as unexpectedly returning to be met joyfully by his waiting and expectant servants. They open to him immediately, and because their watchful, waiting, vigilant attitude indicates the loyal, loving service they have maintained in his absence, the Lord is so filled with joy, that he sympathises with them in their weariness and ministers to their needs (Isa. 25:6-7).

The language is not easy to understand, because we are not familiar with the Jewish customs relating to the Passover. Once we grasp the point, however, we recognise that it is not sufficient for us to merely “eat bread and drink wine” in remembrance of the sacrifice and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but to apply the principles of his passover in our lives. This means that we must live in a state of constant watchfulness and expectancy for his appearance, always observing the signs of the times that we might not be taken unawares. We need to gird up our loins to labour in his service; we need to have lights burning by sounding out the gospel message; to be watchful and vigilant, seeking the coming of the Lord at all times.

Christ warned the apostles, and therefore us, that the time of his return is not openly manifested, and that there is a need for constant readiness, because “the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

## Chapter 7

### THE PARABLE OF JOSEPH: A FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT — Matthew 24:41-43

*It is significant, that in the very same chapter in which is found the Parable of the Fool, the Folly of Nabal, there is also found the Parable of the Wise and Faithful Servant, which we liken to the Parable of Joseph. Consider some of the features of Joseph's life. He was a faithful and wise servant to Potiphar and in prison (Gen. 39:1-20, 21-23). He provided food in time of famine, so that his brethren came to rely upon him. He clearly typed the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of his brethren. All Christ's followers are called upon to manifest these same characteristics, as is clearly shown in the parable that the Lord now outlined to the people gathered around him.*

**T**HE Lord had just completed the parable of the Passover, when he was interrupted by Peter. "Lord, do you speak this parable to us or to all?" The Lord did not directly answer the question. Instead, he spoke a parable, and allowed Peter to work the matter out for himself. He declared: "*Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*"

The steward is described as being both faithful and wise. He is therefore one who lives according to the principles he believes, and who also manifests discretion towards others. In being appointed ruler of his lord's household, he is in a position of privilege and responsibility, as were the elders later appointed over the ecclesias. He must exercise this faithfully by providing the household with "meat in due season."

Such stewards, though slaves, were expected to supervise the household in the absence of their lord, and to see that all received "meat in due season." Jesus described the pleasure of a master when he returned suddenly to find that his trusted steward had been faithfully carrying out his instructions. He will most certainly bless and reward him.

So it will be at the coming of the Lord Jesus for those who have faithfully carried out the Lord's instructions in his absence.

Though the steward is appointed to a position of authority and responsibility, however, he is still the servant of his lord (v. 45). The word in the Greek is *doulos*, and it signifies "one whose will is

swallowed up in that of another.” A servant is one who is intent upon fulfilling the will of his lord, and considers not his own desires.

Actually, all who have accepted Christ are stewards of the Truth, and they must be faithful to its requirements (Tit. 1:7-9). They, too, must allow their will to be swallowed up in that of their Lord.

### **The Fate Of The Slothful Steward**

But all stewards are not faithful, and in his parable, the Master showed that some would prove to be oppressive to their fellow-slaves under them, and indifferent as to whether their Lord would come or not. Thus they are described as saying in their hearts that their lord delays his coming. This results in them becoming apathetic to the signs, and indifferent to their responsibilities. Being lazy themselves, such stewards order the other servants around, ill-treating them if they are not instantly obedient, but themselves eating and drinking to excess.

However, there is an end to that sort of thing! Suddenly, unexpectedly, the Lord returns. He catches the steward off-guard. There is nothing he can say in his defence. He has broken the covenant he had made with his Lord, and suffers the consequence. Figuratively he is cut in two, and appointed a portion with unbelievers, there to live out his life until death.

### **The Awful Fate Of The Wicked At The Judgment Seat**

The Master described the fate of the slothful servant when his lord returns unexpectedly to find that he has been wasting his substance, as being “cut in sunder.” This is a figurative expression indicating that he will bring clearly home to such stewards that they have broken the solemn covenant that they entered into when they accepted Christ.

In ancient times, a covenant was confirmed by a most solemn ceremony. An animal was taken, and divided in two, and the two contracting parties met between the pieces to make their solemn vow. They then partook of the victim in a sacrificial feast, thus typically showing that both were joined in solemn covenant.

Such agreements were so binding, that death was the penalty of breaking them. In fact, in ratifying it with a covenant victim, they were both actually saying that the fate of the victim should be their’s if they broke it! An example of all this is recorded in Jeremiah 34:18-19.

In the parable, the steward is found guilty of breaking his solemn vow to his lord, and therefore in a figurative sense, he is cut in sunder!

How solemn is the covenant we have made with Christ; how awful the punishment of those who break it!

In explanation, the Master declared that they would be apportioned their "portion with the unbelievers." Having denied those under them their rewards, these unfaithful stewards will be also denied any portion, and relegated to the unbelievers.

In plainer language, they will be sent away from the judgment seat of Christ into the world of unbelievers which they loved, and there they will live out their hopeless existence until death claims them. They will provide an example to all mankind of the folly of those who despised their birthright in Christ.

Furthermore, the higher the position held by unfaithful stewards, the greater their punishment: "That servant, which knew the lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."

Knowledge of God's way brings responsibility, and with the seeking of position, there comes added responsibility (see Jas. 3:1). If we flagrantly despise the way of God, we will ultimately receive "many stripes." Let us recognise this truth, and take heed to our ways.

The Bible gives a clear indication of the fate of the rejected. It speaks of "shame" (Dan. 12:2), of "tribulation, anguish and wrath" (Rom. 2:8-9), of hurt and corruption (Gal. 6:8); of banishment to outer darkness (Mat. 22:13); of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mat. 25:30); of the "second death" (Rev. 2:11).

It shows that the "nakedness" (sinfulness) of such will be first revealed (Rev. 16:15), then they will be publicly condemned in the presence of the angels and their fellow-servants (Lk. 12:8; Rev. 3:15-19), to finally end their days in the hopeless world of unbelievers (Lk. 12:46).

The Lord concluded this section of his speech by saying: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Those who have been brought up in the Truth from early childhood should make the greatest use of this tremendous privilege; those who have the ability to study and expound, must exercise their gift without stint; those who are equipped to organise and administer the work of the Truth can indulge their talent to the glory of Yahweh.

Let us all remember that we must use whatever gifts we have in that fashion, for we are stewards of whatever God has given us. Peter, whose enquiry led to the Lord's parable, himself expounded upon it later. He wrote: "As every man has received a gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever" (1Pet. 4:10-11).

**The Need To Purge  
Sin (Lk. 12:49-50)**

The thought of the Judgment Seat, which the question of Peter had raised, brought to the mind of the Lord the need to purge sin, and the part that he would play in this. "I am come to send fire on the earth," he declared. "And what will I, if it be already kindled?"

The "fire" is the cleansing, consuming, illuminating influence of divine Truth by which sin is purged and men are saved (Isa. 6:6-8; Acts 2:3). That fire had been kindled, and the Lord asked, in meditative mood, "What is my will in regard to it?" The question supplies its own answer! That fire must burn on, purging individuals of sin. His followers must become like the burnt offering under the Law, which was slowly consumed by divine fire, with this difference, that they must be constituted "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1-2). The Spirit-Word of Truth must consume them, causing their lives to ascend as a "sweet-smelling savour" unto God (Eph. 5:2). And so Paul exhorted: "Quench not the spirit" (1Thes. 5:19).

This comment on fire and sacrifice, brought home to the Lord that which he would shortly undergo in the way of sacrifice, in effecting the cleansing of others. He therefore declared: "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened [pained] till it be accomplished!" (v. 50).

Baptism is a symbol of suffering, and the Lord was soon to be immersed in the agony of the cross. In fact, baptism is likened to death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:4), and the baptism in the water of the Jordan, which the Lord had undergone at the beginning of his public ministry, merely foreshadowed that sacrificial death at Golgotha and the resurrection that would crown its completion.

Christ's death on the stake illustrated the road all must travel if they would reach the kingdom of God. The cross must come before the crown, for sacrifice must precede salvation.

## Chapter 8

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF DISCIPLESHIP (Luke 12:51-59)

*Outside the house of the Pharisee, the Lord explained true principles of discipleship to the people, warning them against the teaching of the Pharisees, and plainly revealing the state of mind and attitude required of those who would follow him. Sacrifice in some form or another is required of all such.*

**P**ART of the sacrifice that many must undergo for the Truth is the unhappy division of thought and outlook that occurs in those families where all do not accept Christ in the way laid down. How distressing is the antagonism thus caused. But it is inevitable, because flesh is so obstinate. Christ's own family opposed him during his earthly ministry (Mk. 3:31; Jn. 7:5), but the Lord continued on his way unperturbed. That does not mean that he did not feel this most hurtful of all oppositions, but he set himself a course, and refused to deflect therefrom. He therefore can sympathetically understand the distress of all those who similarly suffer.

#### **Christ Will Divide Families (vv. 51-53)**

Such division, he declared, is inevitable. "Suppose you that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, No; but rather division!"

He declared that he would give peace to his followers (Jn. 14:27), but not at this time to the world, because it refuses him. In the face of such opposition two things are possible: to leave the world to perish in its own foolishness, or to save those who are amenable to his Truth at the bitter cost of division. It would be unrighteous and unjust to leave the latter to perish with the world, yet their salvation is only possible through division, sometimes from their nearest and dearest.

The Lord Jesus quoted the words of Micah the prophet (Lk. 12:53; Mic. 7:6) to illustrate the terrible divisions that were inevitable within families as the Truth took hold of some and was rejected by others. Father would be against son; mother against daughter; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and so on.

The truth of his words has been experienced in many a heart-ache, in many a divided home down the ages; but one day infallible wisdom will put all right to the glory of God. Meanwhile, we must not compromise Truth for fleshly associations.

#### **Why There Will Be Division (vv. 54-57)**

To this point, the Lord had been speaking more directly to his disciples, but now he

turned to the people and addressed them. He spoke of the cause of blindness in so many of them; the reason for divisions that would occur in those families where one might discern the truth, and others reject it.

He referred to a well-known phenomenon of nature. When a certain cloud came from the direction of the Mediterranean and spread over the land, people knew that they were in for rain. On the other hand, when the south wind blew from the desert, they knew that it pointed to a spell of hot weather.

They could prognosticate the weather because of these obvious signs.

But what of the Truth?

There were signs enough to show that Jesus was the Messiah. They had them in the testimony of the prophets, the witness of John Baptist, the miracles which Jesus performed — and yet they did not discern that he was the Christ! He therefore decried them as hypocrites, because having equally obvious signs, they still refuted their witness, and did not properly discern that the times were Messianic!

Then, his indignation mounting, the Lord turned on them with a strong rebuke: “Yes!” he declared, “Why, even of yourselves, you should be able to judge what is right!”

By their own independent study of the Bible, and observation of himself, they should have been able to determine the Truth, but, unfortunately, they were swayed by their blind, ignorant leaders. As the Lord remarked on another occasion, the blind were leading the blind, and both would end up in the ditch!

**Whilst There Is Time,** A little earlier in his discourse, the Lord had **Repent! (vv. 58-59).** quoted the prophecy of Micah 7:6 in illustration of the division that would result in family circles where the Truth was not wholeheartedly accepted. In the previous chapter of the prophet, as Yahweh’s defendant testifies against Israel’s apostasy in the terms of a lawsuit on the basis of their responsibility to Him, the summing up pronounces punishment to come (vv. 13-15).

Consistent with this background, particularly in view of the fact that he had quoted from Micah, the Lord concluded this discourse by warning the people of punishment to come, and exhorting them to repent whilst there is time.

“When you go with your adversary (Gr. *antidikos*, opponent at law) to the magistrate; whilst you are in the way, give diligence that you might be delivered from him; lest he hale you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer cast you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart thence, until you have paid the



very last cent!"

It was an appeal to the people to repent whilst there was time, lest they receive the results of their folly. Yahweh is the Judge, and He would punish the nation severely for its wickedness. All who refused to hearken to the voice of wisdom, and did not step out of the procession of those walking along the pathway to destruction, would receive the result of their actions. They would not be able to avoid the judgment to come. Thus the personal exhortation to them was to repent! The same exhortation comes echoing down the corridor of time to our own day: Repent!

### **A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels.**

#### **CHRIST, THE ANOINTED**

Christ is not a name, but one of the titles of Jesus. The word signifies *Anointed*, and the form of anointing in Old Testament times was to have oil rubbed upon one, thus appointing him to high honour. Christ is therefore the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew, *Messiah*.

"Anointing" signified that the office, and the ability to fulfil it, stemmed from Yahweh, for oil was a symbol of the Spirit of God.

Jesus was called Christ from conception (Luke 2:11), because he, like John, was anointed with Holy Spirit from his birth (Luke 1:15; 2:40). But his claim to the title was strengthened, when at his baptism, as he was about to engage upon his public ministry, the Spirit of God descended upon him (Mat. 3:16), so that he possessed its power "without measure." He then commenced his work as a prophet. He was further "christed" after his resurrection, when Holy Spirit nature was bestowed upon him (Rom. 1:4), and his priestly ministry in heaven began. He will be "christed" again at his return, when he will be set forth as the King of the future age (Psalm 2:6, mg.).

In ancient times, prophets, priests, and kings, were so anointed, and the title applied to Jesus indicates his high office. He is prophet, priest and king.

The fact that the Jews were looking for "the Christ" to appear reveals that they were anticipating the coming of that leader who would be appointed of God to his office, as predicted by the prophets (Deu. 18:18). They disputed that Jesus was the fulfilment of their hopes, in spite of the miracles he performed. However, his resurrection made it obvious as to who he was, so that those accepting it were not able to dispute the fact that he was the Son of God, the Messiah who should come. Peter therefore told the Jews: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). It is both proper and significant that the titles of the Lord Jesus should be used by those who acknowledge and understand them. After his resurrection and glorification, Jesus, in the fullest sense, became both Lord and Christ.

## Chapter 9

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### TRAGEDY IN GALILEE

*Jesus had warned the people of the need to repent if they would escape the judgments of God. This caused some among his audience to question whether a recent tragedy in Galilee was the result of divine judgment for some terrible sin that those affected had committed. The question is an important one, and the answer can apply to whatever tragedies may take place anywhere in the world at any time. The answer of the Lord shows that calamities are brought about, not by divine action, but through the folly or wickedness of man.*

**A**S Jesus paused in his discourse, a few among the great crowd of listeners told him of a most tragic incident that had recently occurred.

A number of Galileans had travelled to Jerusalem for worship. Perhaps their leader had been Judas of Galilee, referred to in Acts 5:37, and who died in similar circumstances.

Whether that be so or not, tragedy struck at this group of Galilean worshippers. In the midst of their devotions, the Roman guard, ordered by Pilate, fell upon them and slaughtered them so that their blood was mingled with that of the beasts that had been killed for sacrifice.

It was a cruel, wanton thing for Pilate to do, especially as they were causing no harm, and were intent only upon divine worship.

**The Need To Repent** Why did he do it? We are not told, but Galileans generally, had a reputation for independence of mind, and turbulence of spirit, that manifested itself in revolt against Rome and, therefore, they were particularly detested by the Romans. Besides this, they were the subjects of Herod, who was, at that time, the bitter enemy of Pilate, the Governor of Jerusalem. Or, Pilate may have been just expending his rage against the Galileans, and manifesting his enmity against Herod by this wicked crime. It was the kind of callous, blood-thirsty thing that he was capable of doing, though it could have been caused by a suspicious attitude of the Galileans in the temple, which was a notorious centre for intrigue. Perhaps he imagined that they were stirring up sedition.

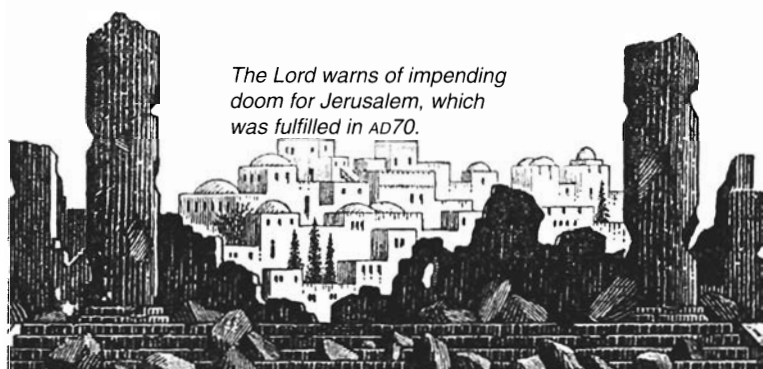
But what troubled the members of Christ's audience was a matter of far deeper concern. Many explained the circumstances away by claiming that whilst it illustrated the wicked cruelty by Pilate, the

slaughtered worshippers must have been terrible sinners for God to have permitted the tragedy to happen.

This is a very comforting philosophy for those who do not suffer, for it demonstrates their righteousness!

It is a theory, too, that is often heard today.

But Jesus did not subscribe to it. He replied to those who drew his attention to this tragedy: "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all others because they suffered like that? I answer, No! Moreover, I tell you, that unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish!"



By "you" he meant Jewry in general. He was endorsing the warning of John Baptist to the nation. John had proclaimed: "O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

The Jewish nation ignored the warning of both John and Jesus, and in consequence suffered the same fate as those Galileans. In the terrible destruction that fell upon Jerusalem in AD70 when the Romans besieged it, many were likewise destroyed. Only those who truly repented and sought to follow Jesus escaped the judgment that fell upon all Jewry at that terrible time.

There was another incident to which the Lord drew attention that illustrated the same truth. A tower, probably at the south-eastern angle of the wall of Jerusalem, close to the Pool of Siloam, had fallen upon eighteen people and killed them. Was that a specific act of divine judgment?

"Were they greater sinners above all men in Jerusalem?" asked the Lord.

He warned them that they were not! There were greater sinners in the city than those eighteen, and unless the nation repented, the divine judgment would reach out and destroy it.

It did so, in AD70, when the temple, like the tower of Siloam, was overthrown in terrible judgment.

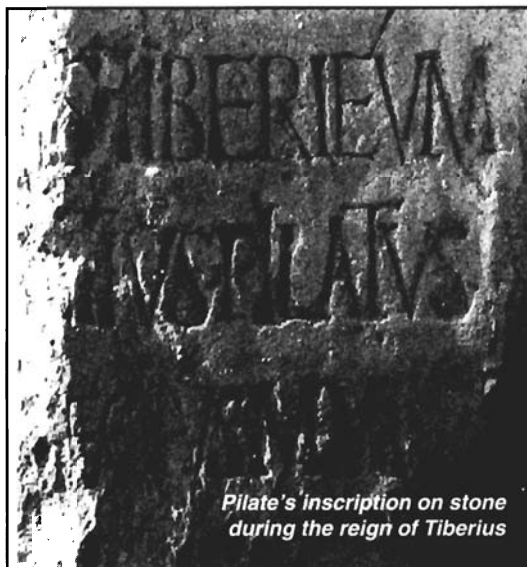
## Different Meanings of the Word “Sin”

The word “sinners” occurs twice in the Lord’s discourse as recorded in Luke, but actually he used two different words, which illustrate different aspects of sin.

The first word (Lk. 13:2) is *hamartoloi*, and it describes sin as “missing the mark.” The mark is the way of life set forth by God for His people to follow either in the commandments He has given them, or in the wonderful example that they see in the Lord Jesus. He is the mark at which we should aim. Paul makes reference to “the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). If we fall short of the mark, or swerve from it, we are “missing the mark.”

The second word is *opheiletai*, and this word signifies a debtor (see Lk. 13:4, mg.). It therefore points to one who has omitted to do something that he knows should be done, and therefore owes something in the measure of his obedience.

The Lord, therefore, referred to two kinds of sinners. The former were positive sinners, *doing* wrong; the latter were negative sinners, *omitting to do* what is right. Thus Christ called upon all of the people to repent. True repentance will be shown in action by avoiding evil and doing good.



*Pilate's inscription on stone during the reign of Tiberius*

## Chapter 10

### PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE (Luke 13:6-9)

*The fig tree is a well-known Bible symbol representing Israel (Joel. 1:7; Jer. 24:5-6), and Jesus used it on several occasions in that way. On one occasion, he cursed a barren fig tree to teach the lesson that Israel must produce fruit if it wanted to escape a similar fate (Mat. 21:19). On another occasion, he told his disciples the parable of the budding fig tree (restored Israel) to show that this would constitute a notable sign that the establishment of God's kingdom on earth was at hand (ch. 24:32). Now he gave the parable of the barren fig tree to show that Jewry could not avoid divine judgment if it persisted in refusing to respond to God's appeal. Jesus had detected in his listeners a spirit of smug complacency as they imagined that the slaughtered Galileans were greater sinners than they, and that they had escaped such a tragedy through their own virtue, and this parable was in the nature of a solemn warning — with also a prophetic significance.*

A man had a notable fig tree standing proudly and prominently in the midst of his vineyard. Its large, green leaves, its wide, spreading branches, showed that the tree was well nourished, and should produce excellent fruit! But year after year, when the owner came seeking for fruit, there was none. All that the tree was good for, was to look at! It gave excellent promise, but no performance!

But the ground on which the tree grew was too valuable to be taken up by such a tree; for if it was removed the vineyard could be extended.

Nevertheless, he was loathe to cut down such an attractive and promising tree if, in some way, it could be induced to bear fruit.

He gave it ample opportunity to do so. For three successive years, he patiently came to it seeking such.

But in vain.

He called the dressers of the vineyard to come to him. "Behold," he said, "For three years have I come searching for fruit on this fig tree, but in vain. Cut it down! Why should it cumber the ground?"

But the vine-dresser pleaded for the tree.

"Lord, leave it for this year, and I will dig about it, and put in manure. Then it may bear fruit, but if not, then cut it down!"

## **The Warning Of The Parable**

The parable ended at that point. Jesus did not say whether the fig tree responded to the treatment or not. He left it at the point of

“if.” There was still time for the fig tree, but time was running out.

The meaning of the parable is not hard to discover.

The fig tree represented Israel. The owner of vineyard is God. The pleading vinedresser who sought to help it was Jesus.

For a period of about three years, ever since John Baptist had been sent out, and Jesus had followed him, God had been seeking fruit from His tree, but had found none. There was plenty of promise but no performance! The temple was crowded with worshippers, the people were flocking to John Baptist, the things of God were studied and discussed — but there was no real application of the message. The fig tree was barren, and God’s patience was nearly at an end. The command had gone forth to cut it down. The pleading voice of the vinedresser sought for extra time to effect a reformation; he had made one last appeal. The last year of his ministry had commenced. He would “dig about it” and “manure it” but if it did not bear fruit now, it would be removed.



At the time, Jesus could say, “If it bear fruit, well...” But time was limited, and the sad sequel to this parable is that the fig tree did not respond and was ultimately cut down.

## **The Lesson Today**

The parable of the barren fig tree is a warning alike to a fruitless nation, a fruitless world, a fruitless believer, and a fruitless ecclesia. It teaches that God’s patience has a limit, and that all will suffer the same fate if they heed not the warning. The ecclesias of Asia did not “behold,” and suffered the fate of the nation. The world today refuses to behold, and will suffer a like fate because it does not produce fruit to the glory of the Father. So, likewise, will every believer who does not apply the lessons that Jesus was teaching at this time. The fig tree had a threefold condemnation:

- 1. It was fruitless;*
- 2. It occupied valuable space that other trees could fill;*
- 3. It drained the soil of nutriment at the expense of surrounding plants.*

Do not let us find ourselves in the place of the barren fig tree.

Later, Peter recalled the lesson and applied it. He told believers that if they give all diligence to faith to produce the fruits in which God delights, it will demonstrate that they have responded to the influence of God in their lives. He wrote: “If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2Pet. 1:8).

## Chapter 11

### THE GRATEFUL WOMAN AND THE POMPOUS BIGOT (Luke 13:10-17)

*Once again the Lord had evidence of the foolish blindness of religious leaders, a blindness that caused them to act a hypocrites in a manner that was abhorrent to God. Yet these leaders imagined they were doing God's service. Jesus was still in the region of Jerusalem, and at the time was teaching in a synagogue somewhere in Judea.*

**O**N one occasion, as the Lord was teaching in a synagogue, his kind eyes ranged over the audience to settle on a woman whose abject state aroused in him feelings of the greatest pity and compassion.

For eighteen years she had been affected with an infirmity. The malady was a curvature of the spine of such a serious nature as to cause her to be completely bowed together.

#### **The Cripple in the Synagogue**

Luke, the beloved physician (Col. 4:14), described her condition accurately. Her face was permanently turned to the ground, and

though she could hear people speaking, she could not look up to view them. Yet, in spite of her distressing affliction, this woman had a love of God, and was found frequenting the synagogue. In fact, in her distressing state she doubtless found much solace in divine worship.

Little did she realise the great joy that was to be hers that day!

Little did she realise that she was to receive the power to lift up her face, and with gratitude to look into the countenance of her benefactor, and the Savior of the world.

#### **The Remarkable Cure**

Jesus looked steadily at the poor, bowed form of the woman among the audience, and paused in his discourse; and then to the astonishment of the people, he addressed her.

“Woman, come here!”

The startled woman heard the summons with wonder, but having been impressed with the power of Jesus' teaching, and impelled by the authority of his voice, she acted. Her pathetic condition was impressed upon the whole congregation as with body bent, and face looking at the ground, she shuffled forward to stand before the Lord Jesus. She was an object of humiliation and helplessness to all in the synagogue.

The people in the synagogue became intent upon the drama being enacted before them. They heard the kind, compassionate tones of the Lord as he addressed her: "Woman," he said to her, "thou art loosed from thine affliction."

At that he laid his hands on her, and to the joyous wonder of the woman, she found that she was cured. With amazement she stood upright; with joy she looked upon the face of her benefactor; with reverent thanksgiving she openly praised God for His goodness.

Once again the Lord had manifested Yahweh as the Healer of humanity (Exo. 15:26). As such he had caused one whose face had been always turned to the ground, to look upwards and into the face of the Savior!

### **The Bigot Speaks**

But there was at least one man who did not look kindly on the Lord's act of compassion. He was very critical of what he observed. He was the ruler of the synagogue. He had observed the healing with indignation because it was a sabbath day. He did not consider that the miracle was an evidence of God's power, and that as the sabbath was His day, the exercise did not violate His law. Instead, he thoughtlessly stood up in his clumsy, angry, zeal to defend the formalism of Judaism. The miracle had been followed by murmurs of admiration on the part of some, but by words of criticism on the part of others (v. 17). The ruler stood up to champion the latter, and to rebuke the former (v. 14). He did not openly attack the Lord, whose divine power was obvious in the miracle, nor the woman who had done no wrong though so badly suffering, but the admiring audience.

To them he declared: "There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day!"

These harsh words of criticism were chilling in their effect upon the people. And yet they were words of Scripture cited from Exodus 20:9. But even Scripture can be misapplied, and certainly it was on that occasion.

The Lord's face hardened as he looked at the interjector, and in words of rebuke, he revealed the hollowness of such sabbath-keeping. The ruler was one of that class of religious formalists who showed every indulgence where their own interests were involved, but absolutely no mercy for others less fortunate than they. In his scathing reply, the Lord drew attention to the way in which the Pharisees showed mercy to their animals (when they were their personal property), and yet harshness toward such as the friendless, poor woman before them. The Lord's fiery words of indignation echoed throughout the synagogue: "You hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the sabbath day loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead



him away to watering?”

Of course they did, as the ruler well knew! And why did they do it? Because in showing kindness to the animals they would receive better service in return. Was it wrong for Yahweh to do likewise to His suffering people?

“And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham whom the adversary has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?”

It was a most telling answer.

Firstly, the Lord recognised the worth of the woman. She was no sinner, but a true daughter of Abraham (cf. Jn. 8:39), and possibly well-known for her piety. Secondly, the Master showed that the ruler had misapplied Scripture, by his proper application of it, speaking of the woman being “loosed from this bond,” for, as Isaiah 58:6 shows that is one of the requirements of the sabbath.

The audience in the synagogue realised this. The Lord’s skilful handling of Scripture caused his adversaries to be ashamed, and the others to rejoice, whilst the pompous officious ruler was completely silenced (v. 17).

### **The Teaching Resumed**

The audience in the synagogue had seen evidence of power that day, such as could completely change the world both in a political sense, as well as in the religious.

The Lord used it to teach of the vast changes that will be brought about by the kingdom of God, both in regard to its authority as well as to its teaching in the Age to come. He spoke two parables unto the people: that of the mustard seed, and that of the leaven hid in meal.

They were parables that he had used before, but which he again used on this occasion because the circumstances were appropriate. We have discussed and explained these parables in vol. 5, pp. 424-425.

## Chapter 12

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### AT THE FEAST OF DEDICATION

*Two months after the Feast of Tabernacles the Festival of Dedication was held in Jerusalem. As the Lord was still in the region of the city, he visited it on this occasion (Jn. 10:22). Apparently he had never left Judea. Luke brings the narrative of his life to the point where the miracle of healing the crippled woman was performed in the synagogue to the annoyance of its ruler (Lk. 13:10-17), and from that incident, we must revert to the Gospel of John, chapter 10, to follow the sequence of the Lord's life.*

*The Feast of Dedication was held on 25th Chisleu which answers to December. It lasted eight days and was a period of general rejoicing. It was originally established by Judas Maccabaeus to commemorate the cleansing of the temple in BC165, some 6½ years after it had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, the vile persecutor of the Jews referred to in Daniel 11. The feast was also called the Festival of Lights, because lights were set up in the homes of the people, and erected over the temple courts. The occasion recalled the heroism of one of the bravest and most successful warriors of Judea following the period of Nehemiah. The feast, therefore, recalled the oppression that took place prior to the time when the Maccabees arose "helped with a little help" (Dan. 11:34) to deliver the nation. Through their efforts the temple was cleansed and Judea rose to a greatness that rivalled any previous period. The thoughts of the people, at the feast, therefore, would be directed to the coming of the Messiah who will repeat in more glorious and complete manner the victories of their hero, Judas Maccabaeus.*

**I**T was winter time,\* and the period of the Feast of Dedication. Because of the inclement weather, the Lord Jesus walked under the shelter of Solomon's porch, quietly observing the celebrations about him. The porch was festooned by lights, and the people were joyously celebrating the wonderful victories of the past.

Solomon's porch was an appropriate place for the Lord to be

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\* The days are at their shortest and darkest at this period of the year in the Middle East, and the lights therefore represent the light of Truth shining in the midst of darkness. How appropriate for the scene described by John. In the Lord Jesus there was seen the Light of Yahweh and of Life walking in the midst of darkness — but the eyes of the people were closed to his real identity.

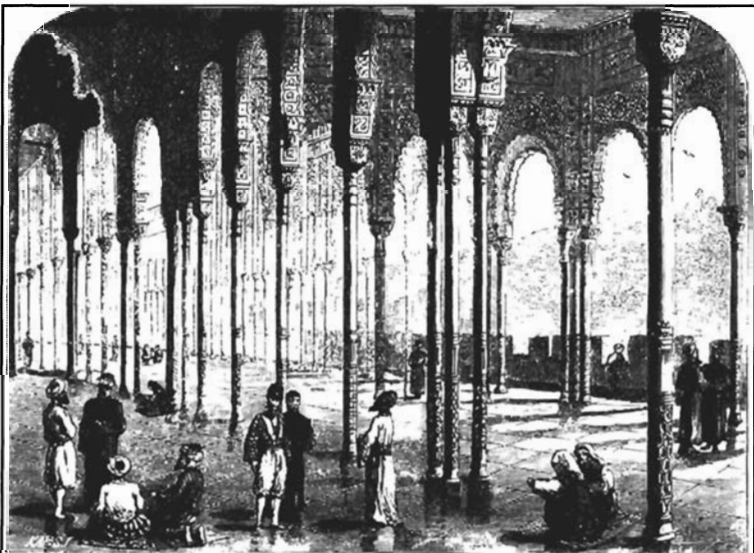
found, for he is the Prince of Peace, and his royal glory will soon far exceed that of Israel's most resplendent king. The porch was called Solomon's because it was thought to be a section of the old temple that was found remaining on the return of the Jews from Babylon.

But soon the Lord was recognised by some of the rejoicing Jews. Some remembered his scathing comments of two months earlier, and now they gathered around him in an urgent manner. They interrupted his meditative walk, determined to challenge him. Due to the celebrations, they were in an excited state, their minds filled with thoughts of the victories of the past and hopes of the future; they gathered around the Lord determined to question him.

**Are You The Messiah?** "How long are you going to hold us in suspense?" they asked. "If you be the Anointed One [the Christ], tell us plainly!"

**John 10:24** The Greek literally signifies that they "kept saying" this, so that perhaps several in the audience flung the questions at him. Their motives were probably mixed. Some hovered between faith and hostility. Others were merely curious. Some desired to incriminate him. All desired "their Messiah," the one who would deliver them from Rome, and by heroic deeds free them from this greater enemy than Antiochus Epiphanes.

Quietly the Lord answered them: "I told you before, and you believed not; but the very works that I do in my Father's name, they



*Solomon's Porch in Jerusalem*

bear witness to the truth of my claims. However, you believe not because you are not my sheep, as I told you before. If you were my sheep you would listen to my voice, and would follow me, and then you would receive eternal life,\* and never perish, neither shall any man have power to destroy you.

“My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of His hand. Moreover, I and my Father are one!”

This is a profound reply. It can be summarised as follows:

1. *I have already told you who I am* (v. 25).
2. *My works prove the truth of my claim* (v. 25).
3. *My sheep recognise my voice* (vv. 26-27).
4. *I know my sheep* (v. 27).
5. *They follow me* (v. 27).
6. *I give them eternal life* (v. 28).
7. *They are eternally safe whilst remaining in my keeping* (v. 28).
8. *I protect them by virtue of the Father's power* (v. 29).
9. *No power is equal to His* (v. 29).
10. *I and the Father work together as one* (v. 30).

The last portion of the Lord's reply has been sadly misunderstood by most people. They imagine that the Lord was proclaiming that he is the second person of the Trinity, and that he, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, comprise only one person. That, of course, is wrong, and is grammatically proved wrong in that “one” is in the neuter gender in Greek, and not in the masculine gender. Jesus is one with the Father in power, in will, in thought in manifestation, in action, but not one in person. In fact, at the time he declared these things, he was mortal in nature, whilst the Father is inherently immortal; and therefore they could not be the same person. Later, in his prayer to the Father, the Lord prayed that all believers might be brought into a similar unity of mind with the Father (Jn. 17:21), showing, beyond all doubt, that in claiming to be “one” he was not asserting to be part of the Godhead.

**The Angry Jews Make Ready to Stone Jesus** The Lord's blunt answer angered the Jews. Moreover they misunderstood the meaning of his words. Claiming that he had been guilty of blasphemy, they took up stones to stone him. But fearlessly the Master faced his furious foes, and boldly he challenged them to successfully accuse him.

“Many good works have I shewed you from my Father, for which

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\* The A.V. renders these words: “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.” The Lord “gives” eternal life in the form of a promise (1Jn. 2:25). The statement can be literally rendered: “They shall certainly not perish for the age.” The Cambridge Bible translates: “They shall never die for all eternity.”

of those works do you stone me?" he asked.

For the moment his answer took them aback. It was obvious that he had performed many good works, and that the miracles he had done demonstrated the power of God. But blind bigotry got the better of them, and they accused him of blasphemy.

"We do not stone you for a good work, but for blasphemy," they retorted. "For you, a mere man, make out that you are God!"

They meant that he was claiming to be more than mere man, that he claimed to be divine. They did not mean that he was literally claiming to be God in the church's Trinitarian sense, because they knew nothing of that doctrine!

In a way, their accusation was right, because the Lord did claim to have divine power and authority; therefore he did not refute that charge, but merely explained it by an appeal to their own Scriptures. He answered them: "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, ye are gods'?"\*

This is true, as the Jews realised. The Lord was quoting from Psalm 82:6, "*Ye are gods, but ye shall die like men.*" In that Psalm therefore, the word "*gods*" is applied to mortal men, and those, too, who are disobedient to God. How much more can it apply to the obedient Son of God!

The word in the Hebrew is *Elohim*, and this same word is translated "judges" in Exo. 21:6; 22:8-9. As judges in Israel they derived their authority and power from Yahweh, and judged on His behalf. To be judged by them was considered the same as being judged by God (Deu. 19:17; 2Chr. 19:6; 1Sam. 2:25 — where the word *Elohim* is again rendered "judge"). They were really the representatives of God, as members of the priesthood, acting on His behalf.

Moses was also given the title of "God" (Exo. 7:1, the capital letter is used in the R.V; Exo. 4:16); and angels also are so described (cp. Exo. 3:2 with v. 11).

So the Lord pressed the argument home to the Jews that if disobedient, mortal men could be termed "God" without incurring a charge of blasphemy, could not he do likewise, without being so charged? He declared: "If He [i.e., Yahweh] called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken [i.e., you must accept the binding power of its truth]; why say you to him, whom the Father has sanctified, and sent into the world, You blasphemers! Because I said, I am a Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works; that you may know, and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him!"

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\* The fact that the word is printed with a small "g" in the A.V means nothing, for initial capital letters were not used in the original Hebrew or Greek.

Here, again, there are profound comments. Jesus claimed to be sanctified, or set apart, like Jeremiah the prophet (ch. 1:5). He told the Jews he was “sent into the world,” being given an official commission like John (Jn. 1:6). But nowhere did he claim to be the second person of a Trinity, as so many allege today.

### Jesus Leaves for Perea (vv. 39-42)

The Jews were silenced by the power of the Master’s arguments, but they were not convinced. Instead, their hatred against him grew, and they considered taking him by force, that they might drag him before the Sanhedrin. But whilst they were discussing how best to do this, he quietly withdrew, probably mingling with some of the less hostile members of the crowd whilst the former argued among themselves.

In the face of the hostility of the people he came to save, the Lord withdrew from Jerusalem, and travelled the 20 or more miles to the River Jordan where he had been earlier baptised by John.

Thus, the “city of the great king” rejected its Messiah. But the witness continued to go forth. At Bethabara, where he had been baptised by John, he stayed for some time, preaching. And success attended his efforts. Many people resorted to him; many miracles were wrought; many believers were won. It was a contrast to the capital city that had rejected him.

And now only about three or four months remained before he would be crucified. Time was short, and there was still much to be done.



***Hanukkah Stamps celebrating the Festival of Lights***



**T**HE district of Perea, located east of the Jordan, was ruled by Herod Antipas. It was an area so far largely untouched by the Lord in his preaching ministry. During the great Galilean ministry, he had preached “throughout all Galilee,” and had also travelled throughout Decapolis, as far north as Caesarea-Philippi. More recently, with the Seventy and the Twelve, he had gone throughout Judea. There remained only Perea. He retired to this district following the antagonism of the Jews in Jerusalem (Jn. 10:40). John records nothing more of what he did in Perea, and it is to Luke that we must turn for details. He declares that the Lord “went through the cities and villages... toward Jerusalem” (Lk. 13:22). This was evidently a circuitous journey throughout Perea, for Luke 13:31 implies that the Lord was in this district because it was the area of Herod. The record of this preaching tour continues to Luke 17:11, and can be conveniently arranged as follows:

- *Jesus and the Pharisees — Lk. 13:22 to 14:24.*
- *Jesus and the Multitude — Lk. 14:25 to 16:31.*
- *Jesus and the Disciples — Lk. 16:32 to 17:11.*



## Chapter 1

### JESUS IN PEREA

**L**EAVING Bethabara, the Lord Jesus commenced a leisurely circuitous preaching tour through Perea with the ultimate objective of returning to Jerusalem.

As he travelled from town to town he preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, calling upon the people to seek God whilst they had opportunity.

Among those who listened to him were the Pharisees, and on one occasion, one of their number interjected: "Lord," he enquired, "are there few that be saved?"

#### **Agonise to Enter the Kingdom (Lk. 13:23-30)**

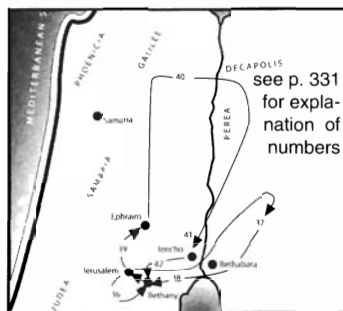
The question was couched in smug, self-righteousness, as though the speaker did not doubt that *he* would be saved, but complacently considered that but few of a

privileged class would be with him. The Lord's answer indicates this, for he warned the man that his salvation was by no means certain, and that only by determined, prayerful, personal effort would it be accomplished.

Moreover, he addressed the man as a class, for in his reply he answered "them" (v. 23), declaring: "Strive to enter in at the straight gate: for many, I say unto you shall desire to enter in, and shall not be able."

The word in the Greek, here rendered "strive," signifies "to agonise." In using it, the Lord emphasised the need for dedicated, personal effort, with complete sacrifice of self in order that salvation might be effected. He warned, too, that the day of opportunity was short.

"When once the master of the house has risen up, and has closed the door, you may stand outside and knock at the door, crying, 'Lord open for us,' but he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from!' You might protest, 'But we ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets!' But he will reply, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from; begone, every one of you, you evildoers!' There you will wail and gnash your teeth, as you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves shut out. Yes, and people will be coming from east and west, north and



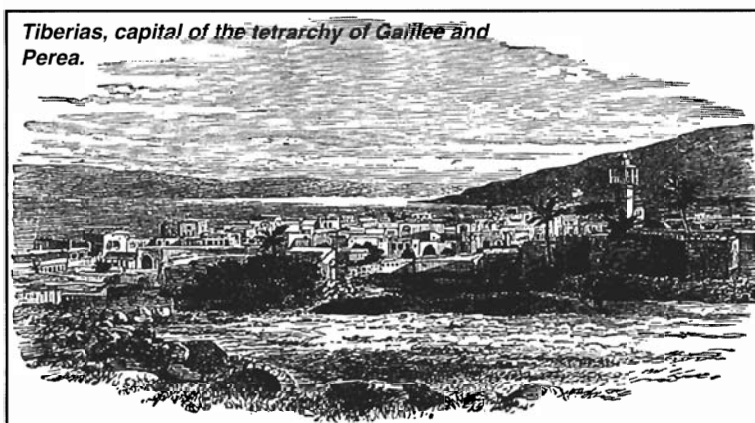
south to sit down and feast in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last!"

These words of the Lord Jesus took his listeners to the Judgment Seat to be set up at his return, and to the Kingdom that will then be established on earth.

To their surprise and dismay they heard that there will be some who will be completely rejected in that day. The Lord will not "know" or recognise them as his own in that day. "We ate and drank in your presence," they will protest, doubtless referring to communion at the Table of the Lord. "You have taught in our streets," they will explain, doubtless meaning by that that they had been the means (the streets) through which his message had reached others. But if that is so, the words of rejection, uttered by the Lord, are a reminder that a true teacher must be more than a mere waymark or signpost — pointing the way but never going there himself! He must not merely proclaim the message, but live it!

To their shame, and their regret, many will be rejected. They will rend the air with bitter wailing in that day, as they recall their lost opportunities. They will see the company of the redeemed, men like Abraham and the prophets, lonely or rejected in their day because of their faithful testimony on behalf of God, but then gathered together as a glorious company in the great feast of remembrance that will be then celebrated at Jerusalem. This will be the fulfilment of that which Jesus promised his disciples when he told them that he would eat bread and drink wine anew with them in the Kingdom of God (Lk. 22:18).

It is obvious from these words of the Master that he taught of a kingdom to be set up on earth in which the rulers will be immortal, but the people will be mortal, because these disbelievers rejected prior to experiencing the "second death" (Rev. 2:11), will see the faithful



gathered together and enjoying a feast of communion with the Lord Jesus (Isa. 25:6-7).

He also taught the Pharisaic Jew who had questioned him, that being a member of the privileged race did not mean that he would automatically enter the kingdom of God. Though the Gospel was taught first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16), “there are last which shall be first and first which shall be last.” Thus Gentiles shall enter the Kingdom of God before some Jews!

**The Pharisees Warn  
Jesus Against Herod  
— vv. 31-35**

On the same day, some of the Pharisees approached Jesus to warn him against Herod. “Leave here straight away,” they warned him, “for Herod will kill you!”

Why did these Pharisees, the deadly enemies of the Lord, warn against Herod? The answer is suggested by the Lord’s refusal to act upon the suggestion. Evidently they feared the influence of the prophet of Galilee, and wanted to get rid of him out of their territory.

It seems as though the Pharisees may have been intriguing with Herod about this time. Perhaps it had been they who had urged him to imprison John, for they were as opposed to the Baptist as they were to the Christ (Mat. 3:7-8). It had been the opposition of the Pharisees that had caused Jesus to leave Judea some time earlier (Jn. 4:1-2), and this had been just prior to John’s imprisonment (Mat. 4:12). Now they tried to drive him from Perea, Herod’s territory, by warning him of the alleged threats of Herod.

The Lord’s answer implies that he knew that they were on terms of intimacy with Herod, because he told them to go and deliver his message to the king (Lk. 13:32) — a message that implied that he had nothing to fear from Herod, but from the Pharisees of Jerusalem (v. 33). He knew Herod to be a cunning, crafty, cruel man, one who would scatter the sheep and lambs in the greed of his rapacious ambition (Eze. 13:4), and therefore appropriately described him as “that fox!”

He declared: “Go you, and tell that fox, Behold I cast out demons, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

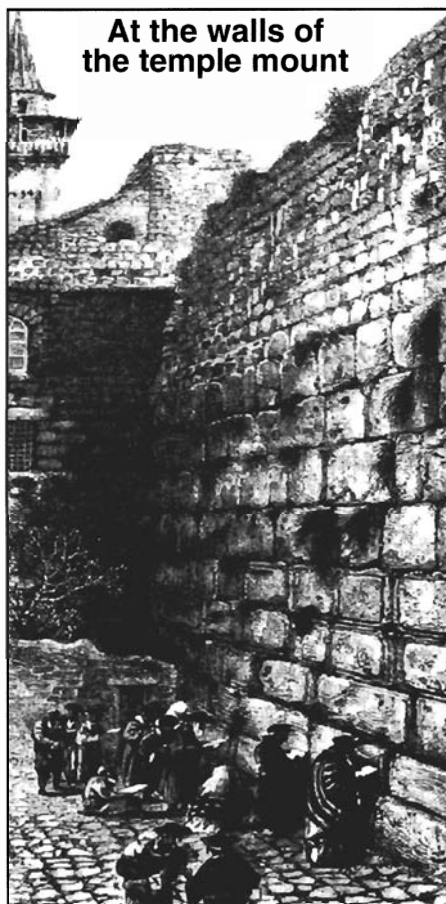
“Today, tomorrow and the third day” is a Hebraism denoting an undefined but specific period of time (see Gen. 31:2; Exo. 4:10; Deu. 19:6, note: A.V. mg.). Jesus therefore declared that Herod would have no power to touch him until his hour had come (Jn. 19:11), and then he would be perfected. The first portion of the Lord’s statement proclaimed his determination to work; and the second portion, the fact that such activity was under divine protection and could not be successfully hindered.

But as he spoke of the tragic events of his last days, he foresaw the even greater drama of Jerusalem, a city that did not appreciate the great privilege paid it by his presence in it, and which would reap the sorrow of lone and dreadful persecution because it rejected the prophets, and worst of all, the Son of God. Like an incurable leprous house (see Lev. 14:44-45), Jerusalem would be left desolate until events at the end of Gentile times cause its people to proclaim: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Lk. 13:35).

When the Lord's sad comment concerning Jerusalem is considered, it shows that he knew and taught:

1. *Jerusalem would suffer persecution;*
2. *The people would be driven into exile and the city left desolate;*
3. *There would be an eventual return of the Jews;*
4. *They would be humbled by trouble and caused to seek the Messiah who would return in the name of God.*

The Lord declared: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets, and stones them that are sent unto you; how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and truly I say unto you, You shall not see me, until the time come when you shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Yahweh!"



## Chapter 2

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### DINING WITH THE PHARISEES

*On several occasions the Lord Jesus dined with Pharisees, but none were a social success. The Lord's refusal to comply with the unscriptural formalism that the Pharisees demanded of their guests as necessary, caused inevitable conflict. The Pharisees were very pious, and as far as that went, they provided an example of stern dedication toward God, however, not according to God's will, but so as to rob their worship of any power. This caused them to reject the very Messiah who they professed to be seeking, and in their jealous hard-heartedness, sought to undermine his influence among the people.*

*Nevertheless, there were some among their number who believed on him, at least partially. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were two such, and there were doubtless others as well (see Acts 15:5). These men did not hesitate to express their opinion when the occasion called for it, and it could have been their agitation, as well as the actual words and miracles of the Lord, that created in some a healthy curiosity as to his mission. This, unfortunately, so frequently floundered on the rocks of their formalism, as to destroy any faith they may have had in Jesus. A typical example of this is recorded by Luke when, during Jesus' sojourn in the district of Perea, he accepted an invitation to dine at the home of a prominent Pharisee.*

**A** certain prominent Pharisee invited the Lord Jesus to dine with him. Other guests were likewise invited, and with much ostentatious display, presented themselves at the house at the appointed time. They were anxious to see the prophet of Nazareth at close quarters, but disliking his teaching, they viewed him only with curiosity and suspicion.

It was a sabbath day, and both host and fellow-Pharisees secretly watched Jesus to see if he broke any of the man-made laws by which they hedged about the simple commandments of the Law. They did not realise it, but they were actually fulfilling a prophetic Psalm by their suspicious attitude! The Psalmist declared: "The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. Yahweh will not leave him in his hands, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on Yahweh, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it" (Psa. 37:32-34).

Thus, after jostling for the most prominent places around the table,

the pompous Pharisees continued to observe Jesus with hostile scrutiny. The Master, though a “guest,” found himself in an increasingly unpleasant, tense atmosphere.

### **Jesus Heals A Dropsical Man**

— Lk. 14:1-6

Among the unbidden guests who, in the manner of the East, stood about the room and looked on, was a man afflicted with dropsy.

He stood in a prominent position which, together with the keen watchfulness of the Pharisees, suggests that he may have been placed there to test the Lord’s scruples regarding sabbath-healing.

The Lord was fully conscious of all that was going on, for he could read the very thoughts that were moving in the minds of the Pharisees. At last he broke the silence: “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?” he enquired.

The Pharisees were taken aback by the bold, challenging question. Its very directness took them by surprise so that they refused to answer. Certainly, they had scruples about healing on the sabbath, but was it unlawful according to Scripture? To claim that it was so, would be to set one at variance with the express teaching of such scripture as Isaiah 58:6 which commands true Israelites to “undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free.” And, after all, who can heal, but Yahweh alone!

The Pharisees evidently realised all this, and refused to answer the Lord’s question. Their very silence, however, indicated that they knew that it would break no sabbath law, as far as the Scriptures were concerned, to heal the man if such were possible. For a moment there was a pause, as each one wondered what next would be done. All animation was suddenly suspended in the now silent room, and then the Lord, in the presence of them all, took the sick man, and healing him of his malady, let him go.



The Pharisees looked on frustrated. It was obvious to all, that the healing was an act of God, and therefore to criticise it would be to challenge the fact of divine mercy. At the same time, it broke a restriction that the Pharisees had made to hedge in sabbath observance, and thereby challenged their teaching.

They therefore looked upon this act of mercy with disapproval. They did not consider their own inconsistency, in

that they were prepared to waive their tradition to help their own family, or even one of their animals, if such were endangered on the sabbath, but instead, they mentally frowned upon his action.

It was this unspoken criticism that the Lord then answered (Lk. 14:5).

“If a son,\* or even an ox belonging to you, shall fall into a pit, will you not immediately draw him out on the sabbath day?”

This statement bluntly revealed their utter inconsistency, but what could they say in reply? They could not dispute the fact. Yet to admit it would be to confess defeat in their attempt to discredit the Lord. If they had been truly alive to their spiritual responsibilities they would have frankly admitted their fault, and asking the forgiveness of God, sought to have made amends.

Instead they remained silent.

The Lord then spoke a parable which soundly rebuked these guests, and appealed to them to manifest humility.

### **The Parable Of The Pompous Guests — vv. 7-11**

Whilst the Pharisees had been curiously watching the Lord to observe his reaction to the circumstances in which he found himself, he, also, had observed how they conducted themselves. Though they were celebrating the sabbath, which should have taught them the lesson of humility, he had noticed that they had marked out and had chosen for themselves the most honored places in the house of the prominent and wealthy Pharisee. They had jostled one another out of the way in a struggle for precedence, an action that illustrated how completely they were governed by pompous pride, the weakest and most contemptible side of human nature.

Pride, however, can take two forms. To strive for the highest place unbidden when it is not one's due, is conceit; to obstinately refuse it when it is rightfully offered, is inverted snobbery. The Lord stood aside from both extremes, and thus gave an example of true humility, for such takes as much care to avoid the ostentation of an affected refusal, as the open demand for recognition which is but the manifestation of human pride. And pompous pride was the besetting sin of the Pharisees (Mt. 23:6; Phil. 2:3).

Jesus, therefore, told them the parable of the man bidden to the wedding feast: “When you are bidden of any to a wedding, do not sit in the highest place; lest a more honourable man than you be bidden of the host, and he that invited you and him tell you, to give place to the other man, and you are disgraced before the other guests. But when you are bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that invited you arrives, he may possibly address you, ‘My friend,

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\* The A.V. renders this statement as “an ass,” but it should be translated “son” as it is in the Diaglott.

come up hither,' and in consequence you will be honoured before all the other guests. For whosoever exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted."

It was a simple lesson in humility, and also a well warranted rebuke for the proud guests who had taken their places around the table that sabbath day, jostling others out of the way that they might secure for themselves the more prominent positions.

But the parable goes further than that, for it is prophetic in its teaching. It sets forth the general principle which God has established as the basis of His dealings with man. Man must humble himself before God before He will accept him, and this is so in regard to the nations as well as individuals. The nations have jostled with one another for the highest positions, but the time is coming when they will all be humbled before the mighty power of Yahweh manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. 2:12-17). Man must come to realise that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and will set up over it him who is set at naught by men" (Dan. 4:17, Septuagint). That One, whom all mankind has set at naught, is the Lord Jesus Christ, due, ultimately, to be elevated over all. When his impending birth was announced to Mary, she immediately saw its significance by rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophetic Word, that the humble would now be able to triumph over the mighty (Lk. 1:46-55).

In his parable, the Lord made reference to guests invited to a wedding (Lk. 14:8), from which it is obvious that he was speaking prophetically of his own wedding-feast: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Those called do not constitute merely the "Bride," or those of the ecclesia who will inherit life eternal, but also those "guests" who will be invited to witness the glory of the Age to come: those obedient nations whose "lives" will be prolonged for that period of time (Dan. 7:12).

In the Lord's day, a marriage supper took place after the wedding, and the guests formed a procession joining the bridal party as it moved from the place of the marriage to that of the supper. Such processions were augmented as additional guests attached themselves to the gathering. The "guests" of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will constitute those nations that willingly submit to the authority of the Lord Jesus following his invitation to them to do so after Armageddon. Jostling for position will certainly be out of place at such a wedding-supper. In fact, both the wedding and the subsequent supper will cause all (both individuals and nations) to be conscious of their unworthiness to be present. Foremost among the nations having been humbled in that day will be Israel, and this will be required because of the very pompous attitude adopted by its leaders during



their history. Then will be fulfilled both aspects of the concluding words of Christ's parable: "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," and the nation of Israel will become the leading nation upon earth during the millennium and beyond (Lk. 14:11. See also Mic. 4:8; Jer. 30:11; Job 22:29; Psalms 18:27; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5-6).

**Jesus Teaches his Host** And now Jesus turned his attention to his host. This prominent Pharisee had no doubt encouraged the spirit of competition for position on the part of his guests by perhaps pompously inviting some to take higher positions over others, in order that his personal prestige might be advanced.

**Who to Invite** He, too, had to learn a lesson in humility. This was a sabbath feast, designed to honour God, and no ordinary occasion when normal social intercourse would be in order. The Old Testament law concerning the sabbath (and the Pharisees had criticised Jesus before because they claimed that he did not keep the sabbath) included the following instructions: "Is it not this the fast that I have chosen?... To deal their bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?" (Isa. 58:6-7).

**— vv. 12-14** The Lord reminded the Pharisee of this. He declared: "When you make a dinner or a supper, call not your friends, your brethren, your kinsmen, nor your rich neighbors, in case they invite you back again and you get repaid. No, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. Then you will be blessed; for as they have no means of repaying you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just!"

The Pharisee was thus reminded of his obligations under the Law. In doing so, Jesus by no means condemned friendly intercourse among acquaintances, but warned of the sin of expending oneself in lavish entertainment for friends whilst ignoring the obvious duty one owes to others. Moreover, this was a sabbath, and the meal was therefore religious in its character. Our religious "feasts"\* should not be exclusive; we should not limit the preaching of the Gospel to those whom we, in our limited understanding, might imagine are the types of people God requires, for He has made it possible for all, even the ungodly (those who normally are without any sense of reverence to Him) to be justified (Rom. 4:25; 5:6).

The Pharisees would have nothing to do with publicans and sinners, figuratively the spiritually "poor, maimed, lame and blind."

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\* By this we mean the preaching of the Gospel and not fellowship at the Table of the Lord which is to be treated as exclusive, as Scripture clearly teaches. Israel was condemned in that they "brought strangers, uncircumcised in heart, to be in My sanctuary, to pollute it, even My house, when ye offer My Bread..." (Eze. 44:7).

and would not even minister to their spiritual needs.

In helping those who cannot adequately repay (both materially and spiritually), a follower of Christ manifests a divine characteristic (Psa. 68:10; Lk. 1:53), and in due time will reap his reward. In Matthew 25:40, the Lord is represented as saying to the righteous when they stand before his judgment seat: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

This has ever been the teaching of Scripture. Proverbs 19:17 declares: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto Yahweh; and that which he hath given will He pay him again."

Unfortunately, though the blind Pharisees studied the Scriptures it was without true understanding. Therefore they were found opposed to that which they professed to revere.

**The Parable Of  
The Great Supper  
— vv. 15-24**

The teaching of the Lord Jesus so startled the company of people gathered together in the house of the wealthy Pharisee, that one of those reclining at the table involuntarily gave a spontaneous word of praise, expressing his admiration of it: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God," he declared.

This remark gave the Lord opportunity to set before the company further truths concerning the kingdom. He did so in a parable that is also a prophecy, and which emphasises two features:

- *It answers the question as to who shall enjoy the privileges of the kingdom.*
- *It expresses a warning against delay and excuses in performing the will of God.*

The parable was appropriate to the circumstances in which the company then found itself, and was built around the custom of sending invitations to guests to attend a supper which, in this case, were refused. How would that prominent Pharisee feel if all the invitations he had sent out had been rejected? Would he not consider it an insult? And would not that show that the invited guests treated him with contempt? And yet, that was how they were treating the invitation of Almighty God!

Jesus tried to bring this home to the assembled guests by his parable. He declared that a certain man prepared a large supper, to which he invited a number of guests. But at the hour of supper, when all was ready and he sent his servants to tell the guests to come, they each made excuses. One claimed that he had just purchased a field and had to inspect it; another declared that he had just taken delivery of five yoke of oxen and had to prove them; a third announced that he had just been married and therefore could not come.

The man became angry with these repeated excuses, and told his servant to go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, the maimed, and the blind to the feast to take the places of the invited guests.

The servants did so, but still there was room.

“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled,” ordered the man, “for I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper!”

That concluded the parable. The Lord added no word of explanation, but left it to his host and the guests to work it out for themselves.

What did it signify?

All the details of Christ’s parables are important to their understanding. Note, for example, that it was “supper time” when the servant of the “certain man” was sent forth to advise the guests that the meal was ready. Supper time is at evening, when the sun is withdrawing its shining, and, according to the teaching of the Lord, represented the period of the first advent. He described himself as “the light of the world” and taught that “night” would come for the nation when he ascended into heaven and was absent from their company (Jn. 9:4-5).

It was therefore “supper time” as the Lord was engaged upon his ministry.

All things had been made ready by God for the Jews at that time, and the message had gone forth through John Baptist inviting them to participate in that which God offered them (Mt. 3:1-2).

But the invitation was refused!

One advanced a pretended necessity: “I must needs go...” (v. 18); the next set forth his own will: “I go to prove them...” (v. 19); the third claimed an impossibility: “I cannot come...” (v. 20). All refused the invitation through things in themselves lawful, but which were pressed against that which should have taken the precedence. The real ground of all these excuses, of course, was contempt for the feast and the one preparing it, though those refusing the invitation sought to be able to make their rejection sound legitimate!

How true this is of human nature when offered the gospel!

In the parable, the servant of the man preparing the feast was again sent forth, this time to the poor, the maimed, and the blind who did accept it.

This part of the parable was fulfilled by the Lord himself, who as the servant of Yahweh, carried the Gospel message to the publicans and sinners who eagerly accepted it. They are represented in the parable as the poor, maimed, halt, and blind, found in the streets and lanes of the city, or within the nation of Israel.

But the number of Jews who accepted the message was not sufficient to fill the vacancies for the feast, and so the third command was issued: "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled!"

So the servants were sent beyond the bounds of the city, figuratively they were sent to the Gentiles, to "compel" them to come in.

This was the work of the apostles. They were sent forth to "compel" Gentiles to come in, not by force, but by persuasion. So Paul told the Jews: "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

As far as the nation of Israel was concerned (as distinct from those individuals who accepted the invitation), it rejected the kind invitation of God, in spite of the warning words of Proverbs 1:24-29. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me; For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of Yahweh."

In the terrible destruction that came upon the Jewish State in AD70, these words had awful fulfilment.

## Chapter 3

### JESUS AND THE MULTITUDE (Luke 14:25 to 16:31)

*Luke 13:22 to 17:10 present some of the teaching of the Lord Jesus as he preached throughout the district of Perea on the east of the Jordan. This teaching can be divided into three main sections: Jesus and the Pharisees (Lk. 13:23-14:24); Jesus and the Multitude (Lk. 14:25-16:31); and Jesus and the Disciples (Lk. 17:1-10). The first section was directed specifically to the Pharisees, but the remaining two were delivered to the multitude and his disciples because of the corrupt teaching and influence of the Pharisees. In his discourses, Jesus provided pearls of wisdom for every class of society, which have an application to our times as well.*

**A**S Jesus went from place to place, large companies of people followed him. As the good shepherd, he was always at their head, leading them onwards, whilst every now and then pausing to teach them. They were, therefore, like a flock of sheep, following the shepherd, stopping now and then to pasture in the rich fields.

**The Cost And Responsibilities of Discipleship — vv. 25-35** — On one such occasion, he must have startled them with the demands of discipleship that he made. He declared: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple!”

These words strike more harshly upon our ears than they would have upon the ears of those to whom they were originally addressed, for they were used to the Oriental-style figurative language called “Hebraisms” used. “Love” and “hate” were to the Hebrews only relative terms, the former being expressive of an all-absorbing affection at the expense of all else, and the latter signifying that the object of it held second place in the affection of the person manifesting it.

For example, in Genesis 29:30, it is stated that Jacob “loved Rachel more than Leah,” which implies that whilst he had a deep regard for Leah, it was overshadowed by his greater love for Rachel.

The next verse states, however: “When Yahweh saw that Leah was hated ...”

Leah was described as “hated” because Jacob’s affection for her

was completely overshadowed by his all-absorbing passion for Rachel.

Discipleship to Christ demands a similar devotion to his cause; all other things, all other affections, must be subordinated to it, to such an extent that it becomes the all-absorbing passion of our lives.

Such consuming service must be rendered in faith, recognising that it will ultimately prove to be for the best, not only for ourselves, but for those who are dear to us, such as father, mother, wife and children. For example, we love Christ best by obeying his commandments (Jn. 14:23), and these require that we “honour father and mother” (Eph. 6:2), that husbands love their wives (Eph. 5:25), that wives render due consideration to their husbands (Eph. 5:33), and that parents consider their children (Eph. 6:4).

The disciple that learns to love Christ with full devotion will learn to love others also.

Nevertheless his words to the multitude on this occasion, served to warn them of the responsibilities of discipleship. True discipleship is a work of dedicated soberness, of calm, fixed and determined purpose. No man can properly enter on it who does not resolve, by the grace of God, to fulfil all His requirements, and make it the consistent and dominating business of his life. It demands the setting aside of sin for a life of self-denial; it requires that we fight fleshly lusts in an endeavor to fulfil the will of Yahweh; it will often incite the enmity and ridicule of a world that cannot understand our motives. Under certain circumstances it may even cost us our liberty, or call upon us to sacrifice everything that is dear to us, even our life. Such was the case with the apostles who saw clearly into the future, and recognised the need of such sacrifices. Paul wrote: “But what things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ...” (Phil. 3:7-8).

A true follower of Christ will daily crucify his personal desires that run counter to God’s law, in order to fulfil the exhortation of the apostle to “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24), and in so doing must “bear his cross.”

This is far from easy, and it is necessary for Christ’s disciples to consider the difficulties facing them and so seek the means to overcome them. “For which of you,” asked the Lord in his discourse, “intending to build a tower, does not first sit down to calculate the expense, to see if he has enough money to complete it? In case, after he has laid the foundation and then is unable to finish the building, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king sets out to fight against another king without first sitting down to deliberate whether with ten thousand men he can encounter the king who is attacking him with twenty thousand? If he can not, when the other is still at a distance, he will send an embassy to do homage to him.”

These words of sound instruction have been sadly misapplied. Candidates for baptism have been told to “count the cost,” as though they can set aside the covering of Christ if they feel that the demands of discipleship are too great.

But that is not what the Lord meant by these words of instruction.

Certainly he called upon the people to count the cost of discipleship, but only that they might assess their own inability to perform it perfectly, and seek the means that God’s grace will freely give them to make good their own lack.

Consider the illustrations that he gave.

If a person’s desire to build a tower is sufficiently strong, and the need sufficiently great, he will obtain the means to complete the work, even though he may not possess them himself. He will either sell some of his remaining property, or he will borrow from others to complete it, otherwise he will be thoroughly discredited in the eyes of others.

This is the principle that the Lord was urging in regard to discipleship. Let the true disciple carefully consider what is required of him, not that he might evade or delay the call to service because of the difficulties facing him, but in order that he might fully understand the need to seek every available help to surmount and conquer the problems he will have to face.

Discipleship to Christ should not be abandoned because of a sense of personal unworthiness. Rather, through a calm and candid appraisal of individual weakness, a person should seek the all-sufficient strength that comes through Christ. So Paul taught: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

Christ’s second illustration was that of a warrior going forth against his enemy. He emphasised the importance of the warrior carefully analysing the relative strength of that enemy, lest he unexpectedly learns of the overwhelming odds, and is forced to a dishonourable submission. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. A good general, knowing the strength of an enemy, is able to make adequate preparations to meet and destroy him. Peter learned that lesson. On a later occasion, he rashly encountered the enemy in his own strength, and was put to flight (Lk. 22:31-34, 54-61), and this experience enabled him to later to exhort his brethren as to where the source of their true strength lay (1Pet. 5:6-9).

Paul likewise called upon Timothy to “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Christ” (2Tim. 2:3).

How does one best “make war”?

The wise man answers: “Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war” (Pro. 20:18).

Christ’s followers have a warfare to wage (1Tim. 1:18), and they will only succeed in the battle by divine counsel and good advice

such as the Scriptures provide. Through these means disciples will learn how strong is the enemy they must encounter, even the flesh. They will realise that their own strength is inadequate for the purpose, and therefore they must accept the alternative between admitting defeat by compromising with the enemy, or seeking further allies that they might add to their strength. And there are those at hand who are ready to help. God has promised that if they draw near to Him, He will draw near to them. He has promised such: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," so that Paul responded "We may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5-6).

Again the apostle declared: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things? ...Nay, in all these things [such as tribulations, persecutions, trouble] we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:31-39).

With such allies as those at hand, we can obtain sufficient strength to overcome the strongest enemy.

How do we draw upon that strength? Christ has taught us in this parable. We first need to consider any problem, quietly meditating upon it with the Bible in hand. Then make it a matter of prayer. How comforting it is when one is utterly dejected and depressed, to hand the problem to the Father in prayer, and to lean upon Him in our frustration or our sorrow. In addition to prayer, however, we must also show personal resolution and determination in facing these problems, and so providing the basis whereby God can help us. For prayer without performance is useless; God will not help us unless we help ourselves with those things which He has already supplied us and which are at hand.

When we apply these principles, experience will show that we will not find our prayers remaining unanswered, though perhaps not always as we expect them to be.

But this requires personal sacrifice: the ruthless rejection of those things that would hinder us in building, or in the battle of life. So Jesus continued: "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple."

These words are frequently misunderstood. They must be understood in the light of their context. The two parables teach that unless a person carefully considers and understands the cost of discipleship, and recognises that it demands great sacrifices (if need be, all that a person has) to attain success, he will reap but shame and failure, like the man who began to build but could not finish, or the king that commenced a war but was forced to come to terms because he could not employ sufficient soldiers. To complete the tower, or



employ sufficient soldiers, might require the personal sacrifice of all available wealth.

Jesus declared that a true disciple must be prepared to “forsake all that he has,” under such circumstances. This does not necessarily mean that a man being a follower of Jesus must always, under every circumstance, part with all that he has, for there were worthy followers of the Lord who were also wealthy (cp. Mat. 27:57; 1Tim. 6:17), and yet served him with single-minded devotion. The word “forsake” (Gr. *apotasso*) can signify to so set apart one’s possessions as to be able at any point to put both them and the consideration of them aside to serve Christ first and foremost. In this way a person can “forsake” his possessions, though he legitimately retains their use in accordance with the guidance of the Word.

In this materialistic age, possessions can become a danger if we allow them to blind us to our spiritual obligations to Christ. We must see that he takes precedence in our thinking and actions, and not the considerations of house, business or possessions.

Let us ever bear in mind the vital exhortation of the Lord.

He concluded his teaching at this time by reminding his listeners that salt is good whilst it retains its flavour; otherwise it is flung out on the roads where men tread it underfoot. The disciple who professes Christ but does not carry out his commands is like salt without flavour, and will be rejected by the Lord at his coming, to be held in contempt of men.

### **Jesus Despised For Associating With Sinners**

The clear, vigorous teaching of Jesus angered the Pharisees who turned away from him; but many publicans and sinners were attracted by his obvious sincerity, and the frankness of his expressions, and drew near to hear more of his powerful, practical words of doctrine.

This gave the Pharisees opportunity to criticise him. As a sect, they kept strictly apart from all other groups, and would not so much as explain the Bible to such as the publicans and sinners, for whom they only had the greatest scorn.

When they saw this class of people attracted to the Lord, they sought to discredit him, by a smear campaign among the multitudes. “This man receives sinners, and eats with them,” they contemptuously told the people.

By “sinners” they did not mean people who flagrantly broke the commands of God in an immoral way, but Gentiles, or Jews who associated with them, and lived like them. Those outside of the covenants of promise were “sinners of the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:15), and were held in the greatest contempt by such as the Pharisees who strictly refused to have any association with them, considering that

they were not worthy to be taught the Truth. They did not consider that from a merely "moral" point of view such people could be worthy citizens.

In answer to the criticism of the Pharisees, and to show that God would receive those whom they called "publicans and sinners" if they turned to Him, the Lord Jesus spoke three parables which he linked together as one.



*The Parable  
in Three  
Parts: The  
lost sheep;  
lost coin;  
lost son.*

## Chapter 4

### THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP, LOST SILVER, AND LOST SON (Luke 15)

*The three parables of Luke 15 are treated as one, for introducing them, Luke wrote: "He spake this parable [not parables] unto them" (v. 3). Each parable adds to the one that went before it, so that they follow one upon another without specific individual introduction (vv. 8, 11). They illustrate three different aspects of one subject: the work of redemption. Consider the different causes of the loss in the three parables. The sheep was lost through its own action, straying from the shepherd through curiosity or desire for better pasture. The coin was lost, not through its own fault, but that of the woman who possessed it. The son was lost through deliberately, wilfully and consciously leaving the house of his generous father, and squandering the inheritance granted unto him. The first represented a 1 per cent loss of the flock; the second, a 10 per cent loss of the woman's hoard; the third, a 50 per cent loss of the family. These figures are significant. They suggest that whilst comparatively few may stray through curiosity or desire for better pasture, the greater number are lost by the carelessness of others, whilst even more leave through wilful, fleshly desire. Now consider the three mediums of reconciliation in each parable. The shepherd represents the Lord Jesus; the woman, the Ecclesia; and the father, Yahweh. The first parable centres attention on the lost, the second on the search, the third on the restoration, so that the dominant verbs throughout are lost, seek, found, rejoice. If these principles are kept in mind whilst the parable is studied, many wonderful points of exhortation will be revealed.*

**A** similar parable had been earlier given to the Lord's disciples (Mat. 18:12-14), but this one was given to the people generally, as illustrative of his ministry.

#### **The Parable Of The Lost Sheep — vv. 3-7**

To that end, Jesus drew attention to the tender care of any real shepherd for the sheep in the flock. Supposing one strays away and is lost, does he abandon it to its fate? By no means. Rather he laboriously searches for it, that he might restore it to the flock.

Why should a sheep stray? Through very waywardness. In those times the shepherd went before the flock, calling the sheep as he did so, and they obediently followed. They came to know him and trust

him implicitly. But what if one of them took its eyes off the shepherd, and allowed them to wander to pastures that might appeal? Then the danger was that it might stray away from the path. Usually, however, sheep kept with the shepherd, carefully treading along the path in which he walked.

A lost sheep, therefore, was an animal that had strayed into danger through greed or curiosity, causing it to divert its eyes from the shepherd. Peter, who heard the parable on two occasions, learnt the lesson of it through bitter experience, and applied it in his exhortation. He wrote: "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd" (1Pet. 2:25).

In the parable, the Lord described how a shepherd, having learned that one of his sheep had strayed, and after carefully providing for the shelter and safety of the remaining 99 sheep, carefully and painstakingly retraced his steps to find the one that was lost. What motive would govern a shepherd in so acting? Merely the loss involved in the cost of an animal? Not merely, even though shepherds were called to account for every member of the flock given into their care (Gen. 31:39). No, it was the principle of personal responsibility to every animal in his care that motivated such actions on the part of shepherds. A true shepherd carefully supervised the condition of every animal in his flock, and sought to help each one according to its particular needs (Eze. 34:1-6). When Jesus described himself as the "good shepherd," and decried the Pharisees and Sadducees as mere hirelings or worse, he was emphasising that he assumed personal interest and responsibility in every member of the flock placed in his care. In Luke 22:31-32, he is revealed as a shepherd carefully tending a "lost" sheep; in the beautiful prayer in John 17, he is shown as a shepherd accounting to the Master Shepherd (the Father, Psa. 80:1) for the whole of the flock given to him; in John 21:15-19, he is represented as a Master-Shepherd instructing one of the under-shepherds in his duty to the flock.

In the parable, the Lord described how a shepherd, having found the straying sheep, would joyfully bear it on his shoulders to return it to the flock.

What a beautiful figure of the care that appointed leaders should show toward those in their charge! One can imagine the irritation and concern experienced by a shepherd when he came to count the flock at the close of the day, only to find one lost. After providing for the shelter and safety of the main flock, and without thought for the difficulties of the search in the gloom of the night, nor his own need for rest, he would retrace his steps to seek that which was lost, filled with anxious care for its welfare. But what joy when it was found. His irritation would be swept away in the realisation of a job well done. He would realise the natural tendency of sheep to wander, and make

allowance for it; and in the sheer pleasure of accomplishment, he would carefully inspect it. If it was footsore and weary, he would tenderly care for it, happily bearing it homewards, rejoicing with his friends, not in the monetary value of that which was saved, but in the fact that his labor was not in vain.

Surely Jesus' listeners would see the point of the parable. The Pharisees had criticised him for associating with those whom they believed were lost, but the Lord showed that in so doing, he was truly acting the part of a conscientious shepherd. He told them that there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repents, than in ninety and nine persons who think they are just, and without need of repentance (Lk. 14:7).

This is obviously the language of irony, for otherwise Jesus would be teaching the virtue of straying rather than of keeping with the flock. He was speaking to the people in relation to the teaching of the Pharisees who claimed that they were justified, and had no need of the repentance that he was urging upon them.



This parable, therefore, illustrates the fact that sheep will stray, and the duty of a true shepherd when such occurs. It introduced Christ's listeners to the next section of the parable, which is closely united to it by the word "either" (v. 8), and which illustrates the work of the ecclesia.

### **The Parable Of The Lost Piece Of Silver — vv. 8-10**

Whereas the sheep was lost through its own action in straying from the flock, the coin of this parable was lost "in the house." It teaches that a person can be "lost" to Christ, even though retaining association with the ecclesia, and perhaps attending the meetings regularly.

The woman had "ten pieces of silver." This was probably a reference to the custom of the times, for when women became betrothed, they wore upon their foreheads a frontlet called *Semedi* made up of pieces of silver, largely valueless in themselves, but which were highly prized for their sentimental worth because of what they represented, for the *Semedi* betokened the fact of marriage, or the promise thereto.

The woman made a diligent search in her house for the lost coin, recognising that disgrace would be hers if she went out with one missing. Lighting a lamp (representing the Word: Psa. 119:105), she

carefully swept out the house, diligently seeking it.

What joy when she found it! Restoring it to its place, she hastened to her neighbors to rejoice with them in the success of her search.

The parable emphasised the responsibility of the ecclesia to carefully supervise that treasure given into its charge. Let the house be illuminated with the light of the Word that it might be thoroughly cleansed, and that any "coins" missing might be restored to their place.

An ecclesia that does that, suggested the Lord, may be sure that there will be rejoicing in heaven over its action.

The Pharisees elected to be custodians of Gods' Truth, and in charge of His house, but here were duties that they neglected.



### **The Story Of The Lost Son — vv. 11-32**

The final section in the trilogy is the well-known story of the prodigal son. He was the younger son in a family of two, and desiring to make his own way in the world, he requested his father that he divide to him the portion of goods that would fall to him on the death of his father.

He had a legal right to the property when this sad event took place (Deu. 21:17), but it was an act of grace on the part of his father to give it to him during his lifetime. But foolishly, the younger son gathered that which his father gave him, and taking his journey into a far country, there wasted his substance in riotous living. He thus cut himself off from his home and, figuratively, from God, for that was what the expression could mean to a Hebrew (Gen. 4:14; Jonah 1:3).

But a severe famine arose in that country, and having wasted his resources, the foolish son found himself in want. In his extremity, homeless and hungry, he forced himself upon a Gentile, a citizen of the country into which he drifted. The Gentile gave him the most degrading and humiliating task: the duty of herding swine, and feeding them with husks, or carob-pods with which those ugly animals gorged themselves. These pods came from the carob tree, and they were considered as only fit for animal-fodder. The Jews have a saying, "*When Israel is reduced to the carob-tree, they become repentant.*"

The audience, listening to the Lord, would understand the significance of the parable. If they were discerning enough, they would recall that Amos 8:11-14 predicted the coming of a great

drought in the Word of God throughout the Land of Israel, and that other prophets had predicted that the nation would be scattered among the Gentiles and brought to great extremity.

The pathetic and miserable state to which the once wealthy younger son was reduced is shown in that though he fed the swine, no man “gave unto him” (Lk. 15:16). He was degraded to the level of the animals, and viewed with the utmost contempt by the people among whom he dwelt. Yet he was once heir to a fortune, and liberally gave to all!

At last “he came to himself.” He recognised that he had acted the part of a real fool. He recalled the circumstances back home, remembering that his father employed many servants, all of whom were much better cared for than he! He knew his father as a lovable man, always ready to help his children. Therefore, in his humility and need, he determined to return home, not as a son, but as a hired servant, pleading the mercy of his father to help him.

So he made the long, weary trek back home.

What reception would he receive when he arrived? He did not know. He only knew that he was deserving of words of stern rebuke and reproach.

What a joyful surprise awaited him. Whilst he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, for he had been ever on the lookout for him, always hoping for his return. Instead of words of reproach and anger, his father immediately observed his crestfallen state, his utter humiliation and destitution, and took immediate pity on him. He was so overjoyed to see him, so pleased to observe his repentant state, that he embraced him, and fervently kissed him.

The son had already commenced the confession that he had prepared on the way home, but so fervent was the love of the father, that he was not able to complete it for the warmth of the welcome he received.

“Father,” he commenced, “I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son ...”

He got no further. The loving father swept away the confession, and called for the servants: “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him,” he commanded, “and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill; and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

The whole household was filled with joy at the loving enthusiasm of the father, and entered wholeheartedly into the welcome. The prodigal son was given a covering (representing the robe of righteousness: Isa. 61:11); he was provided with a ring (the symbol of authority); and shoes were placed upon his feet (the badge of sonship, for slaves were not permitted to wear shoes). Finally, a special animal

was slain for his benefit, pointing to the sacrifice of communion.

In the midst of all this rejoicing, the elder son returned home. He heard the sound of merriment with amazement, but on learning of its cause, he became jealous with anger. To him it seemed inappropriate to expend money and pleasure on his despised and derelict brother who had wasted his inheritance! Had the elder son not worked hard for many years? Had his father ever made such celebrations on his account? Why should a mere waster receive such honour!

Sulkily he refused to enter the house.

Again the father went out, filled now with compassion for his elder son, whose virtues he appreciated. But he was met with fierce words of anger and rebuke. In his blind anger, this elder son referred sarcastically to himself as a slave, one merely serving, whilst his brother assumed the position of a son!

"Behold," he said to his father, "these many years do I serve you, nor have I transgressed at any time your commandment; but you have never slain an animal for me that I might rejoice with my friends; but as soon as this your son was come, who has foolishly and wantonly wasted your living, you kill for him the fatted calf!"

How sadly the loving father must have looked at the envious elder son! Had that son indeed rendered perfect obedience throughout his life? Of course he had not; it was an idle boast (see Phil. 3:6-7). Was he not utterly dependent upon his father for everything? Seeing, then, that all he had, and was to receive, came from his father, should he not go out of his way to help his brother, and thus bring happiness to his father? Did not his very attitude constitute disobedience to the will of his father, even then?

Quietly, but sadly, the father replied: "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It is only right that we should rejoice and be glad under such circumstances; for this your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found!"

The parable ended there, and thus concluded on a most significant



note. Christ did not say whether the elder son entered the house and made reconciliation with his brother, or obstinately refused to do so. How the parable was to end depended upon the attitude of the listeners, for the invitation to enter "the house" had been made to them.



## Chapter 5

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### EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

**I**N this parable, the elder son represented natural Israel, Yahweh's firstborn son (Exo. 4:22). The younger son represented the Gentiles (or those Israelites who acted as such) who foolishly and wantonly squander the inheritance that they receive of the Father, in the goodness He showers on them.

Christ, as representing the Father, was prepared to extend mercy to any such who would make the move to obtain it, as the younger son did when he made his way back to his father's house. But it should never be overlooked, in the treatment of this parable, that the prodigal son made the *first* move to the father *before* the work of reconciliation could be effected. That initial move having been made, reconciliation is offered to all, whether classed as sinners without hope, or not.

The Pharisees, however, instead of rejoicing that the prospects of salvation were being extended to those whom they classed as sinners, or Gentiles, acted as the elder son acted. As the leaders, and therefore the representatives of Israel, they inherited all that the Father had delivered into the hands of His selected people, but with jealous parsimony, they refused the right of others to share in that which the Father had given the nation. Because of that, they "refused to enter" the house of salvation (Lk. 11:52), and their actions thus indicating that they were "unworthy of eternal life," they were left outside, and the appeal was made to Gentiles (Acts 13:46). This aroused the jealous antagonism of Jews still further (1Thes. 2:14-16).

This parable, therefore revealed that the way to restoration, even for the elder son, is the way of humility. But refusing to manifest this, and obstinately rejecting the pleading of the father to enter the house, merely because his despised brother was there, this elder son repeated the error of the younger son in a different and far worse way. The sin of the younger son came through his desire to have a good time; that of the older son came through jealousy, pride and hate.

On its face value, this parable is a warning against both forms of sin; but it is more than that: it is prophetic of the purpose of God to proclaim the Gospel to the despised in Israel, and to Gentiles as well as to Jews.

One final note of importance in the parable. The younger son could only return "home" by recognising that all that was found therein belonged by inheritance to his elder brother. So, today, Gentiles can only return to the Father by acknowledging that their inheritance is that promised unto Israel, and that this nation, after it has been humbled, and shown the divine purpose, will finally enter

upon it. Paul taught: "They also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again" (Rom. 11:23).



## Chapter 6

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### PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD (Luke 16:1-14)

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*This parable should be carefully heeded by all followers of the Lord, for they are described as “stewards,” called upon to minister to others on his behalf (1Pet. 4:10), and therefore should aim to avoid the mistake made by the unjust steward. The apostles were pre-eminently appointed as such, being “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1Cor. 4:1). Thus the parable had particular reference to them, for they were expected to faithfully discharge the appointed duties of their privileged position (v. 2). Unlike the Pharisees who also occupied positions of trust in the nation, but failed to carry them out as they should have done, the apostles honorably fulfilled the charge delivered them, and thereby set a good example for all others to follow. To teach the lesson of true stewardship to both the Pharisees and his Apostles, the Lord delivered this parable of the unjust steward. It is one that has been frequently misunderstood, but which should be carefully studied, for it has a vitally important message for both then and now.*

**A** certain rich man had a steward whom he had appointed over all his estate. To his sorrow, however, he learned that his steward had wasted his goods and brought disgrace to his position.

#### **The Steward Is Dismissed**

“What is this I hear of you?” he demanded. “Give account of what you have done, for you will no longer be steward.” The steward heard the news with deepest concern. “What shall I do?” he asked himself. “I cannot do manual labor, and I am too ashamed to beg!”

He pondered his problem earnestly and long. At last a solution presented itself to him. If he could gain favour with others by helping them while he had the power to do so, surely they would assist him in return, when he was out of employ.

He had the opportunity to help others, for all his lord’s goods were in his care, and the terms of his employ permitted him to organise matters as he would. Among the things under his control were the debts owing to his master. If he were to give a heavy discount to those responsible for these, surely they would remember his kindness, and assist him when he was in need.

**The Steward Makes Use of his Opportunity** The plan seemed a good one, and the steward hastened to act upon it. Calling upon his lord's debtors one by one, he offered them a heavy discount if they paid immediately.

The debtors eagerly seized this wonderful opportunity. Pleased at the benevolent allowance offered them, rejoicing in their good fortune, each of them in turn paid his debt, no doubt profusely thanking the steward for his generosity as he did so.

But when the rich man reviewed his affairs, he found all the debts paid, and that a heavy loss had been experienced in calling them in. He instantly recognised the steward's motive in so acting, and could not but give grudging admiration to him for his clever shrewdness in making good use of his limited opportunity to prepare for the future.

At this point of the parable, Jesus made a significant comment. He declared: "*For the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light.*" They are wiser because they quickly recognise their limited opportunities and make the best of them. "The children of light," (those who know the Truth) do not always do so. Often they do not even recognise opportunities when they present themselves, and when they do, frequently do not act upon them. For example, all true "children of light" know that Christ is coming, and surely they should also recognise that the signs indicate that they live on the very threshold of his return. They, therefore, should appreciate the urgency of the times, and, like the steward, must know that time is limited. But how seldom do they act upon that knowledge!

That is the first important lesson that the Lord would have us learn from the parable. The steward was wise, and it is important to develop practical wisdom. "Children of light" are also called "wise" (Mat. 10:16), in that they have been given wonderful resources of divine wisdom, though, frequently, they do not properly use that which has been given them.

But wisdom in itself is not enough, for faithfulness in action is also necessary. The steward was shrewd, and therefore wise, but he was not faithful or caring for his master.

**The Steward's Cunning Scheme Defeats His Lord** The rich man was angry when he found that his servant had so freely discounted the money owing to him in order to ingratiate himself into the good graces of his debtors, but there was nothing he could do about it. His debtors had paid, each had a receipt, and he had no further claim over them.

What of the steward? The rich man clearly saw through his dishonest motives, but it seemed that he could do nothing apart from dismissing him. Until he, too, thought of a clever scheme.

He would openly and loudly commend the steward for his

shrewdness, publishing it before all his acquaintances, and so destroy his reputation by his very effusive praise. In doing this he effectively defeated the steward's scheme, for who would employ one so dishonest!

The steward had discounted the debts in secret, one by one, in order that each individual debtor would imagine that he was the only one to benefit by his apparent generosity, and each one, therefore, might feel under an obligation to the steward.

But when the rich man loudly and openly "commended" him, all saw through the servant's scheme, and recognised that he was completely unscrupulous, and not at all to be trusted.

Who would employ such a steward as that!

Thus his dishonest scheme utterly failed. He had been shrewd and clever but not faithful, and the rich man's words of commendation revealed this to all. Certainly the debtors would not receive him in their houses or establishments as a steward, for they would not dare risk their wealth in the hands of one they could not trust.

### **Faithfulness In All Things Is Necessary**

The fate of the steward was a warning to the disciples that they had to avoid similar mistakes. Let them by all means imitate his shrewdness, and the use he made of limited opportunities, but let them remain faithful. They had to be "wise as serpents, but harmless as doves."

Jesus declared: "*Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations*" (Lk. 16:9).

What did the Lord mean?

This verse is so frequently misunderstood that time spent in explanation can be profitable.

Who are those whom we can make our "friends" by our faithful deed? Obviously the Father, Son, and the angels. They rejoice in heaven over the faithful acts of believers on earth (Lk. 15:10), who can make *Them* their friends by rendering faithful stewardship in that committed to their care (see Lk. 12:44).

But does not the Lord say that we need to make friends "of the mammon of unrighteousness"? He does, according to the A.V., but the preposition in the Greek translated "of" is *ek*, and signifies "out of." We make friends *out of* "the mammon of unrighteousness," not "of it," that is, when we use it aright. This difference in the meaning of the verse is important, and should be noted.

The word "mammon" signifies "riches" as it is rendered in the margin. We can make Friends in heaven "out of" the way we regard and use the material means entrusted to us now on earth. Unfortunately, people do not normally do so. Instead, they place all

their trust and confidence in these material possessions to the exclusion of God, whereas, if we exercise care, we can so use them as to please Him and those who dwell with Him in heaven (Mat. 6:19; Lk. 11:41; 1Tim. 6:17).

It was the steward's faithless handling of his lord's goods in the beginning that resulted in his dismissal, and his continued faithless shrewdness that brought about his final downfall. The parable therefore taught the need of exercising both wisdom and faithfulness in making the best use of our opportunities that come our way.

What of the statement, "When ye fail," they may receive you? Here, again, the translation is a little faulty, and the statement should be rendered "when *it* fails." At Christ's coming the possession of material wealth will count for nothing, and therefore "it" shall fail; but if it has been used shrewdly and faithfully in the meantime, they (the heavenly Friends) will receive us into "everlasting habitations" where there will be no possibility of one being in want.

There is therefore a contrast between the debtors who refused to give employ to the shrewd but faithless steward, and the "Friends" of the children of Light who will receive them into everlasting habitations if they manifest shrewdness, or make the best use of their limited opportunities (as did the steward) in a faithful manner (as he did not!).

### **On Being Faithful In The Least**

This, the most important feature of the Lord's parable, is the one most frequently overlooked. Jesus told his disciples: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (v. 10).

One does not have to be a great public preacher to reveal faithfulness, for it can be equally worked out in the little things of life. The wife who renders loving service in the home (Eph. 5:22), the child who honours his parents (Eph. 6:1), the servant who renders loyal obedience to his master (Eph. 6:5), are all being faithful in little things, and demonstrating that they are worthy to be elevated to high positions of trust, when they do these things "as unto the Lord."

If the steward had rendered faithful service in minor matters, he would never have found himself in the predicament in which he did. But he was dishonest in his lord's affairs, and when this continued, his faithlessness was made public by the scathing "commendation" of his lord. In the end he could not hope to expect promotion from others.

Jesus then made an observation of wide-sweeping importance: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

He thus reminded his disciples that their attitude to the mundane affairs of life can play a part in their acceptance or rejection at the

judgment seat. We must be faithful in the affairs of this life, if we are to attain unto the life to come. What is the use of preaching to others, if we do not reveal the principles of that preaching in the everyday affairs of life?

This includes our attitude to material possessions. We thank God for them, and in word acknowledge that they have been delivered into our hands as stewards (1Tim. 6:17). Are we faithful in our administration of them? If we prove to be only shrewd, and not faithful in these things, will God commit unto our care the true riches of an eternal inheritance? He will not. And so Jesus continued: *“If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s who shall give you that which is your own?”*

Again the language is a little difficult, for we could perhaps reason that if a thing is “our own,” it should be given us irrespective as to whether we be faithful or not.

The parable provides the interpretation however. The lord of the steward delivered his own valuables into the steward’s hand that he might treat them as if they were his own. But the dishonest use that the steward made of his trust, resulted in his dismissal and in nobody else giving their goods into his hands to be treated as if they were his own. Dismissed from his former master’s employ, he could find similar employment with no one else and was reduced to destitution.

This will also be the fate of those disciples who do not render faithful service in the comparatively minor material blessings with which God has blessed them. If they are not faithful in that which they need to recognise really belongs to Another, He will not deliver into their care that which they will be able to acclaim as their own — eternal life and positions of authority in the kingdom He will set up.

### **The Lesson Of The Parable**

The Lord summarised the teaching of the parable by warning his disciples that they cannot serve (or act as bondslaves) to two masters, for neither will trust such a servant. The steward had tried to do so, by discounting the debts due to his lord, but his action showed that he was not to be trusted, so that he was reduced to hopeless unemployment.

The Lord declared: “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

The bond-slave (and this is what the word “servant” here signifies) had to render undivided service to his master. It was impossible for such to serve two masters, and therefore he had to make choice of one or the other, to “hold to the one and despise the other.” Particularly is that the case with God and Mammon. Whilst we can serve God by a faithful use of the latter, we cannot devote our

time in service to Mammon at the exclusion of God. The steward, in the parable, served self-interest. He sought to serve Mammon as an end in itself, believing that by so doing he would obtain security for the future. To that end, he divided his loyalty between his lord and his lord's debtors, but found that in the end nobody trusted him.

This difficult parable may be summarised thus:

1. *The steward wasted his Lord's goods and was called to account — as we will be.*
2. *Recognising the urgency of his case he made the most of his limited opportunities prior to his dismissal, in the only way he knew how — in this he was wiser than the children of Light who should realise that their time is limited, but generally do not act that way.*
3. *The lord loudly "commended him" for his "shrewdness," therefore making it known to all that he was not to be trusted, as the most effective way of destroying his scheme, for no one would employ such a shrewd, untrustworthy servant as that — in like manner our hidden intentions will ultimately be made known for all to see.*
4. *Christ commends faithful service in little matters promising that this will help ensure promotion to positions of eminence and authority in the future (vv. 9-12).*
5. *The lessons of the parable are: [a] Make the greatest use of limited opportunities; [b] Never conduct small matters in an unfaithful manner; [c] Reveal personal integrity in the material things of life, seeing in this an apprenticeship for spiritual stewardship in the Age to come.*



## Chapter 7

### CHRIST REPROVES THE SNEERING PHARISEES (Luke 16:14-18)

*The parable of the Unjust Steward was received with derision by the Pharisees, who clearly discerned its application against themselves. They were covetous of money, which was not only contrary to the Law (Deu. 5:21), but is also treated as idolatry against God, for it is the worship of gain and of self (Col. 3:5). The Law required: "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth hating covetousness, and place them over them to be rulers" (Exo. 18:21). The mocking Pharisees were not of this character, and yet they assumed the position of leaders among the people. Moreover, when the Lord put into the mouth of the steward that question: "What shall I do?" he made him ask himself the question that Isaiah asks of guilty Judah: "What will you do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your glory?" (Isa. 10:3). The Pharisees claimed to be the leaders of the nation, or stewards placed in care of God's affairs, but they were morally dishonest, and as they had manifested the attitude of the unjust steward, they were about to be deposed from their position of trust. A little later, Jesus told them: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Mt. 21:43), whilst to the apostles he had already declared: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32). Meanwhile, the Pharisees, sensing that the parable was directed against them, began to deride the Lord before the people.*

**A**MONG those who had listened to the Parable of the Unjust Steward were a group of Pharisees, who sensing the meaning of it, and being very covetous themselves, tried to cover up their embarrassment by deriding Jesus before his disciples, and all the people.

The word "deride" is from the Greek, *ekmukterizo*, which signifies "to turn up the nose." It is derived from the word *mukter*, or "nose," and it signifies to contemptuously ridicule or mock.

#### **The Pharisees Mock The Lord**

The Pharisees, therefore, turned up their noses at the Lord, and tried to ridicule him before all. But unperturbed by this opposition, the Lord openly reproved them in a blunt, forthright

manner: "You are those who justify yourselves before men," he declared, "but God knows your hearts; and that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in His sight."

In this statement, the Lord used a very expressive word, especially in view of the attitude of the Pharisees, in turning up their noses at him; for the word "abomination," in the Greek, means, "to cause to stink."

The Pharisees turned up their noses at the teaching of Jesus, but their attitude was like an unpleasant odour to God, causing Him to figuratively turn away His nose from them, so that He would not "smell their sacrifices."

**As Custodians Of The Law They Should Endorse Truth**

As an illustration of the way in which they were displeasing to God, Jesus openly treated with some of their more prominent attitudes and claims. At first sight, his sayings seem disjointed and without proper sequence of thought (Lk. 16:16-18), but a more careful consideration of them will reveal that they are very closely interrelated and to the point.

The Pharisees claimed to be custodians of the Law and to scrupulously follow it, but they failed to realise that the Law and the Prophets which were preached until John, and with which they claimed to rest their teaching, had their fulfilment in the Lord, who stood before them.

But though they could not comprehend this basic doctrine, others could. Some of the publicans (tax-gatherers) and so-called sinners, recognised the power of Christ's teaching, and were pushing the Pharisees aside to listen to him and accept the principles he placed before them.

Jesus told the Pharisees: "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (v. 16). The *Law* emphasised the need of a redeemer to take away sins; the *Prophets* proclaimed the coming of the kingdom, entrance to which was only possible by the forgiveness of sins. Now *Christ* had appeared in fulfilment of both, to show how it was possible for sinful men to enter the kingdom through the sacrifice that he would provide. Thus with greater meaning, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God had been preached, for the way was about to be made possible for Jews and Gentiles to attain unto it.

But those who wanted to do so, had to show faith and determination. They had to "press" into it. The word signifies to "press violently," to make forcible entrance. The R.V. renders it as "entereth violently." "All men" were doing that, claimed the Lord. He meant that people of all classes of society were flocking to him (Lk. 15:1), not that every person was doing so. Moreover, all classes of

society would be accepted, for no longer were the things of the kingdom of God to be the exclusive preserve of the Pharisees and other leaders of the Jews, or that they could so twist the Law to conform to their traditions!

The Pharisees, however, with their insistence upon observance of the formalism of their man-made laws claimed that the success attending the preaching of Christ was only possible by him relaxing the requirements of the Law. Jesus, therefore, in his next statement, showed that that was not so, declaring: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle\* of the Law to fail" (Mat. 5:18).

In this statement "heaven and earth" symbolise the government and nation of Israel. Both would pass away because the leaders failed to observe the requirements of God in His Law. That being the case, Jesus, certainly, was not prepared to relax the Law, as the Pharisees claimed he did.

And then, skilfully and powerfully, in a way they could not refute, he plainly showed that the lax conduct of the Pharisees toward marriage destroyed the very foundations of the Law. The sin of infidelity, of which they were notoriously guilty, brought every concept of Truth into disrespect. It broke up the family unit, destroyed communal worship, and weakened the whole nation.

Of what value was the formalism of the Pharisees, their scrupulous arguing over Bible texts, their insistence upon minor matters of their man-made law, when they lived in complete infidelity toward one another and before their God. God "hates putting away" (Mal. 2:16), and He detested the loose way in which the Jews then viewed the marriage bond. Jesus brought this fact bluntly before them: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery" (v. 18).

The Lord's hearers must have been shocked at this statement, for it meant that many of them were living in an adulterous relationship, and they knew the penalty of the Law for such: *death by stoning!*

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\* The word "*tittle*" refers to the small points of apices which serve to distinguish one Hebrew letter from another. The omission of such an indication could alter a whole word! Thus, the Lord refers to the most minute parts of the Law which would be fulfilled by his righteousness. But as these were commonly broken by the people (Jas. 2:20), there was a need for justification without the Law (Rom. 4:1-16; Gal. 3:21), provided in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

## Chapter 8

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### PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Luke 16:19-31)

*This parable was given by Jesus to the Pharisees because of the contempt that they showed for his teaching. It served to illustrate the words of reproof he had delivered to them as he indicted them for failing to see the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets in him, and for so acting as to bring the worship of Yahweh into disrepute. They were like the rich man of the parable: outwardly prosperous and happy, but actually subjects of the wrath of God by their rejection of His principles, and their contempt of others whom they viewed as the rich man did Lazarus.*

**A** certain rich man lived luxuriously every day. He was clothed in the most elegant robes, and the finest food graced his table, which groaned beneath the luxuries heaped upon it.

But outside his house there lay a destitute beggar named Lazarus. Each day he was flung down\* contemptuously on the ground by those who bore him there, in the hope that he might receive something left over from the plenty on the rich man's table.

Desperately ill, full of putrefying sores, the only comfort he enjoyed, and the only physicians who attended him, were the dogs that gathered around him, and licked his sores.

As the Lord told the story, it was obvious to whom the principal characters referred. The rich man in his elegant clothes, dining sumptuously day by day in total disregard of Lazarus, represented the Pharisees, who separated themselves from all others, lest they should be contaminated by contact with those whom they despised.

The Pharisees dressed and lived elegantly. They assumed a pompous disregard of the needs of others. They sat in Moses' seat (Mat. 23:25), and though claiming to teach the principles of the Law, they were completely indifferent to its real teaching and requirements (ch. 15:1-9). Their contemptuous attitude to others was an affront to the spirit of the Law which they claimed to uphold, for it commanded that one should show consideration to others (Exo. 23:4-5).

The parable required that in the course of time the beggar died. Jesus said nothing concerning the disposal of his body. Possibly it was flung into Gehenna, the valley of refuse on the southern side of the city of Jerusalem, as was the custom with such as this destitute beggar. Be that as it may, the Lord, borrowing the idea from one of

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\* The words, "was laid" (Lk. 16:20) are *ballo* in Greek, and signify "to throw or cast down," as though glad to be rid of the unwelcome burden.

the current false beliefs of the Pharisees who embraced the Greek fiction of the immortality of the soul, declared that Lazarus was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.

The rich man "also died and was buried in hell." This is how the statement of Luke 16:22-23 should read, and not as it is recorded in the Authorised Version. He was "buried in hell," which is the grave. In the parable, no angel bore him to Abraham's bosom. Instead, he was conveyed to the place of torture, where he suffered intensively, and in his misery gazed longingly across the gulf that separated him from those who were in the place of privilege.

And there, to his amazement, he saw Lazarus the beggar! He could hardly believe his eyes. If that destitute beggar, the man of

### **ABRAHAM'S BOSOM (Luke 16:22)**

The term "*Abraham's bosom*," was derived from a current tradition of the Pharisees. It is not taught in the Bible, nor is it according to Truth. The Lord used it in the parable, not because he believed in it, but in order to better impress the Pharisees with the point of the parable he delivered unto them by using their own ideas. In his *Discourse to the Greeks concerning Hades*, Josephus showed that the Pharisees looked upon *hades* as a place of darkness where angels "distribute temporary punishments agreeable to everybody's behaviour and habits." The "bosom of Abraham" was the name give to the place where the righteous were supposed to rest in *hades*. According to the false teaching of the Pharisees against which Jesus warned (Mat. 16:6, 12; 15:1-9), the souls of the wicked were dragged into the region of fire in *hades* in the sight of the righteous. There they feel the heat of the fire, and they saw, according to Josephus, "the place of the fathers and of the just," and so were punished. Josephus declared: "A chasm deep and large is fixed between them [i.e., the righteous and the wicked], insomuch that a just man that has compassion upon them cannot be admitted nor can anyone that is unjust, if he were bold enough to attempt it, to pass over it."

From this description, it will be seen that the parable does not support the current fiction of an immortal soul taught by the churches. If it did, those relying upon this parable for support, would be forced to believe that both heaven and hell are in *hades*, separated by a vast gulf, and that the inhabitants of both can not only see each other, but can speak with one another. Moreover, they would be forced to acknowledge that only Jews will go to the place of bliss, because, in accordance with the tradition of the Pharisees concerning "Abraham's bosom," only Jews could go there!

Why should Jesus use a teaching of the Pharisees if it were false? He obviously did so in order to appeal to them upon the basis of their own traditions, that now is the day of opportunity, and that they should earnestly consider his teaching in the light of the Scriptures. But they remained unmoved by the lesson drawn from either their teachings or the Scriptures.

repulsive sores, whose only associates were the dogs who licked his sores, was with Abraham, why should not he be?

In any case, surely the beggar could fetch him a little water to cool his tongue from the heat of the fire that consumed him! So he pleaded with Abraham: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame!"

How often had Lazarus, in his life-time, pleaded with him for a little food to relieve his hunger; but the rich man had not heeded his cry! Notwithstanding all that, surely he was of greater worth to Abraham than was miserable Lazarus the beggar! In any case, surely the one-time beggar could be sent to him, the lordly Pharisee, on a mission of mercy, even though it meant descending into the place of flame to help him! So the rich man reasoned in the parable.

But God who is merciful, is also just. And therefore, in the parable, Abraham is represented as replying: "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. It is not possible that he can come to you because there is a great gulf fixed; so that those who would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can one from your side pass to us!"

In other words, the day of opportunity was past, and the rich man had to reap what he had sown! He now recognised his folly, his wasted opportunities, and in view of the torment of his soul, desired



that Lazarus should be sent on a mission to his father's house that he might testify to his five brethren, lest they also should end up in the place of torment.

But the request was not granted. Abraham replied: "They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear him!"

In his agony, in the realisation that he had wantonly squandered his opportunities, the rich man was persistent: "No, father Abraham," he pleaded, "but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent."

But the firm reply came over the gulf of Hades: "*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*"

### **The Parable Is Also A Prophecy**

The parable taught that the Pharisees would not heed, even though one rose from the dead. By this statement the parable became a prophecy, foretelling the purpose of God and the attitude of the Pharisees to it. It predicted both the miracle that Jesus performed on Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, as well as his own

#### **WHY JESUS USED A FALSE THEORY IN HIS PARABLE**

The things believed on by the Pharisees were false and impossible, but there was no bar to their use in parabolic expressions, for Jesus was trying to impress them, from their own teaching, with the urgency of heeding the warning message of God.

Many of the beliefs taught by the Pharisees were not according to Truth, but they formed a convenient basis to press home a lesson. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus was not unique in that regard. Other parables, found throughout the Word, draw from impossibilities to teach lessons. Thus the sea is represented as making a declaration (Isa. 23:4); the floods are said to clap their hands (Psa. 98:8); the trees are described as sending a deputation and appointing a government (Jdg. 9:8); and the thistle is joined in marriage (2Chr. 25:18).

Josephus' references to hades and Abraham's bosom show that this parable is based on Jewish tradition, borrowed from Grecian mythology. These were some of the Jewish fables against which Christ and Paul warned (Mat. 16:6, 12; 15:1-9; Tit. 1:14). Though Jesus warned against the teaching of the Pharisees as false, he did not hesitate to use it for the purpose of illustration. When they claimed that he performed miracles by the power of the pagan god Beelzebub, he used the same false idea to show the folly of their reasoning (Mt. 12:27).

It is a mistake, therefore, to take the *parable* of the rich man and Lazarus as expressing doctrinal Truth concerning the literal state of the dead, because to do so clashes with the clear declaration of Scripture in other parts, and, in any case, its use of hades does not endorse the current belief of souls ascending into heaven.

impending resurrection from the dead.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead took place a very short time after this parable was given, and the Lord's words proved true, for instead of the miracle convincing the Pharisees, it made them more determined than ever to put him to death (Jn. 11:53).

But the parable seems to particularly point to the resurrection of Christ. The name Lazarus is a form of Eleazar, and signifies *God is a Helper*. One of Aaron's sons was named Eleazar, and on the death of his brother, he became the high priest elect (Lev. 10:6). As high priest elect who was to supersede Aaron, he typified the Lord Jesus whose priesthood supersedes the Aaronic.

This parable thus taught that the death and resurrection of the high-priest elect who would supersede the Aaronic priesthood, would not be acknowledged by hard-hearted Jewry.

As such the Lord visited the Father's house, but the nation (represented by the five sons of the rich man) refused to hearken to him, and thus ended in a national grave, a place of torture among the Gentiles, for the centuries that followed.

In the parable, therefore, Lazarus stands for both the "publicans and sinners" who were despised by the Pharisees and denied access to God, and for the Lord Jesus himself whose testimony they refused, and whom they hated. In their eyes, he was figuratively covered with sores (a leper), and was despised because they saw him surrounded by those whom they considered as "dogs."\*

The Lord tried hard to help the Pharisees, but they were too blind to their own failings, and their needs to be helped.

### **Purpose Of The Parable**

This parable-prophecy was designed to show the Pharisees that their attitude would bring both them and the nation to ruin. It is a parable of contrasts that was born of a sneer, and though it was spoken *to* the Pharisees it was also designed *for* the disciples. We can all learn by the mistakes of others, and this parable teaches us to avoid the blind, pompous pride that was manifested by the leaders of Israel, and which brought the nation to ruin.

Consider the rich man of the parable from the standpoint of the world and of God.

The world saw him as well-clothed, dining sumptuously, given over to merriment and every form of indulgence, having "more than

\* Gentiles were called "dogs" by the Jews (Mat. 15:26-27) because they were considered unclean under the Law. Paul (Col. 3:2), and Christ (Rev. 22:15) also used the term to describe those who act like Gentiles. In those days the dog was not a trained, domestic animal as today, but was despised, savage, ownerless, prowling around the cities to snatch what food it could. "Dogs" thus typed those who tried to snatch the food of Israel but remained savage, snarling Gentiles, dangerous to all with whom they came in contact.



heart could wish" (Psa. 73:7).

God viewed him as wretched, poor, miserable, blind, naked (Rev. 3:17), and stinking (Lk. 16:15), standing in a slippery place that would bring him down to destruction, as in a moment (Psa. 73:17-19).

It is only possible to view humanity around us from the standpoint of God when we "go into the sanctuary of God, and understand their latter end" (Psa. 73:17).

We will then understand that though men appear happy and prosperous they stand on a slippery path that will suddenly and unexpectedly bring them to destruction.

What were the sins of the rich man? They were his thoughtlessness, his heartless indifference to the needs of others, his self-satisfied ego, his godless existence, and, above all, his complete ignorance of his true spiritual state which he "knew not" (see Rev. 3:17).

These are sins often overlooked. True disciples of Christ will carefully examine their hearts and motives lest they be guilty of them also.

## Chapter 9

### THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF DISCIPLESHIP (Luke 17:1-10)

*Immediately after delivering the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus to the Pharisees, the Lord turned to his disciples and reminded them of the great responsibilities of discipleship. His discourse naturally arose out of the parable as is shown by the opening statement of Luke 17: "Then said he unto the disciples..." The Pharisees were respected in Israel, but the parable revealed them to the disciples as men who had failed to measure up to what God required of them, and this was because they were blind to their own needs and responsibilities. The "kingdom of God" was to be taken from such and given unto the apostles (Lk. 12:32). Meanwhile, it was necessary for them to exercise care in their conduct, lest they suffer the same fate as the Pharisees. As the disciples of the Lord they had to represent him before the people by manifesting the qualities of his character.*

**T**URNING from the Pharisees, the Lord addressed himself directly to the disciples, warning them of the responsibilities that rested upon them.

#### **Cause No Offence** (vv. 1-2)

"It is inevitable that offences will come," he declared, "but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones!"

The word "offences" is from a Greek word, "*skandalon*." This was the name given to the part of a trap to which bait is attached, and which, when struck by the animal, springs the trap. The word thus was used to denote a stumbling block, usually caused by attractive "bait." It is so easy to lead people astray by attractive, seductive ideas! The Pharisees were doing that, and Jesus warned the disciples of the fate of those who would do likewise to any of those who believed in him.

But what did he mean when he said that a "millstone would be hanged about the neck" of any guilty of leading astray those immature in the faith (described as "these little ones")? It is said that the form of punishment inflicted upon the worst kind of criminals by the Greek and the Romans (but not by the Jews) was to tie a large stone about their necks, and to fling them off a cliff into the ocean. It was a Gentile punishment designed for Gentile criminals; and the Lord's use

of this illustration implies that those who would cause others to fall by placing before them some attractive bait in the form of seductive teaching that would lead the spiritually immature from the requirements of the Truth, actually act like undisciplined Gentiles, and will receive the punishment due to such.

The most solemn warning of the Lord's statement, however, is the comment that "it is inevitable that offences will come!" In other words, there will always be those who will impose a great trial on their brethren by seeking to lead astray those who lack sufficient understanding of God and His Word to resist the attractive "bait" put before them. In every age in which the Truth has been manifested, there have been those who lacked a sense of true responsibility to it, and have, therefore, reasoned that "motive" means more than "command," and that Christ will not condemn those who are truly sincere, even though they may not fully understand his will. This attractive "bait" encourages laziness, for people naturally reason that it is more important to be sincere than to seek God's Truth, and so conscience, that is, what the flesh thinks, will be elevated above "the Word of Yahweh."

True disciples will be on their guard against adopting such reasoning, or attitude.

### **Take No Offence** (vv. 3-4)

In view of the fact that it is "inevitable that such stumbling blocks" will arise, the Lord warned his disciples to "take heed to yourselves," lest they be found among those guilty of this crime.

If the Lord saw fit to warn his apostles against such a possibility, what of lesser leaders? The danger always exists and must be guarded against. How easy it is for human reasoning to supplant an appeal to the Word! The former seems so reasonable, so attractive, so sound;



whilst the latter requires so much exercise of the mind to grasp it, and is so susceptible of various "interpretations," that "little ones" naturally prefer the former. And in that there is danger. Even Peter was found leading some astray at one time (Gal. 2:12-13), so that Paul never did a greater service to the Truth than when he recorded this incident,

and thus showed how easy it is for great men to fall — as, indeed, Peter himself acknowledged (see 2Pet. 3:15-16).

The Lord therefore warned the disciples that they were to avoid any circumstances that might lead them to act in that way. They were not to stumble themselves, nor cause others to stumble.

To that end, if a disciple suffered a trespass from the hands of another, he is openly to rebuke such a one (not speak against him behind his back), but to freely forgive him if he repents and acknowledges his faults. Even if he repeatedly trespasses against one of the Lord's disciples, the latter is to forgive him when the erring one acknowledges his sin and pleads forgiveness.

Thus disciples are to extend the same treatment to others as they hope to receive from God. They are in need of God's forgiveness many times every day; and it is only right that they should extend the same privileges to others. When they feel irritated at continued trespasses committed against them, let them bear in mind that God, likewise, is saddened by the constant failings of the members of His spiritual family on earth, and let them extend to others the forgiveness that they hope to receive from God.

Of course, the Lord's comments relate to sins committed against the disciples personally. They cannot forgive people for sins that others commit against God. Such must themselves seek God for His forgiveness of sins committed against Him, for such is quite outside the scope of disciples to grant.

### **Manifest An Active Faith (vv. 5-10)**

The listening disciples thus heard the Lord teach them that true discipleship requires the development of such a sense of mature responsibility toward the Truth as will enable them to avoid the sin of setting their own ideas instead of those of God, before men. It further requires that they crush the natural desires for personal revenge, and, instead, manifest a constant attitude of approachability and forgiveness.

But the demands of discipleship are so contrary to the desires of the flesh, that the disciples could see that they could only be met by an active, virile faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith," wrote John later. Faith enables one to clearly see that the sacrifice of self to serve God will be adequately rewarded, but in most, faith is so weak as to blind them to that.

As the disciples listened to the Lord, they became conscious of how weak their faith was, and now sought his help to strengthen it.

"Increase our faith!" they asked him.

Nearby where they were standing there was a sycamine tree. It is a short, sturdy tree, known also as the black mulberry, bearing a blood-red berry. The colour of the fruit could well represent sin, and in

answer to the plea of the disciples, the Lord directed attention to it. "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamine tree, Be plucked up by the root, and be you planted in the sea; and it should obey you."

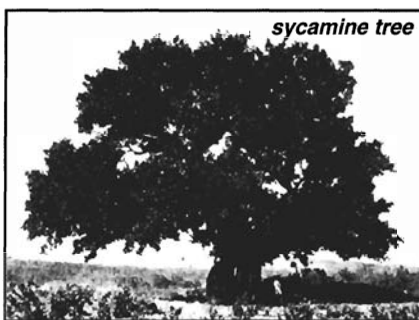
It is suggested that Christ's remark regarding the tree was a proverbial saying among Jewish teachers in his day to indicate the accomplishment of things almost incredible and impossible. If so, the Lord taught that the well-nigh impossible can be accomplished if one has "faith as a grain of mustard seed."

What kind of faith is that?

The mustard seed is extremely tiny, but it grows into a very large herb. "Faith as a grain of mustard seed," therefore, implies a living, thriving, developing faith. There was a need for the disciples to develop that faith. But the disciples had a tendency to boast in their own accomplishments, and not in the One who made them possible (Mk. 6:30). The way to increased faith is to become submissive and humble as a servant, doing the will of God and Christ.

But though the Lord may have used a proverbial saying, he did so with new and greater meaning. The blood-red fruit of the sycamine tree was doubtless used by the Lord as symbolic of the sinful deeds of the flesh. The only way to get rid of those is to wash them away in the waters of baptism, and in this sense it is possible to remove the figurative sycamine tree and cast it into the sea of baptism (see Mic. 7:19). The waters of baptism are only efficacious, however, where a living faith is in evidence, without which they are useless. Such a faith will be manifested in action. It will be revealed by submission to the will of God, and patience in awaiting His good pleasure to help or reward.

The Lord pointed to the lesson by a homely illustration taken from the then normal circumstances of life. He declared: "Which of you, having a servant plowing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him immediately\* he is come in from the field, Go and sit down to meat? Will you not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and afterwards you



\* These words "by and by" of Luke 17:7 are better rendered "immediately" (Gr. *eutheos*). The Diaglott renders the words as, "as he comes in." The Lord was drawing attention to the fact that a slave had no defined hours of labor, his work was never completed. Though he may have laboured in the field, there is still work in the house for him to do. As the Lord's "slaves," therefore, we must be constantly in his service.

shall eat and drink? Would you thank that servant because he did the things that you commanded him? I think not! So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do!"

With what care the Lord instructed his disciples! He had first warned them against leading others astray, then commanded them to set an example of forgiving those who may trespass against them. This was followed by an exhortation to develop an active, increasing faith that would provide the strength to do that which is otherwise well-nigh impossible. Finally he reminded them of their respective positions: they were his slaves, and as such, must not expect immediate reward for anything they did, but must await the pleasure of their Master, who desires them to personally serve him.

Can we now serve Christ personally? Christ says that we do so whenever we minister to the needs of the least of his brethren (Mat. 10:42; 25:31-40).

But in doing even this there arises a danger against which Christ warned, and that is the danger of Pharisaism. When we are circumspect in our teaching, so as to avoid leading others astray, or when we manifest a forgiving attitude toward those who trespass against us, or when we labour hard in the field or household of faith, there is a tendency to be lifted up in pride at the consciousness of the measure of our sacrifice and service. So the Lord taught his disciples to manifest true humility, and to recognise that in doing what they had been commanded to do they were but performing their duty, and were "unprofitable servants."

Why "unprofitable" servants?

Because we only become servants by the forgiving mercy of God through the offering of His Son (Rom. 6:8-10). Can we add to the measure of that love? We cannot! Therefore, though we might forgive sins every day of those who oppose us, we are adding nothing to what God has done for us, and therefore, whatever we do, we are but "unprofitable servants." Jesus had earlier impressed that fact, when he taught the apostles to pray: "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Lk. 11:4). Let that be a reality, because only when that is the case, can we expect the same privilege from the Father.

## THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE LORD

(continued from page 101)

*After recording the conversation of the Lord in which he impressed his disciples with the responsibilities of discipleship, Luke declares: "it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem..." (ch. 17:11). This was the last journey that the Lord took to Jerusalem prior to his death and is the journey, therefore, to which John makes reference in chapter 12:1. In his previous chapter, John shows that the Lord's ministry in Perea was interrupted by the appeal of Mary and Martha consequent upon the death of their brother, Lazarus. This brought the Lord from the east of Jordan (Jn. 10:40) down to Bethany (ch. 11:1), after which he returned to Ephraim to the north of Jerusalem (v. 54). He stayed there a short while and then travelled north to the border of Samaria and Galilee (Lk. 17:11). He then turned east, following this border towards the Jordan and Perea. In Galilee he met a company of friends, including Mary Magdalene and other women (Mk. 15:40-41). They travelled with him, through Perea to Jerusalem. Jesus probably had moved north by appointment to meet this company and to travel with them to Jerusalem for the Passover, at which he was crucified. See map on page 345.*

### THE PEREAN MINISTRY

#### (1) — Preaching in Perea.

- #37 a. Circuit of Perea (Lk. 13:22).  
b. Contention with the Pharisees (Lk. 13:23 to 14:24).  
c. Preaching to the Multitudes (Lk. 14:25 to 16:31).  
d. Teaching the Disciples (Lk. 17:1-10).

#### (2) — To Bethany (in Judea) and Back.

- #38 a. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11:1-46).  
#39 b. Jesus returns to Ephraim (Jn. 11:47-54).  
c. Along the borders of Samaria and Galilee to Perea (Lk. 17:11).

#### (3) — Through Perea to Jerusalem.

- #40 a. Jesus cures ten lepers (Lk. 17:12-19).  
b. Preaching the things of the Kingdom (Lk. 17:20 to 18:14).  
c. Teaching and healing great multitudes (Mt. 19:1-2; Mk. 10:1).  
d. Instruction regarding marriage, etc. (Mt. 19:3-15; Mk. 10:2-16; Lk. 18:15-17).  
e. The Difficulties of the Rich (Mt. 19:16-24; Mk. 10:17-31; Lk. 18:18-30).  
f. The Parable of the Labourers (Mt. 20:1-16).

## Chapter 10

### THE SEVENTH “SIGN” LIFE FROM THE DEAD (John 11)

*The Gospel of John records eight outstanding “miracles” which the apostle selected as signs setting forth in sequence the purpose of Yahweh in His Son (see notes pp. 62, 73-74, 205). A close analysis of them will reveal that each builded upon that which went before, so that they all set forth a continuing and consecutive story. The miracles of Christ were designed to teach important principles of Truth, and not merely to demonstrate his power. It is appropriate, therefore, that the seventh of the eight signs recorded by John should be the raising of Lazarus from the dead, because in Scripture, “seven” is the covenant number; and is representative of the Covenant that provides the key to unlock death and the grave (Rev. 1:18)! It is also significant that the miracle should have taken place so soon after the Lord had spoken the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and remarkably, also just a few months before his own death. The prediction that Christ made therein concerning the reaction of the Jewish leaders if one rose from the dead, proved so true in the case of this miracle that consequent upon it, the hard-hearted Jewish leaders not only refused to believe in him, but instituted determined efforts to take him that they might kill him, and destroy any influence that he might still have. Their overbearing pride and envy prevented them from taking advantage of the wonderful power of resurrection vested in him.*

**U**P in the little village of Bethany, close to the Mount of Olives, Lazarus, the beloved brother of Martha and Mary, lay desperately ill. Every attempt at a cure had been made, but in vain. And now the illness became acute. If something were not done quickly, Lazarus would die. The little home in Bethany was plunged into the deepest gloom. In their distress, the thoughts of the two sisters turned to the Lord, who had so frequently used the home as a refuge from his weariness when he was in the vicinity of Bethany (see Lk. 10:38-42, and p. 232). He, alone, could help them in their distress.

#### **A Call For Help**

Knowing the merciful compassion of the Lord, they were confident that he would come if only he knew their trouble.

A messenger was sent with an urgent communication to Jesus who



was somewhere in Perea. It merely apprised the Lord of the state of affairs without presuming to say what he should do. The sisters were confident that he would respond in the best possible way. The messenger was told to say to Jesus: "*Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick!*"

But Lazarus grew rapidly worse before they received any response from the Lord. And then what they feared happened. Lazarus died, and as was then the custom, he was immediately buried. Mourners came to perform their sad rites, the friends and relations of the sisters flocked to the house, and followed the bier to the tomb outside the village, many coming from Jerusalem some two miles away.

But there was cold comfort for the sisters in the words they received from such; the one they had expected and wanted above all else was not there. He was in a distant place.

Meanwhile, the messenger found the Lord Jesus preaching in Perea, and delivered unto him the urgent message. But he gave the messenger a reassuring answer to convey back to the two sisters: "*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*"

But Lazarus had died! What a sad message to receive when it was clear that their brother was dead!\* Obviously a terrible mistake had been made. Clearly Jesus had not realised how desperately sick their brother had been. Surely he must have known that they would not have called for him unless it had been absolutely necessary! Even now that death had struck down their brother, and he was beyond all hope of recovery, the presence of Jesus among them would have been a comfort. He could have assuaged their grief with words that would have softened the blow. But all that they had received was this seemingly cold, detached message, and the news that Jesus had remained in the place continuing his preaching.

And what did the message mean anyway? Mary, the more thoughtful of the two sisters, could make nothing of it. It obviously stated that Lazarus would not die, and that in some way the glory of God would be revealed in his recovery. But he *had* died! And there was no glory to God in the mournful company that had followed the bier to the place of burying, and had witnessed the friend of Jesus laid to rest. At that moment of greatest crisis for the household in Bethany, it seemed that Jesus had let them down.

**Jesus Explains His Purpose To His Disciples**

But Jesus will never desert those who place their trust in him, and certainly not those whom he loves, as he loved the two sisters

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\* Jesus remained preaching for two days, and then returned to Bethany, at which time Lazarus had been buried "four days" (v. 17). This would suggest that he died almost immediately after the messenger had left the company of Jesus, plunging the house into the deepest gloom.

and their brother at Bethany. And though his reply and his subsequent actions appeared cold, they were not so, and as if to make this perfectly plain, John's record adds the comment: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

Knowing the bitterness of their grief, feeling deeply for them, he would have immediately hurried back to help them; but to have done so would have defeated the purpose of his Father in the incident that was about to take place. Instead he "abode still in the same place where he was." Much as he loved the sisters and Lazarus, his love for Yahweh was greater, and he submitted to what was required at the time, knowing that in so doing his Father's work would be better served, and his friends would come to understand the purpose of God more completely.

The disciples, too, had heard the message that Jesus sent back to Bethany, and rejoiced that their friend would recover from his malady. Therefore, the fact that Jesus continued to preach for two days did not astonish them. But when that period of time was completed, and he turned to them and said: "Let us go into Judea again," they were not only astonished, but fearful. They recalled the bitter hostility manifested towards Jesus when last they were in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and how an attempt had been made by the Sanhedrin to arrest him (Jn. 10:39). They knew of the deadly hostility of the leaders in Judea and Jerusalem, and heard this news with some trepidation. "Master," they protested, "the Jews of late have sought to stone you; and will you go there again?"

But Jesus explained that it was impossible for the Jews to harm him until the time appointed of the Father. As darkness comes at a certain defined hour and not before, so he, as the Light of the world, would be taken from them when the time arrived. Meanwhile, he, as the Light of the world, would continue to lighten the path before them, so that they could all walk with confidence. He explained this in figurative language which they probably did not then understand.

"Are there not twelve hours in the day?" he enquired. "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he does stumble, because there is no light to help him!"

The disciples listened in silence. It was all a little above their comprehension. So, once again, the Lord spoke: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," he said, "but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep."

What a trivial reason to leave the successful preaching tour of Perea, and to risk his life in the hostile environment of Jerusalem! Surely if a sick man had a good rest, it would contribute to his cure, and what need for the Lord to risk his life to merely awaken him out of sleep. So they thought, and so they spoke: "Lord," they protested, "If he sleep, he shall do well."

And so Jesus explained to them the real state of what had transpired meantime, though they could not yet properly grasp the meaning of his words, nor anticipate the great and dramatic miracle that was about to take place in sleepy, little Bethany.

“Lazarus is dead,” he said plainly. “And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that you may believe. Nevertheless, let us go unto him.”

The miracle of resurrection was to be as much for their learning and comfort as for the family in Bethany. Jesus was thinking of others all the time, and trying to arrange matters for their benefit. And, for that matter, the disciples were also thinking of Jesus. They were not lacking in courage. If Jesus was prepared to go into danger to help others, they would follow him. Thomas voiced the feeling of them all. Turning to his companions, he declared: “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

The difference between Jesus’ feelings for others, and the disciples’ concern for him was that his was based upon a true knowledge derived from God; whereas theirs was a concern developed out of a lack of understanding.

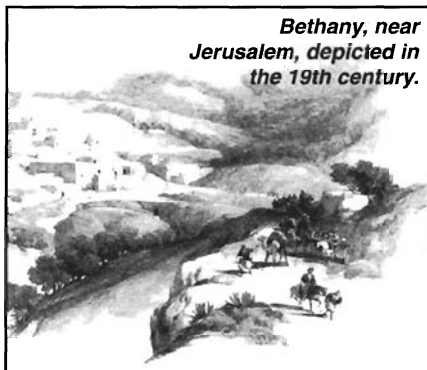
The disciples followed the Lord back to Bethany, very puzzled over all that he had said and done.

### **The Mourning At Bethany**

Bethany is said to mean *The House Of Afflicted Ones*. The home in which Martha and Mary lived was known as “the house of Simon the leper” (Mk. 14:3; cp. with Jn. 12:2-3). In Luke 10:38-42, this house is called Martha’s, from which it can be inferred that Simon was the husband of Martha, that he had died, and consequently she was a widow.

The house, therefore, had truly been one of affliction for them, and now, added to past sorrows, was the sudden and unexpected death of Lazarus. The tragedy of this had been intensified by the message of assurance that the sisters had received from Jesus, telling them that “the sickness is not unto death.” But their brother *had* died. Jesus’ message of assurance had proved false. If only he had been present, he might have saved Lazarus! But now it was too late!

That is what the sisters thought as they had sorrowfully laid their brother to rest, and mourned his passing. If only Jesus had come! If



only he would come even now, and join with them in their sorrow, and speak words of true comfort to them, as only he could utter!

But four days had passed since Lazarus had died and had been buried, and any real help was beyond all hope. They concluded that Jesus could not have realised the urgency of the matter when he sent the message to say that the sickness was not unto death.

So the sisters must have thought as they remained in the house of mourning, in the town called *The House Of The Afflicted Ones*. Bethany was a very sad place at that time; and saddest of all were the lonely Martha and Mary. Their friends and relations gathered around them, vainly trying to comfort them in their sorrow, so that there were many in the house at the time.

**Martha Meets Jesus** At last news was received that Jesus was coming and was even then not far from Bethany. How glad Martha was to hear that! Immediately, with characteristic energy, used to activity, to doing something, she hurried from the house to meet Jesus. She left Mary in the house. Mary had not heard the news that her friend and Saviour was at hand (cp. v. 28). More thoughtful than her sister, she was pondering all the circumstances of the death of her brother and the mysterious message received from Jesus, but could make nothing of it all.

Meanwhile, Martha hurried through the streets of the little village, to meet the Lord outside. No sooner had she seen him than she burst out with the question which was uppermost in her mind, the one that she had discussed so often with Mary over the past four days: "Lord," she said, "if you had been there, my brother would not have died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever you will ask of God, He will give it to you!"

What did Martha mean by this statement? It is obvious, from the context, that she did not mean that Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead (cp. v. 39). Probably she meant that he could provide some alleviations in their sorrow, though she knew not what. Her main concern may have been for her sister who seemed to have taken the death of Lazarus more to heart than had Martha, who, as the widow of Simon the leper, was more used to suffering.

The Lord sympathised with her in her distraught state, and gently directed her to the true source of comfort at such times: "Your brother will rise again!" he said.

Martha knew that. Indeed, it was the one source of comfort to her in her sorrow. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," she answered.

Her sorrow was not an evidence of her lack of faith in the ultimate purpose of God, but rather a grief that she should be separated from one she deeply loved by an untimely death. Jesus now strove to bring

her mind back to realities, to the glory of the future when the grim shadow of death will never again frighten with its chill hand. He sought to comfort her with words that should ever be borne in mind at such times: "I am the resurrection and the life," he said. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."\*

It was a challenging statement to make at such a time as that, but one that served to divert Martha's mind from her sorrow to the greater joy reserved for all those who truly "believe." The word signifies more than to merely acknowledge a doctrine: it implies action in accordance with the things believed. Was Martha prepared to do that?

She replied: "Yes, Lord: I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

**Mary Meets Jesus** There was a protective care in Martha for Mary her sister. Such a lovely attitude is seen very frequently in those women who are active in the affairs of life. Their more meditative sisters sometimes irritate them, as Mary irritated Martha on one occasion when the Lord was present (Lk. 10:38-42), but though sometimes roused to irritability at the inactivity of others, they are essentially warm-hearted, very active in doing good, and very helpful in alleviating the sorrows or trials of others.

On this occasion, Martha was anxious to help Mary in her sorrow. Hastening back to the house, she found her surrounded by the mourners. Taking her aside, she quietly told her: "The Master is come, and is asking for you."

Mary felt indescribable relief at learning that her friend and Savior had come. She arose quickly and hastened to the outskirts of the town where Jesus was awaiting her. The mourners watched her go with some concern. They did not know that she hastened to meet Jesus. Indeed, the very secrecy with which Martha had whispered the news to Mary suggests that the presence of Jesus in that place was not without some personal risk and danger to himself, and that the sisters felt that it would be better if others did not know he was there, lest the information be given to those who were anxious to arrest him.

Be that as it may, the mourners certainly misinterpreted the motives of Mary. They imagined that in excess of grief she had again hastened to the sepulchre where her brother had been laid, and that she was going there to weep. They therefore followed her that they might be with her to give her a measure of their kind of comfort.

Outside the city she came upon the Lord. At the sight of him, the

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\* Rotherham renders the statement of Christ: "No one who liveth again and believeth on me shall in anywise die unto times age-abiding" (or eternal). They shall live again because he is the *Resurrection*; they shall not die because he is the *Life*.

one who could have saved Lazarus, her pent up emotion got the better of her. Falling down at his feet, she addressed him in similar terms to those of Martha, a statement that they had doubtless repeated to one another many times since the tragic death of their brother: "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died!"

Deeply moved by the sad figure crouching at his feet, feeling keenly for the mourning sisters in their distress, the compassionate Lord was touched with the sorrow that surrounded him at the time, and with the utter impotence of man in the face of death. He was "touched with the feeling of their infirmity," and in his anguish, he "groaned in the spirit and was troubled."

There was nothing cold or detached in the attitude of the Lord toward his fellows. Though he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, and restore him to his rejoicing sisters, he still found it possible to understand their feelings and to sympathise with them. Gently he asked them: "Where have you laid him?"

"Lord, come and see!" they replied.

### **Jesus at the Tomb**

The procession of mourners led the way to the sepulchre, with the weeping sisters at the head. The cold, hard stone that barred the entrance represented the finality of death; the weeping company surrounding the Lord shed the common tears of all humanity, the tears that commenced to fall when sin entered the world in the beginning of time and brought death to mankind. The silent tomb symbolised the negation of all that God represents, for He lives and is the fountain of life.

The sensitive mind of the Lord took in the whole scene with a significance utterly beyond the comprehension of the others gathered there. Inexpressibly moved by it all, he wept!

The onlookers were impressed by this evidence of emotion.

"Behold, how he loved him!" they remarked.

They did not truly understand his feelings. Jesus was not weeping for Lazarus whom he was about to bring again from the dead; he was not merely weeping for the sisters with whose sorrow he sympathised but which he would soon remove; he was weeping because he could see in this death the sorrow of humanity, a sorrow brought about by sin. Nor was it mere empty emotion, because, in a short time, he, too, would be placed in a tomb, and the manner of his death would reveal "how he loved," not merely Lazarus, but all who will come unto him and live.

But all did not admire Jesus at that moment. Some were there to spy upon the followers of Jesus, and to report back anything that appeared suspicious to the Pharisees (cp. v. 46). From them the hostile tones of criticism were heard: "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

## The Miracle

Jesus was sensitive to all the influences about him. The critical comments of his enemies, the genuine sorrow of his friends, the presence of the mourners, the ghastly work of death of which the cold, closed sepulchre was a token, deeply affected him; as well as the fact that the miracle that he was about to perform was a sign of his own impending sufferings and death, when there would be revealed a measure of criticism, hatred, misunderstanding and sorrow such as the world has never seen before or since. "Groaning in himself" (*Diaglott*), the Lord stepped forward in front of the little company, and for a moment gazed at the tomb before him.

Then he uttered words that caused an exclamation of wonder and consternation to pass through the crowd.

*"Take away the stone,"* he commanded.

Such a thing was unheard of. After all, the burial was now four days old! The idea of opening the tomb after such a time, at the whim of mere curiosity, was preposterous. Martha, always forthright, expressed the general reaction to the Lord's suggestion: "Lord," she protested, "by this time he stinketh; for he has been dead four days!"

She had not understood the import of the message she had received from afar, the message that the Lord still sends "from afar" to those who believe in him: "If you will only believe, you will see the glory of God."

But Jesus insisted that the stone be removed from the sepulchre, and at his request it was done. Then the Lord, for the benefit of those standing about, uttered a short, public prayer to the Father, thanking Him that He had granted the petition for which he had already asked in private, and requesting that the miracle may influence some to believe.

"Father," he prayed, "I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me."

*"Thou hearest me always,"* said the Lord. Later, he was, on his own behalf, to "offer up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him out of (not "from" as in the A.V. in Heb. 5:7) death," and his ensuing resurrection, like that of Lazarus, would cause many to believe on him (Rom. 1:4).

The prayer having been uttered before the silent, but now open, tomb, the people watched, doubtless wondering what next would happen. Then, with a loud, piercing cry, the Lord commanded:

*"Lazarus, come forth!"*

A hush fell on the assembly at such a strange proceeding. The eyes of all — critics, friends, enemies — looked wonderingly at the open sepulchre, when, to the startling gaze of all, Lazarus came shuffling forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face bound about with a napkin.

What incredulity, what amazement, what joy in the group of startled people around the tomb. So stunned were they with the incredible miracle, that for a moment they were rooted to the spot. Even Mary and Martha could do nothing as they saw before their eyes their beloved brother, and experienced a joy that they had felt was absolutely beyond the realm of possibility.

For a moment, Lazarus stood there with the taint of the grave upon him, helpless before his Savior, a type of those who will yet be raised mortal to stand before their Judge and Redeemer.

Then the command came, and instantly people snapped out of their petrified astonishment to lend a willing hand:

“Loose him, and let him go!” ordered the Lord.

What joy it will be for those who stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to hear welcome words that will release them from the taint of death, and grant them life eternal!

The raising of Lazarus typed all this. It illustrated that the Lord Jesus is, indeed, “the resurrection and the life.”

### **The Divided Multitude**

The amazing miracle caused many of the Jews that had gathered at the house as mourners, to believe on the Lord Jesus. They dispersed to tell the story of the remarkable miracle time and again. The little household at Bethany added its testimony, and thus played its important part in the preaching of the Gospel, and convincing the people of its power by revealing the purpose of the miracle, for now its significance was obvious to them all.

It was a sign of the resurrection unto life eternal, such as Jesus had promised Martha (vv. 25-26), and as this was pressed upon the notice of the people, many believed.

But, as Jesus had warned in the parable, even this amazing miracle failed to properly move some, for instead of believing on Jesus, they went and told the Pharisees what had happened. Thus the miracle divided the multitude into two groups: those who believed, and those who served the flesh and upheld the evil leadership of the Jews, though they could not dispute Christ’s power. It was a form of judgment in which each declared himself!

The latter sought to gain favor with the authorities by telling them of the miracle. The report sent the rulers of the people into a fury of apprehension. There was no doubt that Jesus had performed an amazing miracle, and one they could not explain. There was also no doubt about the powerful effect that such would have upon public opinion. Something must be done to counter the Lord’s growing popularity in Jerusalem, and the Sanhedrin decided to meet to discuss the problem.

Meanwhile, let us consider the significance of the miracle itself as



one of the eight signs recorded by John.

### **The Miracle As A Sign**

It is quite obvious that this miracle was performed, not to demonstrate the wonder-working power of Jesus, but to teach an important lesson, namely, that he is the “resurrection and the life.”

Every detail of it is significant. The very place where the miracle was performed is suggestive. By meaning and association it impresses the mind with the gloomy combination of affliction, sin (leprosy) and death.

In this city of sorrow, Lazarus died to lead others to God. His name is a Greek form of the Hebrew Eleazar, which means, *Whom God Helps*, and was the name of the high-priest elect under Aaron. In the sign, therefore, he seems to type both the Lord in his sacrificial death and resurrection, and the multitudinous Christ who shall be raised to glory at the second coming.

Why did Jesus stop “two days still in the same place where he was” (v. 6), before proceeding to the “house of affliction” to bring joy to mourners through the resurrection? Surely it represents his present absence from his friends in a far place. As a day is with the Lord “as a thousand years” (2Pet. 3:8), here is a figurative period of 2,000 years during which the Lord is absent, and those “whom he loves” mourn as they are surrounded by sorrow and death. They know, like Martha and Mary, that if only he would come, this sorrow would cease.

At his coming, he will effect a personal and a political resurrection. Those in their graves, who are amenable to judgment will be raised, whilst natural Israel will be brought again from their political graves. And both these wonderful and miraculous events were brought into view by the raising of Lazarus (see Jn. 11:25).

In the sign, Martha and Mary type different qualities that are found in believers who await the Lord’s coming. The former, active and impulsive; the latter more meditative and thoughtful, but both moved by the influence of Christ’s example and teaching. Both had excellent qualities which he was able to mould and to use to the glory of God.

Even the Judgment Seat of Christ is brought into view by the sign, for the resurrection of Lazarus divided the multitude, some believing earnestly on Jesus, the others seeking to serve the flesh by hastening away to report the miracle to the Pharisees.

Thus the seventh sign in John’s record illustrates the great hope of the Gospel: life from the dead. It is appropriate that this should be the *seventh sign*, for in the Bible, seven is the number of the covenant. The death and resurrection of the Lord provided the confirmation of the covenant (Rom. 15:8), and the guarantee that all those truly in him should likewise be raised to life eternal (Rom. 6:5).

**The Sanhedrin Meets** One would imagine that the wonderful miracle would have caused the greatest rejoicing, in that the people would see that a man of God was in their midst, and would perceive that the resurrection of Lazarus illustrated how easily God could snap the shackles of death.

But the Sadducees and Pharisees had grown to so hate Jesus as to be impervious to such an influence. Only one thing would satisfy them, and that was his death.

The amazing wonder of the miracle seriously concerned them. They believed it could seriously affect their personal standing with the community. If this man persisted in performing such miracles, it would not be long before he would have all the country following him.

They did not reason that it was the power of God that Jesus manifested, and that in opposing him they were fighting against God. Moved by bigotry, dominated by jealousy and consumed by hatred, they determined to put a stop to the work of Jesus.

They convened a meeting of the Sanhedrin. This was the supreme national court of Israel, consisting of seventy-one members, and claiming to have originated from the council of seventy elders appointed by Moses with himself as their head (Num. 11:24).

The Sanhedrin claimed the right of regulating all affairs of religion, and therefore it was within their prerogative to examine the claims of Jesus, and to act accordingly. But though it claimed to have originated with Moses, it certainly did not manifest the spirit of Moses when dealing with Jesus.

If it had done so without bias, and had thoroughly investigated this miracle, for example, it would have been compelled to report to the nation that Jesus was a man of God (Jn. 3:1), and more: that he was the promised Messiah.

But the Sadducees and Pharisees were not prepared to admit that, so that the council was called for one reason only: to devise a way to stop Jesus.

It met in an atmosphere of hatred and perplexity. On the one hand, the leaders could not deny the miracle; on the other hand, they refused to believe in Jesus, for they feared his growing influence. Thus they vainly raged in impotent arguments as to how they might rid themselves of him. They sought a means to justify and legalise a crime: the blackest crime in history! Their frustration and bewilderment was expressed by some of their number in council:

"What shall we do?" they asked themselves, "for this man does many miracles. If we let him alone to continue these, the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation!"

What conceit is expressed in these words! These men claimed as their own, what belonged to Yahweh (the nation and temple, being the

“place”), not recognising that they occupied their positions of authority only as custodians of God.

But, presiding over that council was a man named Caiaphas. He was a Sadducee, and therefore denied the resurrection. As such he also denied the influence of Providence, and believed that he possessed absolute power to do good or ill. He was high-handed, callous, insolent and yet servilely under the domination of another powerful priest-politician, one Annas (Lk. 3:2). And now, with a high hand, he shamelessly forced a resolution on the council that Jesus be put to death.

Proudly, contemptuously, he swept all debate aside: “You do not grasp the situation, nor do you see how critical it is!” he declared. “Do you not see that it is expedient for one man to die for the people, rather than the whole nation perish!”

This shameless avowal of a murderous policy revealed how ruthlessly cold-hearted he was. Justice or righteousness meant nothing to this man who lived by the rule of expediency. What was best for him, and not what God desired, governed his principles. And yet he was high-priest!

But though he did not understand it, his words were prophetic. The apostle John, who recorded them, pointed out that he spoke these things, not of himself, but through the circumstances which were God-controlled, and, in fact, they revealed the purpose of God in the offering of His Son. He was to die, not only for the personal sins of his people, and for the redemption of his body, but also for the nation; for the blood of Jesus will ultimately wipe away the guilt of Judah as it does of those who come unto him for individual and personal salvation (see Zech. 13:1). And not only for Judah, but as John records: “But that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (Jn. 11:52).

The children of God then scattered abroad comprised the people of the northern kingdom of Israel, taken into captivity long before by King Shalmaneser of Assyria. They, together with those who constitute Judah, will be gathered back in their own land under Christ, whose sacrifice will provide the means whereby they will find forgiveness with God.

Thus John clearly saw the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel back in their land, such as his Master had promised (Mat. 19:28).

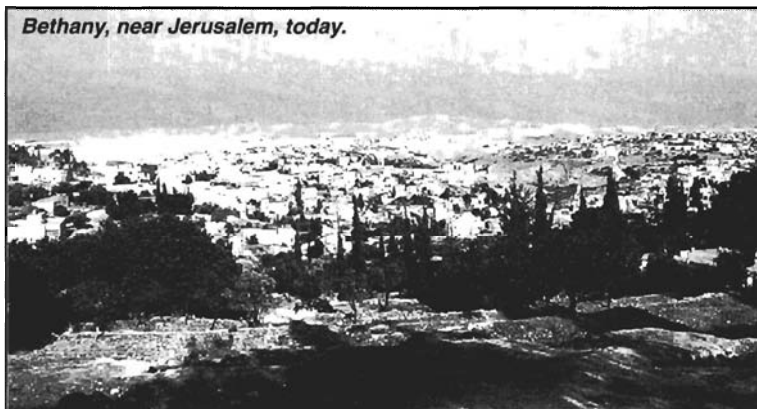
Meanwhile, the advice of Caiaphas was endorsed by the Sanhedrin, and definite plans were implemented that Jesus might be taken and put to death.

These determined attempts to take Jesus forced him into retirement. He no longer appeared before the Jews, but withdrew from Judea, and moved north to the town of Ephraim, some nineteen miles north of Jerusalem. Though the Lord was under the direct

protection of his Father until the appointed time of his crucifixion, he did not see in this fact a licence to be reckless. Rather, as the threatening waves of opposition rose about him, he went out of his way to avoid trouble, recognising the principle underlying the commandment of Scripture: "Thou shalt not tempt Yahweh thy God."

Meanwhile, the Jewish authorities sought for him but could not find him. They then issued a directive and warning that if any should know the whereabouts of Jesus, they should report it unto them in order that they might arrest him.

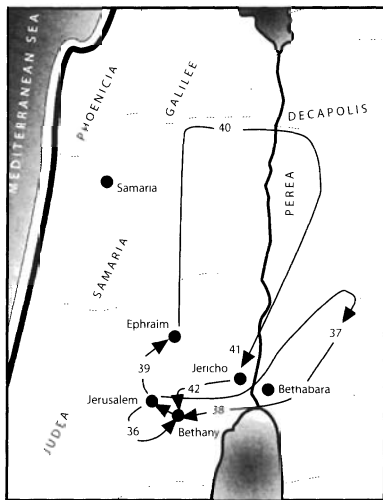
Christ now lived with a price on his head, and therefore moved out of the danger zone to one where he could continue his work without fear of molestation.



## Chapter 11

### THE GRATEFUL LEPER

*From John 11 we must return to Luke 17:11 to take up the narrative of Christ's life. He remained at Ephraim for a short time with his disciples, preaching to the people (Jn. 11:54). When the time came for him to go up to Jerusalem, he proceeded north to Galilee (Lk. 17:11), and then, mingling with the crowds converging on Jerusalem, he proceeded "through the midst" (the "interior" as in the Diaglott) of the two provinces of Samaria and Galilee along the valley of Bethshean towards the Jordan Valley and Perea, and then south to Jericho and Jerusalem. This indirect route was probably taken in order to complete the ministry of Perea that had been interrupted by the call for help consequent upon the death of Lazarus, and also to avoid any risk of danger within Judea due to the command of the Sanhedrin that people should report the presence of Jesus, in order that they might implement their plot to arrest him. The miracle of the curing of ten lepers took place as Jesus was moving towards Perea.*



**A**S the Lord was about to enter a village on his way towards the Jordan valley, his progress was arrested by the pathetic cry of a group of ten lepers who, standing some distance away, attracted his attention.

Leprosy is a hideous, corrupting, loathsome disease; a living death, that eats away the flesh, distorts features and limbs beyond recognition, and makes abhorrent the touch. Lepers were not permitted to enter a Jewish town, nor to attend a synagogue for worship. The disease was used by the Law to typify sin (Lev. 13), and lepers lived a life apart, avoided by all mankind, for contact with them was considered defiling, like sin.

Leprosy was the one disease, however, that could unite Jew and

Samaritan, for those afflicted by it, having been cast out by both their communities, found a common cause in their affliction. How like the knowledge of sin! When we are conscious of our failings, we recognise that formal exclusiveness is hypocritical, and that we are in need of Christ, equally with all others.

It was required of lepers outside the cities, to draw attention to their defiling, horrible state by keeping up a dull, harsh, plaintive, mournful chant of: "Unclean! unclean!"

**The Lord is  
Met by Ten Lepers**

On this occasion, however, the lepers recognised in Jesus the great prophet of Nazareth, who had performed so many miraculous cures. Perhaps he could help them. They had faith that he could if he would. So they changed their cry of "Unclean," into an appeal for help: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," they cried.

In acknowledging his power and status, they declared their faith that he could cure them. The measure of their faith was shown by their reaction to his command.

The Lord stopped as he heard their appeal, and turning to them, he put them to the test: "Go shew yourselves unto the priests," he commanded.

The Law commanded that when a leper was cured, that he show himself to a priest that he might obtain a clearance, and permission to again engage in public worship, and mix with normal people. The Lord called upon these men to do this before they were cleansed of the disease, as a test of their faith in him.

However, these ten lepers were evidently all men of faith, and implicitly believed on the Lord Jesus, for without questioning him, they immediately turned away to do as he bade, evidently believing that they would be cured.

"It came to pass, that, *as they went*, they were cleansed." Their faith had cured them. They had all manifested two virtues: faith and obedience. At the word of the Lord they had set off to find a priest, confident in Christ's power to heal. And as they went, they felt in themselves the healing effect of the cure. New joy was added to their faith and obedience as they felt the benefit of heeding the Word of the Lord, and quickly they went on their way.

All except one.

**Where Are  
The Other Nine?**

One among the ten felt that something more than formal adherence to the Law was required. He felt deep gratitude and love to God for curing him of the horrible disease, and desired to express it before the One whom he now knew to be the channel of divine Grace. There was no longer any need for him to "stand afar off." So, coming

close to the Lord, he bowed deeply to the ground at his feet, and in a heartfelt prayer of thanks, he gave glory to God, thanking Jesus also for the mercy he had revealed.

He was a Samaritan: a stranger, beyond the recognition of most Jews as a true worshipper.

But his action was a contrast to the other nine, and pleased the Lord. "Were there not ten cleansed?" he asked, "but where are the nine? There is not one that is prepared to return and give glory to God, except this alien!"

And then, addressing the Samaritan, he declared: "Arise, and go your way. Your faith has made you whole!"

The word "whole" means "to save," and is used not only to describe salvation from physical ills, but also salvation spiritually (Acts 2:47; 16:31; Rom. 8:24). The Samaritan had already been cured of his malady; now he was promised complete salvation. He was offered this because he had manifested gratitude and love to God in addition to the faith and formal obedience to Law that the other nine had revealed.

### **The Lesson Of The Miracle**

A tremendous lesson is to be learned from this incident. All ten were cured of their disease by faith and obedience, but only one received the promise of complete salvation. The obedience of the nine was governed by the formalism of the Law, but the Samaritan recognised no bounds to the love and the gratitude he owed to God. He really *felt* the thanks he expressed, and paused sufficiently long enough to express his thanksgiving and love to God.

That is an example we should follow. Paul taught: "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1Thes. 5:18).

When we count the great material and spiritual blessings that we daily receive from God, we will learn to express our appreciation and thanks for them, and to repay them by loving acts of service that go beyond the bounds of His law.

God has manifested love toward us, and invites us to address Him as "our Father." As such, He teaches those who are parents what He desires most in His children. What does any parent desire to see manifested by his or her children? Is it not a spontaneous love that goes beyond mere law? Do not we delight in those children who may perform some simple deed of affection, not because they have been commanded to do so, but because they love us, and desire to express it? Will not parents who receive such consideration overlook those minor acts of disobedience and petulance that are incidental to children? Cannot we, as the children of God, take heed to that lesson? The Samaritan did, and received the promise of salvation.

What of the others? What hindered them? Did the formalism of their religion blind them to the need of expressing spontaneous thanks and unfettered love to God? Did a selfish acceptance of God's bounty without real appreciation of His great mercy and goodness, harden them in their attitude toward Him? They had faith, they obeyed, they responded to the formalism of the Law, but had remained unchanged by its teaching, and so, unmoved to gratitude. They were guilty of the sin of stubbornness. How like Israel, and many Gentile believers. The Psalmist declared: "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel" (Psa. 106:13).

We learn from this incident that faith or belief, and baptism or obedience, are not sufficient to ensure salvation, though they are necessary to cleanse us from the defilement of sin; but that upon the foundation of such we must learn to worship God in a love that will take us beyond the formalism of law.

Let us observe the example of the grateful Samaritan, and learn to freely express our thanks and gratitude to God for all that He has done for us, in our acts of love, and words of praise to the glory of His holy Name.





## Chapter 12

### CONVERSATION CONCERNING THE KINGDOM

*As the Lord travelled east towards Perea, and then turned south to go to Jerusalem, he engaged in a series of conversations with a variety of people. There were Pharisees who superciliously approached him with a desire only to trap him in his talk, and find something to condemn in him; there were disciples who had to be warned of problems to come, so that they might be placed on their guard against them; there were those who needed encouragement and comfort, and whom he cheered and strengthened by directing them to the Source of all real help. The Lord had a suitable word for all, and knew how to best treat each one according to his need.*

**A**T one place in his travels, the Lord was accosted by a company of Pharisees who violently disagreed with his teaching concerning the Kingdom of God.

“When will the kingdom come?” they bluntly enquired, hoping to embarrass him.

**Warning the Pharisees** “The kingdom of God will not come for you (Lk. 17:20-21) whilst you continue to manifest your present hostile attitude,” he replied. “Nor will it come by open, popular acclaim! But, look for yourselves, God’s royal majesty is among you!”\*

We have paraphrased the rather difficult comment that the Lord gave on that occasion, to express what we feel he was trying to impress upon his hearers.

According to the A.V., he is represented as telling them that the kingdom will not come “with observation,” or, as the margin gives it: “with outward show.” But the Greek word *parateresis* signifies “to watch with hostile, sinister intent.” In ancient times it was a term often used to describe the anxious waiting for an illness to develop, or, when used legally, for keeping watch on a criminal. (See Moulton and Milligan’s *Lexicon*).

\* The word *basileia* translated “kingdom” signifies sovereignty, royal power and majesty, as well as the sphere over which a king might rule. The Diaglott renders the phrase in this place as “God’s royal majesty is among you.” The Kingdom was still in the future (Lk. 19:11; 23:51), though in the person of the Lord, Peter witnessed its majesty (2Pet. 1:16), and the people its power (Lk. 11:20). In him, therefore, the Pharisees should have beheld the manifestations of God’s royal majesty.

The Lord thus warned the Pharisees that those who engaged in such a form of observation, who with hostile intent “watch for iniquity,” will never attain unto the kingdom of God. Therefore, for such, it will never come!

He further declared concerning his coming: “Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there!” Lk. 17:21). Many, including the Pharisees, thought that when Messiah appeared, he would lead a popular movement, and that there would be a dramatic stirring of the people, so that multitudes would be attracted to his cause. Such was not the Lord’s intention, though if the Pharisees had been observant enough, they would have recognised in his character and message that the royal Majesty of God was among them.

But the Pharisees were blind, and did not appreciate the majestic dignity and bearing of that one in their midst (Mat. 23:6). They were possibly taken aback by the blunt, forthright reply that they received from him, for, apparently they did not reply to it; or, if they did, their answer was not worth recording.

**What Christ’s Disciples Should Heed** Having rebuked the Pharisees, the Lord turned to his disciples, and warned them in terms that expressed his deep concern for their welfare. “The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there; go not after them nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lightens one part of heaven, shines unto the other part; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.”

The disciples did not understand these words, any more than the Pharisees did those addressed to them. They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear (Lk. 19:11), and did not realise that the Lord must first ascend into heaven. He was warning them of that fact. He was telling them that he would be taken from them, and that they would then be thrown on their own resources and would find opposition and persecution so strong and difficult, that they would desire the relief of “one of the days of the Son of man.” The “days of the Son of man” are days when he is manifested among men, either in preaching or in judgment. The Scriptures reveal two such “days:” at the first and second advents of the Lord. Naturally, the day that the apostles would most earnestly have desired would have been the second advent, when judgment will be followed by the establishment of the kingdom in glory. But even the first advent, when the protection of the Lord was with them, or the time of the outpouring of judgment on guilty Judah in AD70 when his followers found some relief from the bitter persecution of the Jews (and which is described as a “coming” or a manifestation of the Lord), would be better than the harsh opposition they would experience after he had been taken from them.

## **He Warns Them of His Crucifixion**

The Lord warned the disciples that few would truly heed his teaching, and that he would suffer many things, and be rejected by the very generation to whom he had been sent. He declared that men would ignore his message as they did Noah's.

*"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all..."*

The people of Noah's days mocked at the message delivered them; they were indifferent to their individual responsibility, and unheeding to the signs. It was a time when "every imagination of the thoughts of men's heart was evil continually" (Gen. 6:5), when God's way was universally corrupted (v. 12), and the earth was filled with violence (v. 13).

Saddest of all, it was a time when believers were so involved in the world's affairs, that they, too, joined the mocking voices of scorers in ridiculing the warning counsel of Noah (Gen. 6:2). So evil had mankind become, that God decided to blot that civilisation out of existence (Gen. 6:7). Only Noah and his family found grace in His sight.

Those were the times that Christ selected as being typical of those that would exist in "the days of the Son of man." The overthrow of guilty Judea in AD70 was a "Day of the Lord," in that it represented specific divine judgment (Deu. 28:49; Mat. 22:7). It was preceded by a state of things that foreshadowed the present worldwide conditions that are ushering in a time of unprecedented trouble for the Gentiles (Dan. 12:1-2).

The warning words of the Lord, therefore, have a double application: they applied to the crisis of those days, and apply also to the present.

Jesus also warned the disciples that conditions would exist such as in the days of Lot, when the people showed complete indifference to his warning of impending doom, and when a state of gross immorality prevailed. Similar conditions existed just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; and certainly do so today. Seldom has the world witnessed such widespread wickedness, such cold-blooded violence, and such blatant immorality as in this age. And as the evils of Sodom stemmed from "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness" (Eze. 16:49), even so they do today.

The great sin of the people was not merely immorality, but their shameless attitude toward it, for it was committed without attempt to hide it (Isa. 3:9). People openly supported the wicked in opposition to the righteous (Jer. 23:14), even as they do today.

Jesus warned that such conditions foreshadowed those that would be, and told his disciples that they should take heed when they saw

evidence of the approaching trouble (Lk. 17:31). He summed up his exhortation in three graphic words: “*Remember Lot’s wife!*”

### **“Remember Lot’s Wife”**

Lot’s wife provides an example to avoid by all true believers. She was given the opportunity to escape the destruction that was about to rain down upon Sodom, but so greatly did she desire its pleasures that she could not bear the thought of parting from them. It was only with reluctance that she followed her husband, for her inclinations were with the city which he had left, and in thought she rebelled against leaving it. In fact, she looked back to it with longing eyes, and lagged behind Lot in escaping from it — to be involved in the destruction that overwhelmed it.

The Lord emphasised the lesson of Lot’s wife by commenting: “*Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it*” (v. 33).

Instead of the word “save,” the R.V. has “gain,” and the Diaglott has “insure.” Jesus thus taught that the best way to gain eternal life or to insure for the future, is for men to give themselves to him in the way appointed, for he will preserve that which is his. Some imagine that they “gain” most by providing for personal security now, or that they “insure” their future by the accumulation of material possessions, but the Scripture teaches otherwise. Paul taught: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1Tim. 6:17).

Again: “Bodily exercise profiteth little [*for a little time, because of our mortality*]; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1Tim. 4:8).

This was the lesson that Jesus taught his disciples; and the truth of his words will be made evident at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**One Taken; One Left** The Lord warned that the Day of Judgment will discriminate between two classes: “*I tell you,*” he declared, “*in that night there shall be two reclining on a couch; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*”

What did he mean? The Lord seemed to have had both days of judgment in mind; that of AD70, and that of the future age. He warned that in both occasions the crisis would unexpectedly overtake those engaged in the daily business of life. Two men shall be reclining on a couch eating supper together; two women shall be grinding meal together, when suddenly, without warning, they shall be involved in the judgment: one to be accepted, and the other to be rejected.

The Greek word for “taken” is *paralambano*, and signifies: to take to oneself as of a wife (see Mat. 1:20, 24); the Greek word for “left” is *aphiemi*, compounded of two words: *apo* meaning “from,” and *heimi* meaning “to send,” and therefore “to send forth, or away; to let go from oneself,” etc. Both parties are therefore called to judgment, but one is accepted as part of the Bride of Christ, and the other one is sent away rejected of him.

But to where will the rejected be sent?

That was the question the apostles asked when they enquired: “Where, Lord?”

He replied: “Whosoever the body [or carcase] is, thither will the eagles [or vultures] be gathered together.”

The dead carcase of Israel is meant. In AD70, the Roman vultures gathered around the nation to feast upon it, and those disciples who had neglected to follow the Lord’s advice, and to flee the city when the enemy had assembled against it, were consumed in the ensuing destruction.

Those who today neglect to prepare for the Lord’s future coming, will be sent away from his presence to be involved in the judgment that shall fall upon the unsuspecting and guilty world that they loved so much (Mat. 25:41).

Hence the significance of the Lord’s exhortation: **“Remember Lot’s wife!”**



## Chapter 13

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### PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE (Luke 18:1-8)

*After impressing his disciples with the need to dedicate their lives to the service of the Truth, and hinting at the problems that are incidental to such a life, the Lord spoke the Parable of the Unjust Judge, to reveal to them the means available to overcome such problems. The parable illustrates the power of patient, persistent prayer, and emphasises the exhortation so frequently stressed throughout the Word, that men should not faint under trials, but should “pray always” (Lk. 21:36; Acts 6:4; Rom. 12:13; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1Thes. 5:17). It is important to cultivate the habit of prayer. By it we can reach to heights of personal communion with God not possible otherwise. We can experience what it means to be able to call Him our heavenly Father, and can obtain His help in all the circumstances of life. The Lord spoke this parable to the end that “men ought always to pray and not to faint” or lose heart. It had particular application to the apostles at that time, as they were about to experience the most bitter opposition, the most violent challenges, when men would do everything possible to destroy both their influence and themselves. In such times, when they might feel crushed under the heavy burden of persecution they would be called upon to endure, then they would be able to find relief and help from God, who would avenge them speedily.*

**T**HERE lived in a city, a hard, ruthless judge who feared neither God nor man. He knew little of mercy, compassion and love: the divine characteristics (1Jn. 4:8) that are commended to our attention as worthy of emulation (Rom. 5:8). He was quite indifferent to the feelings of others.

#### **The Parable Presented**

In the same city, there lived a widow woman who had been deeply wronged. Her only means of help was from the harsh judge. It was his duty to assist her, for the Law of Moses demanded that every support and help, consistent with justice, be extended to such (Deu. 27:19; Isa. 1:17). Indeed, God, who is both merciful and loving, has expressed His concern for widows, and has declared that He will extend Himself to assist them (Psa. 68:5).

The judge of the parable, however, cared neither for God nor the woman; his greatest concern was to serve his own selfish interests.

Therefore, he completely ignored her plea when she came before him.

But the woman was desperate, and her need great. This made her persistent. She refused to take no for an answer. Day after day she came before the judge to plead her cause.

Her very persistence finally wore him down.

He came to dread the moment when she would present herself before him with monotonous regularity to weary him with her complaint, and at last, realising that she was determined to continue her demands until she got her way, he said to himself: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow annoys me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she wear me out!"

To the great joy of the woman, on that day she found that her patience was rewarded, and that the judge was prepared to assist her in her cause.

"Now consider what the unjust judge said," commented the Lord Jesus in pressing home the point of the parable. *"And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?"*

Of course He will! God answers all prayers, though not always in the way that we might desire them answered! Frequently, we do not know what is best for us, and make requests that it would not be in our true interests for God to grant (see Rom. 8:26-27). In His infinite wisdom, He knows what is best, and we must accept that in faith. So often we confuse our needs with our wants, or we desire things that it would be contrary to the will and purpose of God to permit. The answer to prayers for such requests is in the negative.

However, we have this assurance, that if we do that which is right in His sight, and bear with patience any acts of injustice that are committed against us, God will avenge us speedily. Isaiah declared: *"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Yahweh, and their righteousness is of me, saith Yahweh"* (Isa. 54:17).

But though this is our heritage, it is not always possible, or desirable, for God to reveal His actions immediately for our vindication, and therefore, we may be subjected to long periods of frustration, opposition, or persecution before relief comes. When this occurs, a true disciple will not fall into despair, but, like the woman in the parable, will continue to petition the One who is able to help, knowing that in due time He will grant the petition requested in faith and obedience to the divine will.

Moreover, there is a vast difference between God and the judge, as Christ was careful to emphasise. The judge was hard and ruthless, but not so our loving Father in heaven. He "bears long" with His elect.

The word in the Greek signifies that He is good-tempered toward such. The R.V. renders the word as "longsuffering," and the Diaglott as "compassionate." These words express part of the character of the great Creator. He is not like the unjust judge who considered neither principles of righteousness, nor the feelings of those before him. God does do so, and "His thoughts toward us are for good and not for evil" (Jer. 29:11). We need to bear this in mind when we feel that there has been needless delay in His assistance of our cause.

However, if the hard-hearted judge was moved to help the woman because of her persistent pleas, will not the same persistence be more quickly answered by a merciful, heavenly Father? There are some lovely, encouraging expressions of Scripture that are expressive of His character, and show His willingness to help His people, even when they are disobedient to Him. Consider the following:

*"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old"* (Isa. 63:9).

*"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Yahweh, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to make your latter end an object of hope"* (Jer. 29:11; alternative translation).

*"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so Yahweh pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust"* (Psa. 103:10-14).

Can we measure the heaven above? We cannot! The most powerful telescope that has ever been trained upon the vast arch of heaven reveals only illimitable space! So, also, the mercy of God is limitless.

And how far is the east from the west? It, too, is limitless! For the further east or west we go, so the distance continues to stretch out before us and we never reach the end of east or west! This is not the case with north or south, for they have terminal distances. If we travelled by aeroplane in a northerly direction around the world, once we reached the north pole, we change direction to south. But if we are travelling east or west, we would continue to travel in either direction for infinity. It is most significant that the Psalmist should thus carefully select west and east to illustrate the infinite scope of God's love towards His earthly children.

In the parable, the unjust judge only avenged the woman because she wearied him with her persistent requests. It was this that gained results from the hard-hearted magistrate.

And the Lord declared: *"Hear what the unjust judge saith. And*



*shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?"* The Diaglott renders the last phrase of this statement as: "and He is compassionate towards them."

God is neither unjust nor hard-hearted, and He invites us to place our care upon Him. He will avenge us, and that speedily, if we seek Him in the proper manner (See Rom. 12:19; Rev. 3:9; 6:10; 19:2), for He is compassionate towards us.

"I tell you," said the Lord, "He will avenge them speedily!"

If Christ's followers put their uttermost trust and confidence in God, they will not be disappointed, nor will they have to wait for Him to be moved by impatience (like the judge in the parable), before He will assist them. Rather will God do so speedily.\* Like the woman, they must clearly understand their need of help outside themselves; and recognising the Source from whence it is obtainable, seek for it through prayer.

There was particular need for the apostles to understand this, and use the means available to them, for Jesus knew that once he was taken from them, they would experience bitter persecution from their countrymen. Under those circumstances, it was important that they should constantly seek God's help. If they did so, their cries would ascend into heaven, and God would avenge them very speedily by punishing those who persecuted them, as Jesus showed on another occasion (see Mat. 23:35). Later, when the apostles were subjected to persecution from the Jewish authorities, the judgment of God was poured out upon their persecutors in terrible punishment. But God also avenges His children in a more personal way, and His help is always available to them, to strengthen them in time of need. Hence Paul taught: *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"* (Rom. 12:19).

### **Shall He Find Faith On The Earth?**

The Lord completed his parable with a cryptic remark that has occasioned much thought and discussion among his disciples ever since. He asked the question: *"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"*

In considering this saying of the Lord, it is important to bear in mind the context, as well as the statement itself. In the Greek, the definite article is attached to the word "faith," so that it is *"the faith"* that is in question. What faith is that? The context supplies the answer. The Lord had described a faith that gives power to prayer, and manifests the utmost confidence in God to sustain and vindicate one in the face of the greatest opposition and persecution. Such faith

\* God is continually moving for the vindication of His people, but the manifestation of His action on their behalf is not always immediately apparent, and for that they must await in patience.

is seldom revealed in times of ease and plenty such as the present, when the temptation is strong to grasp the ever-present opportunities to accumulate this world's goods to the exclusion of "treasure in heaven." Instead of leaving it to God to avenge His own, there is a tendency to ruthlessly seek personal power, and, like Lamech of old, to pursue personal revenge even unto "seventy times seven" (Gen. 4:23-24). Under such conditions, to leave vengeance to God, or to put faith in Him to the extent of denying self, is considered unrealistic. Therefore, when the Lord questioned as to whether he would find *the* faith at his coming, he indicated the great difficulty that true believers would experience in manifesting real trust in God in the midst of such an environment as he knew would exist at the time of the end.

The Lord's query applied to the destruction of the Jewish State in AD70, as well as to the present age. The former is described as an outpouring of divine vengeance (see Mat. 22:7; 23:33-36), and, in that sense, a "coming" of the Lord (ch. 24:27). We, of course, await the literal and personal coming of the Lord, when "every eye shall see him."

The Lord's question, therefore implied that ecclesias would exist in particularly difficult conditions at the time of the end, which would not be helpful to the development of faith. Paul warned: "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away*" (2Tim. 3:1-5).

Such an environment does not lend itself to the development of a virile faith such as the Lord advocated in the parable of the unjust judge: one that is constant, is not easily discouraged, and rests confidently in God to vindicate and to avenge.

The Lord has warned that the conditions at the epoch of his second coming, will be so difficult for those who live godly lives, that such faith will be of rare occurrence! Let us heed the warning and guard against the evils of this age.

## Chapter 14

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### THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN (Luke 18:9-14)

*This parable presents further thoughts on the subject of prayer, and was evidently given shortly after the one considered above, with which it should be studied. In the Parable of the Unjust Judge, the Lord showed the power of **persistent** prayer; in that of the Pharisee and the Publican, he taught the need of **proper** prayer. There were many in Judah at that time who engaged in long and frequent prayers, but who utterly failed to pray aright. The Pharisees were of that class. They imagined that the length and frequency of prayer was what counted, and ignored the need of sincerity, feeling, motive, and purpose in their approach to God. So the Lord spoke this parable to teach the need of humility in prayer.*

**T**HE Lord had taught the need of constant prayer. The Pharisees thoroughly endorsed that principle. As a group, they were noted for their frequent and long prayers, and yet their worship was completely lacking in power. Why was that? Because their prayers were but pompous expressions of their own worth! They prayed to God, but put all their confidence in self. They “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” There was no deep love of God in their hearts, nor a recognition of their dire need of His help. Therefore, their prayers were offensive to Him.

To illustrate the sin of pride and self-righteousness, in all its ugliness, the Lord told the story of the Pharisee and the Publican.

#### **The Two In The Temple Court**

Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, the other a despised tax-gatherer, a publican. The Pharisee carefully surveyed the court of the temple, that he might select a place where others could see and admire him for his piety.\* He was conspicuous among the common worshippers by the distinctive robes he wore. As he proudly gazed about him, he caught sight of the tax-gatherer in the distance. Like most Pharisees, he treated common Jews with contempt, but he loathed such as the publican who stooped to gather taxes from his fellow-countrymen to pay to Gentiles! A spirit of self-satisfaction took hold of him as he turned his eyes heavenwards, and prepared himself to pray. Whilst he could thank God that he was not as others, God must also be well-pleased that He had such as himself to worship before Him!

With thoughts such as this, the proud Pharisee began to pray.

Luke alone records the parable and the prayer (Lk. 18:11-12). The most prominent word in the latter is the little, single-lettered word, “**I**,” which stands boldly upright among the other letters as the Pharisees did among the worshippers! The Pharisee used it five times in his short prayer, and it is quite illuminating to colour the word with a distinguishing colour, such as red, in your Bible. Then it will stand out in bold relief, a continual reminder of the folly of self-promotion. Worshipping self, the Pharisee deluded himself by a belief in his own worthiness, and addressed the Creator in terms of the most objectionable familiarity. He urged his claim of personal righteousness before God, using five times as many words to do so, as the publican did in his short prayer.

### **The Prayer of the Pharisee**

The Pharisee set forth three principles in his prayer: *[1] He was more righteous than the common people; [2] He did no harm to others; [3] He paid God that which was due to Him.*

There was no recognition of his need of God in his prayer, no thanksgiving for the benefits he had received, no humility in acknowledging sins committed or duties he had failed to perform. He knew of no faults in himself. He believed that he had scrupulously carried out all the ordinances of the Law. He was not an extortioner; he was not immoral; he was not unjust. He was a “good-living man” both in his own estimation, and that of others.

His besetting sin, of course, was personal pride, and this blinded him to his faults, and elevated him in his own sight. Therefore, he approached God on the basis of his own personal merit, almost as an equal. In his concept of religion, God owed him something, and he felt that he had a right to expect it. Proudly he told God: “I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess!”

The Pharisee made a practice of fasting twice a week, on the second and fifth days, even though the Law did not demand it. The first fast was to commemorate the ascension of Moses into the mount to receive the Law; the second one was to recall the day that Moses descended from the mount to punish the people because they had commenced to worship the golden calves.

The Law commanded one fast only: on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:29), though fasting was performed voluntarily on other days; but the Pharisees made it compulsory to keep these two fasts at least; and so the praying Pharisee proudly proclaimed that he had kept the law of the Pharisees.

His cold, pompous prayer illustrated the truth of Paul’s words: “*I bear them [natural Israel] record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteous-*

ness [or means of justification by faith], and going about to establish their own righteousness [their own means of justification], have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:2-3).

**The Publican's Prayer** Meanwhile, the tax-gatherer had sought out an inconspicuous place in the temple court, "afar off" from the prominent spot selected by the Pharisee. There, overcome by remorse at the recognition of his unworthiness, and with downcast eyes, he could but beat his breast in despair, and pour out to God one pitiful request: "*God, be merciful to me a sinner!*"

He had nothing to offer God but a despairing and repentant heart. He was conscious of his failings, recognised that he was worthy of only punishment from God, but pleaded the divine mercy.

"I tell you," said the Lord to his hearers, "*this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*"

What an amazing assessment of values this was to the disciples! To them, the Pharisees were the criterion of virtue. The distinctive robes they wore, their scrupulous regard for the laws that they set before men, their ostentatious display of religious zeal, their assumption of knowledge, caused simple-minded men to look up to them as outstanding examples of worthiness. They did not realise that all this was a mere facade, a cover for their actual spiritual bankruptcy. These men were pompous and self-righteous in the extreme. Their religious life was couched in terms of gross familiarity toward God which was an offence to Him. Their pride was an affront to the means of redemption He has devised, for that reveals flesh as inherently evil, and illustrates the need for it to be thoroughly humbled before Him.

Actually, there was much that was good in the religion of the Pharisees, if only they had blended it with humility, and a true knowledge of God's will and doctrine. Jesus himself, acknowledged that (Mat. 23:3).<sup>\*</sup> There was a certain virtue in the strict rules that they imposed, if they had limited them to themselves, and had not been so condemnatory of others who did not observe them; there was a benefit in some of the additions that they made to the Law, if they had not, at the same time, destroyed its spirit, and demanded that all men observe them, rather than it. But, unfortunately, they elevated their man-made laws over God's will, and in doing so, they condemned the Lord Jesus who was God's provision for the salvation of humanity.

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<sup>\*</sup> The "all things" (Diaglott) in v. 3 are their traditions, for Jesus condemned the very "things" they bade the people to obey (Mat. 15:13-14). They were to examine carefully whatever they said in word or writing (their traditions) and to act accordingly, and not according to "their works."

## THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN: A CONTRAST

### **The Hypocrite**

He searched his heart and found only good.

He stood apart in pride.

He stood upright in confidence.

He felt that God had need of him.

### **The Worldling**

He searched his heart and found only evil.

He stood apart in shame.

He bowed his head conscious of sin.

He felt a need of God.

*The first essential to acceptable worship is to recognise our need of God.*



*An ancient illustration of the Pharisee and the Publican at the temple for worship*

## Chapter 15

### A DISCUSSION ON MARRIAGE (Mat. 19:1-12; Mk. 10:1-12)

*From Luke 18:15, it is necessary to turn to Matthew 19:1-13 or to Mark 10:1-13 to follow the sequence of the Lord's life. This will be seen by a careful consideration of the sections of Scripture to which we have referred. Luke 18:15 records how Jesus blessed little children that were brought to him, but the accounts in Matthew and Mark record the incidents and teaching that preceded this incident, and show how closely they are related.*

*However, both Matthew and Mark omit details in the life of the Lord that are supplied by Luke. Matthew, for example, summarises all that is contained in Luke 9:51 to 17:19 by the general statement: "When Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan" (Mat. 19:1).*

*The Lord, therefore, had ascended up from Ephraim (Jn. 11:54) through Samaria, then had turned east to travel along the border (the meaning of the word "midst" in Lk. 17:11) of Galilee to Perea, in ancient Gilead (see map on page 347), and then south towards Bethany, near Bethabara (see RV, Jn. 10:40), on the eastern side of the Jordan — not to be confused with the Bethany by the mount of Olives where Lazarus lived. Jesus was now back in the place at which he had received the message from Martha and Mary that their brother was desperately ill.*

**A**S the Lord and his disciples moved south through Perea towards Bethany on the way to Jerusalem, they were overtaken by large companies of people who were doing likewise, for the time of the Passover was near at hand.

Many of them recognised Jesus as the Prophet of Nazareth, and stopped to hear him preach his message of salvation. They looked with curiosity at the little procession of apostles and disciples, including a company of women who had attached themselves to the Lord in Galilee (Mk. 15:41), and were now ministering to his needs, as he proceeded on his way.

#### **The Pharisees Try To Trap Jesus**

The Pharisees, however, were angered at the manner in which the crowds flocked around the Lord, and listened to his teaching. They had felt the lash of his tongue more than once, and had come to hate him, and to spy on his every move. They were always to be found

watching him, lying wait to catch him in his speech, ready to tempt and entrap him into some rash judgment or ruinous decision, that they might use against him.

And they felt confident that they could entrap him this time!

He was back in the very territory where he had previously answered their taunts by accusing them of breaking the spirit of the Law, and then to prove his charge, had made reference to the manner in which their teaching on divorce destroyed the very spirit of the Mosaic ordinance.



They now returned to the charge by plying him with a difficult question.

They "tempted" him by asking: *"Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"*

This was a question fraught with the greatest difficulties, in that there was a "temptation" to avoid the issue, or to answer in such a way that the divine law might be frustrated. To do either would have put the Master into succumbing to temptation.

It was an age of easy divorce, when the very foundations of healthy national and religious life had been undermined by widespread infidelity in the home, and consequent disruption in family life. It needed courage to give an answer that challenged the prevailing habit.

The nation was completely divided on the issue, and it was hotly debated by two schools of thought, both in high repute, known as those of Hillel and Shammai, two outstanding rabbis. The former claimed that it was legitimate to obtain divorce for the most trivial reason; but the latter claimed that it was permissible only in the case of scandalous unchastity. The Pharisees reasoned that whatever answer the Lord gave, he must offend one or the other of the two schools of thought, and thus set some people against him.

There was also a further matter, that made the "temptation" dangerous. The Lord was in the district ruled over by Herod, who had beheaded John because of his public pronouncement against divorce, and to declare (as they doubtless were sure that the Lord would be compelled to do) that divorce was a violation of the divine Law, could have brought the wrath of king Herod upon Jesus.

But the Lord was not detracted by either the difficulties or the dangers associated with a true and forthright reply to their question. He asked: *"What did Moses command you?"*

They replied: *"Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and*



to put her away.”

He answered: *“Have you not read, that He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Therefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has yoked together, let no man put asunder.”*

In this answer, the Lord restored marriage to its original rightful status. He avoided the arguments of the two schools of Jewish thought, and clearly showed that if people are moved by God’s will, they will respect His teaching in regard to divorce and remarriage, and conform thereto.

The Pharisees could not refute the Scripture set before them, and, taken aback before all the people, they asked in defence: *“Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?”*

Now, Moses never did command that any man should put his wife away, and the Lord showed this in his next answer: *“Moses because of the **hardness of your hearts** suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning of creation it was not so!”*

It other words, Moses’ legislation was to guard against an abuse of privilege. In the beginning, God had designed marriage to be absolutely binding, but He took heed also, of the hardness of men’s hearts and their innate sinfulness, and knowing that they would break His law, made provision for the ill effects of such to be limited as much as possible. Thus the Law of Moses demanded that a bill of divorcement be given to the rejected wife, and commanded that when this was done, the husband could not take her back. This protected the wife against the tyranny of a husband who might send her away for a time, with the intention of claiming her back again. It warned such husbands to exercise the utmost care, lest they find themselves destitute of the company of the “wife of their youth” (Mal. 2:14-15).

To this point in the discussion, the Lord had avoided the danger to which he would be exposed from Herod if he publicly criticised his marriage, as had John Baptist. But then he came out with a bold declaration that showed that he did not fear the king. He declared: *“I say unto you, Whosoever [and this included Herod] shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery!”*

This was a bold, fearless declaration of Truth, made in the very region governed by Herod who had beheaded John Baptist for daring to assert publicly that the king’s marriage was irregular. Christ’s statement not only endorsed that of John, and thus was defiant of the king’s power to harm, but it also condemned the attitude of those

Jews who claimed to base their lives upon the Bible, but were prepared to ignore its teaching when it suited them.

**Apply The Lord's Words Today**

Christ's teaching on marriage was given at a time when divorce was frequent, and immorality was common. The times were similar to those of today, when the marriage vow is treated lightly, and broken homes and juvenile delinquency are common.

Those who seek to follow God's way should avoid these evils like the plague. They should treat marriage and its related associations as set forth in the Bible, and not according to the current fashion. When a young married couple set up home together, they should strive to establish it upon godly principles, not according to the way of the world. These principles will provide the foundation for lasting, happy marriage. They show the need for mutual sacrifice in marriage relationships, with each partner manifesting love and respect for the other. The husband is called upon to love his wife with the self-sacrificing devotion that Christ shows for the ecclesia (Eph. 5:25), and the wife is called upon to submit herself unto her husband, as unto the Lord (Eph. 5:22).

There will be no need or place for divorce (which God hates: Mal. 2:16) in a home built upon such principles. Instead, with true and lasting fondness for each other, each partner will assist the other in their joint walk towards the kingdom of God. A successful marriage does not depend upon the quality of the carpets on the floor, the size of the automobile in the garage, or the extent of the balance in the bank — but the mutual love that finds its expression in mutual sacrifice for the wellbeing of each other.

In the days of Jesus, as today, the world has made incompatibility a legitimate ground for divorce, so that if two people could not get on together they could lawfully break up their marriage and take on new partners. But Christ did not agree with this procedure. He called it adultery. He gave an example of self-sacrifice in marriage, for though Jesus was never physically married he is spiritually betrothed to a Bride, the ecclesia. And unfortunately, that Bride is not always compatible to the ways and will of her Lord. Nevertheless, with true sacrificial love, he does not cast her off because of that, but willingly overlooks her shortcomings, and freely forgives the sins she commits and her cantankerous ways! Christ's attitude in that regard is advanced by Paul as the ideal for all marriage (Eph. 5:21-33).

Though the world has made divorce easy, and has legalised immorality, it is none the happier for so doing. There are many broken hearts, and soured lives today, because men and women have failed to implement in their married lives the very principles advanced by the Lord Jesus. If they applied the principles of Christ to married relationships, divorce would never be needed or desired. Thus Jesus

taught that marriage is indissoluble:

- *Because it is a divine institution* (Mat. 19:4);
- *Because it came into existence by express command* (v. 5);
- *Because God has yoked the married couple together in marriage* (v. 6);
- *Because He designed marriage from the beginning as a permanent yoke* (v. 8);
- *Because of the evil consequences attendant upon divorce and infidelity* (v. 9).

**The Disciples  
Question The Lord  
(Mt. 19:10-12;  
Mk. 10:10-12)**

The Pharisees were evidently silenced by the Lord's explanation, for no reply on their part is recorded. Certainly they could not dispute the force of his reasoning from the Word of God. Moreover, they must have given grudging admiration to the boldness of his words, not merely because the question was one that was hotly debated among the Jews, but also because of his fearlessness in openly proclaiming, in Herod's dominion, that a union such as that of the king was adulterous in the sight of God.

But the apostles were puzzled. As they walked back to the house in which the Lord was staying at the time, they pondered the matter in their hearts. Obviously, his concept of the marriage bond was much different from that of the leaders of Israel. They determined to seek further information. Therefore, once they were in the house, they gathered around Jesus, and asked him to be more explicit in regard to the subject of marriage and divorce. Accordingly, he clearly stated his teaching to them: "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, commits adultery against her;*" he declared. "*And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she commits adultery.*"

It was a plain answer, and it means that a man is completely bound to his wife, and it is his duty to support and help her under all circumstances (see Rom. 7:1-3. See further notes in *The Christadelphian Expositor: Romans*).

The teaching left the apostles in a quandary. They could see how restrictive marriage could be under those conditions. If a man is completely bound to his wife, so that his freedom is limited by his duty to her, would not that mean that his activities in God's service would be restricted by family obligations? If so, would it not be better for a disciple of the Lord to remain unmarried, and give his life completely to the work of the Truth?

They put this proposition to Jesus.

"*If the case of the man be so in association with his wife, it is not good* [Gr. "profitable"] *to marry,*" they tentatively suggested.

What did they have in mind when they suggested that marriage

under such conditions would not be “good” or “profitable”? Obviously that which was closest to their minds: profitable to the preaching of the Gospel.

The Lord did not deny that if a person desired to devote the whole of his life in complete dedicated service to God it may be better if he remained unmarried, but he pointed out that there are few who can receive such a saying as that, because so few can live such dedicated lives! However, there are some who do so for “the kingdom of heaven’s sake,” and it is legitimate for such not to marry. Paul was one such, and there have been others. They have been individuals so completely devoted to Christ that they have given their lives absolutely to the service of God, and for that reason have never married.

Nevertheless, marriage is honorable (Heb. 13:4; Eph. 5:25). Therefore, where no impediment to it exists, and the opportunity presents itself to enter into it, a person should do so. He should acknowledge the truth of Genesis 2:18: “It is not good for a man to dwell alone,” and submit to the law of marriage, with its salutary discipline. The Lord therefore concluded his comment by saying: “*He that is able to receive it, let him receive it!*”

This was Jesus’ answer to the apostles’ question; it signifies that where no restriction to marriage exists, a person should do so if possible.

It is sometimes thought that this answer is in conflict with Paul’s advice in 1Cor. 7, but the apostle Paul is there careful to state that his advice was then given “by permission, and not of commandment,” and was “good for the present distress” (v. 26), by which he refers to the terrible circumstances that would erupt in the years leading to the Roman invasion of AD70. Those circumstances would put much stress on the people, and for that reason it was wise not to be over-anxious for marriage and its additional cares and responsibilities.

There is no real conflict between Christ and Paul, for the latter reflected the mind and spirit of the Master (1Cor. 7:40). Even the Lord Jesus warned against children-bearing at that time (Luke 21:23), only because of the distresses they would face.

**Christ’s Care For  
Children (Mt. 19:13-  
15; Mk. 10:13-16;  
Lk. 18:15-17)**

Whilst the Lord was engaged in this conversation with the apostles, the lady of the home entered the room with some of her children, hoping that the Lord would place his hands upon them and pray over them. Her action interrupted the discussion between the Lord and the apostles, and the latter, forgetting that they were indebted to the woman for the hospitality she had shown towards them, irritably turned on those who had brought the children in, and rebuked them for breaking in on so vital a conversation.

Their attitude greatly displeased the Lord (Mk. 10:14). He, in turn, rebuked the apostles: *"Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me,"* he declared, *"for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."*

To enforce the lesson, the Lord Jesus took the little children up in his arms before the apostles, and putting his hands upon them, he blessed them!



How kind and condescending he was. He, the Son of God, and earth's future Ruler, was prepared to take time to treat even little children with kindness and consideration. It was a lesson in humility and true greatness for the apostles. It was even of greater significance than that, for it followed immediately upon his discussion of marriage. His attitude endorsed his previous words and actions which had emphasised the benefits of marriage. Early in his public ministry, he had blessed a marriage feast with his presence, and now, as though to repudiate all false and unnatural ideas of the extreme virtue of celibacy, apart from the "kingdom of God's sake," he blessed the fruits of marriage, lifting up and fondling the little children, manifesting an affection toward them unusual in a young bachelor, such as he was.

Christ's action thus enforced three principles:

1. *It showed the disciples that they had to become as little children, and trustingly accept the truths set before them.*
2. *It taught that they should not despise others, even though more simple-minded than themselves.*
3. *It set the seal to the Lord's approval of marriage, for he blessed the fruit of such union.*

How pleased the mother of those children must have been as the Lord rebuked the apostles, and blessed her little ones. It was an act of condescending grace that was majestic in its simplicity.

## Chapter 16

### THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE RICH (Mat. 19:16-22; Mk. 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23)

*The Lord constantly taught that material possessions are not necessary for a life of happiness or of profit. He stressed that life “consists not in the abundance of things possessed.” Faith must recognise that God provides us with all our needs, though not necessarily with all our wants. The Lord exhorted that we should “not take anxious thought as to what we shall eat or drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed, because our heavenly Father knows that we have need of **all these things**.” Instead, having faith in God, we should “seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:31-34). In our age of material well-being this teaching of the Lord should ever be kept in mind. It was dramatically brought before the attention of the apostles by an incident that happened as the Lord was moving towards Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. As we consider it, let us remember that many rich men have clearly seen what has been required of them, and have been so moved by faith that they have been able to serve God acceptably. Examples of such wealthy men are seen in Abraham, Job, Joseph and others. Some such ministered unto the Lord “of their substance,” and these loving ministrations he greatly appreciated. The possession of riches does not necessarily destroy the manifestation of righteousness.*

**S**HORTLY after the Lord’s discussion with his disciples concerning marriage, he left the house in Bethany, which is east of the Jordan, and departed for Jericho.

As he proceeded on his way, followed by the little company of disciples, he was stopped by a young man whose **elaborate dress** indicated that he was both wealthy and of the ruling class (Lk. 18:18). He had hastened up to the Lord, and **despite** his position and means, he humbly knelt before Jesus (Mk. 10:17), and addressed him as teacher.

**“What Good Thing Shall I Do?”**

“Good teacher,” he said, “What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”

There was much that was **excellent** in that short opening address. It acknowledged the need of eternal life, it indicated a willingness to do something about it.

However, there was also that about it which was objectionable.

The rich young ruler had described Jesus as "Good teacher," as though this goodness was an inherent quality in the Lord, and did not stem from a Greater than he, even Yahweh. And his speech also suggested that by one stupendous act of goodness, the ruler could ensure eternal life for the future, and thus buy his way into divine favour. He did not realise that it is a humble, consistent, daily application of divine Truth that is necessary to obtain such.

His very use of the adjective "good" was unfortunate. No man is inherently good, not even Jesus (Rom. 7:18), because of the nature he bore. As far as man is concerned (and the Lord was of our nature), all goodness is derived from without, coming down from God (Jas. 1:17). The young man evidently regarded Jesus in the way in which the rabbis of Judaism, or the poets and philosophers of Greece were regarded: men supposed to have light and goodness in them as innate qualities. The truth, of course, is that such only comes from God, and only through God-manifestation will one manifest light and goodness.

So the Lord administered a gentle rebuke to the eager, young ruler: "*Why do you ask me about what is good? And why do you call me good?*" he asked (see Diaglott), "*There is but One good, that is God; but if you would enter into life, keep the commandments.*"

The Lord thus showed that "the good teaching" the young man craved was found in the Word, and to it he directed attention. It would reveal what should be done, for it called upon all to "keep" the commandments.

The Greek word *tereo*, here rendered "keep," signifies to take care of, to keep an eye upon, to watch attentively. To "keep" the commandments in that sense, is to meditate upon them, carefully watching over them that one might observe to do them.

"Which commandments?" asked the young man.

Jesus replied: "*Thou shalt do no murder; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"

This was quite a comprehensive reply, though the Lord condensed it into a few words. He had omitted the first four commands of the Ten Commandments, for it was obvious that the young man would observe those, and in setting forth the rest, he listed first the negative demands of the Law, and then moved on to its affirmative requirements. In regard to the latter, he first made reference to the comparatively easy command to honour parents, before moving on to the more difficult and exacting one of the loving one's neighbour as oneself!

The Lord's reply constituted excellent advice for the building up of a character acceptable to God. We need first to learn to avoid evil, and then progress by building into our lives qualities of good, first

doing those duties that come easiest, and then moving on to more difficult requirements of self-sacrificing love.

The all-embracing reply of the Lord, however, did not deter the young man. He could sincerely claim to have carefully observed those things from early youth. "All these have I kept from my youth up," he claimed, "what lack I yet?"

There was nothing pompous or boastful in this reply but a modest statement of what he had done. The word "kept" (Gr. *prulasso*) signifies "to keep on one's guard." He did not tell Jesus that he had fulfilled all the requirements of the Law, but rather, that he had carefully watched over his behaviour from early youth, in an attempt to do so.

This modest answer pleased Jesus. He took careful stock of the eager young man facing him. He had the earnest, generous enthusiasm of youth. There was a keen zeal as he came running (Mk. 10:17), an openness about him as he knelt before the Lord (v. 17), a becoming modesty as he answered him (Mat. 19:20). Though he was wealthy, there was not then in him the pride of riches, the self-sufficiency that they engender, nor the hypocrisy of those who are fully conscious of their moral purity. All that he had heard and seen in Jesus, quickened to greater intensity his desire to serve.

But Jesus' searching look into the heart of the young man before him was penetrating. He knew what was required of the rich young ruler more than he did himself. He could discern depths of wickedness and greed (not as yet developed) that the young man never knew existed. In full understanding of what would develop in him if left unchecked, Jesus offered him sound advice: to seek earth's poverty and heaven's riches!

*"There is one thing that you lack," he observed quietly, "If you will be perfect [i.e., complete], go and sell that which you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me!"*

The young man was taken aback. This was an answer and a demand that he had not expected to receive! What! Give all his wealth to the poor? What benefit would that be for anybody? If Christ had asked some for himself, the young man would have willingly given it! If he had asked material support for his cause, he would not have held back. But to give it all up — and to the poor! It seemed an entirely unreasonable request to the rich young ruler.

He turned away bitterly disappointed, feeling rebuffed and angry. "His countenance fell," observed Mark (ch. 10:22; R.V.). The same Greek word is used in Matthew 16:3 to describe the lowering sky. Jesus had touched upon the man's weak point, and it made him resentful. With clouded face he gazed upon what he lacked; in Christ he saw what he needed. Yet he departed very sorrowfully for his rich



home, and for all his wealth he remained a poverty-stricken man in the true riches! What of the future? Who knows? Christ loved him.

But, meanwhile, with angry face, resentful that he had been humiliated before others, he turned on his heels, and left Jesus.

### **Jesus Instructs His Amazed Disciples**

As the Lord watched the young man leave, he made an observation to the disciples that (Mt. 19:23-26; Mk. 10: 23-27; Lk. 18:24-27) *amazed them beyond all measure. "Truly I say unto you, that it will be only with difficulty that a rich man shall enter the kingdom of God,"* he declared.

They heard those words with amazement. They were astonished that the Lord should speak thus of one like that young man: enthusiastic, earnest, anxious to serve God, even though he was not prepared to sacrifice everything for the Truth.

After all, how many are prepared to do that!

Jesus discerned their wonderment, and sympathising with their confusion, he quietly sought to instruct them. "Children," he said unto them tenderly, *"how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eyes of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!"*

The word "trust" (Gr. *peitho*) signifies, "to suffer one's self to be persuaded or convinced; to have assurance." The rich young man was swayed by the appeal of riches, even though this desire may not have been fully developed then, and the Lord's advice to him was based upon his knowledge of "what was in him" (Jn. 2:23-25).

In spite of all the young man's knowledge of the Law, it was easier for a "camel to go through the eye of a needle" than for such as he to enter the kingdom.

What did the Lord mean by that saying? It is obvious that the apostles knew for they did not comment upon it. It is suggested by some that he was using a saying among the Jews to describe what is impossible or highly improbable. Others suggest that by "the needle," the



***Showing the Jaffa Gate, with the small door on the right, called "the eye of a needle."***

Lord was making reference to a small side gate for foot travellers that led into the city of Jerusalem. It was only with extreme difficulty that a camel could be taken through this gate. First the camel had to kneel in humility (and this the young ruler had done), and then it had to be unloaded of its burden (which the young man refused to do!).

But how many are prepared to sacrifice as much as Christ had demanded of that rich young man? This is what the apostles thought as they considered the matter.

“Who then can be saved?” they asked among themselves. The Lord overheard the remark, and fixing them with a steady gaze to impress his point, declared: *“With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible!”*

It is only in the strength of God and of Christ, that men will triumph over self (Phil. 4:13), and over the temptation of riches. And so Paul instructed Timothy: *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who gives us richly all things to enjoy”* (1Tim. 6:17).

If we fully trust in God, we will learn to conquer over every trial.

**The Danger of Riches** Christ did not say that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, but that it is only with difficulty that he will do so. The reason is that the abundance of material possessions tends to blind men to their need of God. Indeed, rich men in the past like Abraham, Job, Joseph of Arimathea, and others, have demonstrated that it is possible, because they have matched their wealth of possessions with a rich faith in God. Generally, the super-abundance of material possessions tends to make people self-sufficient and independent of God. Hence the preaching of the Gospel in this age of plenty, has not the appeal to people that it did have in more difficult times. The following Scriptures are appropriate warnings for the times in which we live:

*“Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (Lk. 12:15).

*“When I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke Me, and break My covenant”* (Deu. 31:20).

*“Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation”* (Deu. 32:15).

*“The iniquity of Sodom [was] pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness”* (Eze. 16:49).

*“The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Mt. 13:22).*

Hence the exhortation: *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1Tim. 6:17-19).*

**What Christ’s  
Disciples Shall  
Receive  
(Mt. 19:27-30;  
Mk.10:28-31;  
Lk. 18:28-30)**

One thing was obvious to the apostles, as they listened to the Lord’s discourse upon the danger of riches, and that was that there was no danger of them being excluded from the kingdom through the possession of riches, for they had none. Unlike the rich young ruler, they had not hesitated to give up all that they had, even though it did not amount to much, to follow the Lord.

As Peter pondered this in the light of the Lord’s remarks concerning the rich young ruler, he was led to boast about what they had done for Christ, as though Jesus should consider it an honour that he had such men to follow him! “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee,” he declared, “What shall we have therefore?”

Peter boastfully drew attention to the fact that he had done what the rich young ruler was not prepared to do, and he expressed himself in such a way as to emphasise the sacrifice that he and his fellow-apostles had made, rather than humbly acknowledging the honour that had been paid them, in being appointed to follow the Lord.

After all, Jesus was the Son of God, and earth’s future ruler; was it not an honour to be found among the appointed apostles of such a one? Men esteem it a privilege to be able to bask in the glory of their fellow-men, how much greater a privilege is it to be the close associate of Yahweh’s anointed!

Jesus greatly reminded Peter of this: *“Truly I say unto you,”* he declared, *“That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration,\* when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Truly I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and*

\* The Greek word rendered “regeneration” is *palliggenesia*, and signifies “new birth.” Jesus here used it in relation to the rebirth of the nation of Israel which shall bring peace to the whole world — Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 7:27.

*lands, with persecutions; and in the Age to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."*

The Lord's reply put Peter's comment in proper perspective. Peter had boasted of the sacrifices he had made on Christ's behalf; but the Lord's reply showed that such sacrifices are more than compensated even now, in the rewards which contact with Christ brings, and the glory and honour of apostleship. Peter lost nothing by following Christ, but gained much. Not only so, but there was also set before him the prospect of eternal life.

All who truly follow Christ will appreciate the truth of his words to Peter. If they carefully review their lives, they will find that they have lost nothing by "following him," in spite of any sacrifices they have been called upon to make, but have actually gained much. True discipleship brings peace of mind, contentment, and genuine pleasure even now of a kind that the world cannot provide; whilst, in addition, it provides the hope of life eternal in the Age to come.

Christ completed his statement by declaring that "*many that are first shall be last; and the last first.*" He was discriminating between men of faith, and those who only have the works of the flesh to offer. Israel, as a nation, is in the last category. It comprises "the first" of this verse, because to its people the Gospel was first preached (Rom. 1:16). And though, as a nation, Israel will be incorporated into the restored kingdom of God, it will be in subjection to those men of faith (whether Jews or Gentiles) who will reign with Christ. Many of these have been despised in the past, but then "the first will be last, and the last first."

Among those to be accounted as the "last" becoming the "first," will be the apostles. They will occupy twelve thrones over the twelve tribes of Israel, and will rule them under the Lord Jesus who will sit upon "the throne of David in Jerusalem" (Jer. 3:17; Lk. 1:32-33). Under his rule, the ancient order will be restored "as in the days of old" (Amos 9:11). In the golden age of Israel's history, Solomon sat on the "throne of Yahweh" as king (1Chr. 29:23), and under him were appointed twelve princes over the twelve tribes (1Kgs. 4:7), and this order will be re-introduced under Christ, with the apostles occupying the twelve seats of honour.

In view of this wonderful promise, Peter's sacrifice must have seemed very petty by comparison.

## Chapter 17

### THE PARABLE OF THE LABOURERS (Matthew 20:1-16)

*The preposition “for,” with which this parable commences, connects it with the incidents that immediately took place before (Mat. 20:1). The background of it, therefore, is the question of the rich young ruler, “What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Mat. 19:16), and the rather complacent demand of Peter: “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” (v. 27). The parable provided answers to both questions. It shows all laborers (no matter what they are called upon to do, or what sacrifices they make) are amply compensated now, in that God will provide them with their daily needs (Mat. 6:11; Psalms 37:25; 1Tim. 4:8), whilst the future reward of eternal life is a gift of grace (Rom. 6:23). Any who grumble at these conditions will be dismissed from service (Mat. 20:14), so that the exhortation provided is: “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phil. 4:11-13; 1Tim. 6:6; Lk. 12:15), and the warning is: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1Cor. 10:10).*

**T**HE kingdom of God,” declared the Lord, “is like unto a man that is an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers in his vineyard.” Yahweh has acted the part of such a Householder throughout the ages. He sent forth His prophets to Israel, figuratively “rising early” to do so (Jer. 7:25-26; 2Chr. 36:15), that He might encourage workers in His vineyard. Later, after Israel had finally rejected the call, He sent the apostles and their co-workers to the Gentiles with the same message.

#### **Employment For Idlers**

Their successive call to labour forms the basis of the parable the Lord now spoke to the apostles. He described how that the householder went to the marketplace, where workers stood, offering themselves for hire. He went there early, that he might obtain the best of the labourers, and that he might secure from them a full day’s labour.

He saw there a group of such labourers, and entered into an agreement to pay them a penny (a Roman denarius) for a day’s labour. The men agreed, and left to work in the vineyard.

About 9 am. (the third hour), he again went out, and saw other

men standing idle in the market place. He invited them also to go and work in his vineyard, but this time he made no agreement with them for any specific amount. "Go into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you," he invited them.



Placing their confidence in him to do whatever is right, they also went their way. About 12 o'clock (the sixth hour) and about 3 pm. (the ninth hour), he did likewise.

Finally, late in the day, about the eleventh hour (5 pm.), he went out, and found others standing idle. Though it was very late in the day, and not much time remained for work to be done, so urgent was his need of laborers, that he decided to hire them also.

"Why stand you here idle all the day?" he enquired.

"Because no man has hired us," they replied.

"Go into my vineyard and work," he invited them, "and whatsoever is just, that will you receive."

They did as he invited them, leaving it to him to reward them as he saw fit. At the close of the day, about 6 pm., the lord of the vineyard called upon his steward, and commanded him to pay the workers. "Call the labourers, and give them their hire," he ordered, "beginning from the last unto the first."

This was not a very tactful procedure, but it did test the workmen. It showed up the first as complainers, working for their self-gratification alone. For when the steward paid the men their wages, all the workers received the same amount of money.

Those who had commenced work at the eleventh hour received the same amount of hire as those who had commenced at the third hour and earlier, and whom the lord of the vineyard had agreed to pay a penny a day.

All the laborers received every man his penny. When those who had commenced earliest saw that the lord paid the other workmen a penny, they thought that they would receive more than the amount agreed upon. But they only received their penny, the same as the others! They felt that the lord was unjust and murmured against him. "These last have wrought but one hour, and you have made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day!" they complained.

But the employer spoke to them gently. "Friends," he replied, "I do no wrong: did you not agree with me for a penny? Take that which is your own and go your way: I will give unto this last, the same as you receive. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Why do you see evil in that which I did which is good?"

And Jesus, commenting on the parable, declared: "*So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*"

## Chapter 18

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### ON PLACING TRUST IN GOD

*The Parable of the Labourers (see pp. 379-380), taught that faith should be revealed by placing confidence in God. He has promised to provide the needs of those who respond in loving obedience and service to Him. Israel suffered because the people refused to do this. They manifested an attitude such as did the first labourers in the parable, who were hired on contract rates, but bitterly complained when they found others who had not laboured as long as they had, treated just as liberally by the same householder. There is a most powerful lesson to be learned in this parable, that has particular point in these days of materialism.*

**A**S this parable relates to the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the relation of workers to it, we should give earnest attention to its message. By this parable the Lord taught that God, who is just, will amply compensate each one now, for the labour he or she expends in His service. The Book of Proverbs declares: "*Honour Yahweh with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine*" (Pro. 3:9-10).

In other words, God will more than repay any sacrifice that any may make in His name.

How does He compensate us now?

By providing us with the necessities of life!

God has promised to do that for us, and will be faithful to His word. Those who labour in His cause will never lack means of sustenance. That is what is meant by the penny paid in wages; it does not relate to the promise of eternal life, but to the blessings of our service.

#### **The Lesson of the Parable**

The parable also teaches that we should not compare our labours with those of others, and so conclude that we are worth more than they. That is what some of the labourers did as recorded in the parable. Having laboured all day, they received only a penny as did those who had only been employed at the close of the day. Naturally, they thought that they should receive more. Indeed they claimed more, and their claim seems justified at first sight. But, in fact, they had bargained with the householder for a penny, and they received that for which they agreed to labour. They should have accepted their

pay cheerfully and uncomplaining, pleased that they had been employed, and glad to have received their wages for the day.

What if the employer seemed to be more generous to others? Should they complain? Of course not! In any case, how could those who were employed all day long know that they had done anything more than those who came in at the eleventh hour? It may have been that the services of the latter were more urgently needed than those of the former! Perhaps if the former had worked harder, there may not have been any need to employ further laborers!

In any case, all received their just payment, so that complaining, or comparing the value of one labourer over that of another was out of place.

Such comparisons are odious. Paul warned against them in 2Cor. 10:12. "Some," he wrote, "measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise!"

It is foolish to govern our conduct, or compare our labour with that of others. Those who do so "are not wise," declared the apostle, or they "lack understanding," as the margin renders his words.

Let all measure themselves by Christ! Do they work as hard for God as did he? They do not! Are they so intent upon the things of God as was he? Certainly not! Is the measure of their sacrifice as great as his? By no means!

What did he receive from God?

He told one who wished to follow him: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Mat. 8:20). He received but the bare necessities of life from God. It was the penny wage that he received, and he was thankful for the blessing.

He was not jealous over what others might receive, nor imitated the complaining labourers in the parable who agreed upon a certain payment, and then murmured because they did not receive more than the others.

Who do those complainers represent?

Among the labourers employed by the householder, they revealed certain unique features:

1. *They were the first ones whom the householder employed.*
2. *They were the only ones who entered into terms of agreement with him.*
3. *They looked upon themselves as more privileged than the others.*
4. *They were the only ones who complained.*

Who do they represent?

It seems, natural Israel. Notice these points of identification:

1. *God's call was first to Israel then to the Gentiles.*
2. *They accepted the Mosaic agreement that promised them*



*occupation in the Land so long as they laboured according to its terms.*

3. *They considered themselves privileged above the Gentiles.*

4. *They complained when others were given equal privileges as they.*

In the parable they were dismissed from service; receiving no further reward than that which the Law provided. "Take that thine is, and go your way: I will give unto these last, even as unto you!" the householder told the complaining labourers.

Israel, the first to be called by God, was dismissed from His service, and became the last.

This will be the fate of all those who act as did natural Israel, and placing confidence in the flesh, claim a privilege that is not rightly theirs.

In the interpretation of this parable, it is important to notice, that though these complainers were dismissed from service, they did receive their penny wages.

What does the penny represent? Certainly not eternal life, because the complainers will not receive that! As we have suggested above, it represents that which God has promised to give all those who seek to obey Him: the needs of life, the wages of a labourer. David declared: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psa. 37:25).

If those called to God's service, become dissatisfied with their lot, and complain that they should receive better treatment than others (as did the early labourers) they will be dismissed from His service, and will not receive the great bonus of their labours, even eternal life.

### **How Much Was A Penny?**

A penny a day was a labourer's wage in the days of the Lord, but it represented much more in value than the penny of today! If it did not, those workers would have been on a starvation diet indeed!

The cost of living, in those days, was very much cheaper than it is today, so that when the Samaritan gave the innkeeper two pence to pay for the accommodation of the injured traveller (Lk. 10:35), he was not being parsimonious.

An indication of how cheap the cost of living has been in the past can be gauged by the legislation of 1351 in Great Britain by which the price of labour was regulated by Parliament in terms comparable to those of the parable before us. Cornweebers and haymakers received one penny per day. But, on the other hand, the prices of goods were comparable thereto. Two dozen eggs were sold for 1d. A pair of shoes cost 4d. A goose could be purchased for 2½d. A hen brought 1d. Eight bushels of wheat cost 2/-. A fat sheep sold for 6d. A pig was 1d.

A penny a day, therefore, was adequate pay for times when food was so cheap.



*Ancient Gilead, called "Perea" in New Testament times, through which the Master proceeded on his way to Jerusalem. He spent a number of months in this area, ministering to the people and preaching the gospel.*





**MATTHEW** 20:17-19, *Mark* 10:32-34, and *Luke* 18:31-34 record that the Lord commenced the “going up to Jerusalem.” He had travelled south through Perea, on the eastern side of Jordan, and coming to the ford just north of the Dead Sea, had passed over to the western side, to move on towards Jericho and the twenty mile ascent to Jerusalem. A sense of expectancy, of some momentous event impending, took hold of the little company. As far as the apostles were concerned, they thought that the Kingdom of God was about to immediately appear (*Lk.* 19:11). Therefore, with growing excitement, they crossed the Jordan and turned towards the Holy City, the capital of David. It was approaching the time of Passover when Jews commemorate the great deliverance from Egypt; and this could have been a suitable time, in their estimation, for Christ to proclaim himself as king. They imagined, therefore, that they were walking towards glory; little did they realise the tragic events that were to unfold within the course of little over a week. The Lord warned them, but with thoughts centered only on victory, glory and a crown — they could not bring their minds to think of a cross.

## Chapter 1

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### FROM BETHANY TO JERUSALEM

**C**ROSSING the Jordan, just north of the Dead Sea, and a short distance from Jericho, the Lord set his face toward Jerusalem via that city.

Before him stretched a twenty mile journey along the steep, narrow, lonely road that wound around the hills of Judea to Jerusalem above. The very thought of that city of such significant history caused the Lord to set his attention upon the drama and tragedy that would take place there at the Passover, now only a few days ahead.

**Jesus Warns Of His  
Impending Death  
(Mt. 20:17-19;  
Mk. 10:32-34;  
Lk. 18:31-34)**

It was a very solemn company of people that had followed him over the Jordan, and set their faces toward Jerusalem. The apostles had listened intently to the parable of the labourers, and had been concerned that the first should be set last. They could not understand that this would relate to the holy people, the nation of Israel, and yet what else could it mean?

So they were confused, or “amazed” by the Lord’s teaching (Mk. 10:32).

The others that followed him were fearful. They were now in the region of Judea, and well knew the feelings of hate that motivated the people of that area (Jn. 7:1). Among other things, a decree had been issued by the authorities for the arrest of Jesus (Jn. 11:8, 57). So, as they passed over the border of the two districts, their minds were filled with anxiety.

But struggling with this confusion and fear in the minds of Christ’s followers, was the conviction (among the apostles at least) that the moment of glory was at hand. They were convinced that “the kingdom of God should immediately appear” (Lk. 19:11). Therefore their excitement grew as they commenced this last stage of the journey to Jerusalem. Surely the moment when their beloved Lord would proclaim himself king, was at hand.

The Lord could sense their feelings of excitement, knew from whence it stemmed, and felt sad for them. When would they learn the lesson of Scripture; when would they heed his own teaching!

Like so many others, they only took from his words what they wanted to believe, and conveniently forgot the rest.

Yet, as he knew, there was much that they would have to endure, so that it was important that they should be forewarned that they might be forearmed. They really should realise what lay before them.

*“Listen carefully!” he said. “We are going up to Jerusalem; and*

*there the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and Scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him, spit upon him, flog him, and put him to death; and the third day he will rise again” (Mk. 10:33-34).*

There were eight points (the number of resurrectional regeneration) in the Lord’s statement of his impending humiliation and triumph.

1. *He would be betrayed into the hands of the chief priests (see Mat. 26:14-16, 45-47).*
2. *He would be condemned to death (Mat. 26:65-66).*
3. *He would be delivered over to the Gentiles (Mat. 27:2).*
4. *He would be mocked (Mat. 26:67; Lk. 23:11).*
5. *He would be scourged (Mat. 27:26).*
6. *He would be spat upon (Mat. 26:67; 27:30).*
7. *He would be killed.*
8. *He would rise again from the dead.*

Though the Lord’s statement was clear enough, the apostles did not understand it. It seems incredible that they should have failed to have done so, until we recall that they really understood so little of what the Lord told them.

He had frequently spoken to them in parables, explaining profound truths by a simple story with a hidden meaning, so that perhaps they gave parabolic significance to this clear statement of fact. Perhaps they interpreted him to mean that he would be greatly opposed by the leaders of Jewry for three days, so that he would figuratively die and be buried under the burden of sorrow that would afflict him, though afterwards he would assert himself and assume his rightful power and position of privilege.

Luke declares “*they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken*” (Lk. 18:34).

It seems strange that they should not understand. They could hardly mistake the literal meaning of his words, but perhaps, being unable to reconcile them with their preconceived notions of Messianic glory, they were at a loss to know what meaning they should place upon them.

Evidently, despite the solemn manner in which the Lord addressed them, they failed to take in his message, and it soon faded from their minds. This is suggested by the fact that the very next moment, James and John were pleading for positions of glory in the kingdom they thought would soon be set up.

The Lord did not, at that time, give any further explanation; he realised that these men must learn by bitter experience that which they refused to understand from the Word of God. It is so with us all. If we ignore the Word, and fail to apply its lessons, bitter experience will force home upon us the full measure of its truth.

## Chapter 2

### THE THOUGHTLESS PETITION OF ZEBEDEE'S WIFE AND SONS (Mat. 20:20-23; Mk. 10:35-40)

*Matthew and Mark both report this incident, but from entirely different standpoints. Matthew relates that the wife of Zebedee approached the Lord with a request on behalf of her two sons; Mark records that the two sons made the petition. Both are correct. Evidently, Salome, the mother of James and John, approached the Lord with her request, taking James and John with her, and they also joined with her in asking for themselves positions of eminence in the kingdom they thought was about to be set up.*

*Their selfish request received a well-merited rebuke from the Lord, and caused resentment among the rest of the apostles.*

**T**HE Lord had solemnly warned the twelve apostles (see Mat. 20:17), that he was on the way to Jerusalem, not to receive the glory of a crown, but to experience the ignominy of a cross. They did not understand what he meant. Their thoughts were filled with visions of imminent power and kingly glory, and they were so impatient of any other consideration, that they were not receptive to his warning of betrayal and of death.

When a person does not want to believe a matter, he finds little difficulty in rejecting it, or in misinterpreting it. So it was with the Lord's followers at that time; the careful instruction of the Lord went completely unheeded.

Indeed, as they crossed the Jordan from Perea into Judea, and made their way towards Jericho and Jerusalem, they were filled with a general expectancy that the time of the setting up of the kingdom had come (see Lk. 19:11), and impatiently awaited the glory that they confidently felt would then be revealed.

#### **The Selfish, Thoughtless Plea Of Salome**

This feeling of impending glory was transmitted from the apostles to the group of disciples that also followed the Lord. Among this company was Salome, wife of Zebedee, and sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus (cp. Mat. 27:56; Mk. 15:40; 16:1). With other women, she had helped the Lord by ministering unto his needs (Mat. 27:55; Mk. 15:40-41; Lk. 23:49; 8:1-3). She had heard the Lord's reply to Peter, who had asked: "What shall we have therefore?" Jesus had answered: "*In the regeneration when the Son of*

*man shall sit in the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Mat. 19:27-28).

She was convinced that the time had come for this to be fulfilled, and was eager that her sons should have the most prominent positions in the Kingdom. Already she had noticed the pre-eminence given to James and John (cp. Mat. 17:1, etc.), but, perhaps, was moved with jealousy that they should share this with Peter. The family of Zebedee was prosperous (cp. Mk. 1:19-20), reverent, and of good social standing (cp. Jn. 18:16), and this may have stimulated her ambitious, thoughtless, request.

Be that as it may, she now hastened towards her nephew (Mat. 20:20; RSV), and humbly desired that she might present a request to him.

"What do you desire?" he enquired.

She answered: "Give orders that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left in your kingdom!"

### **James And John Support Their Mother's Request**

Salome was not alone in her request, for James and John had approached the Lord with her (see Mat. 20:22), to join with her in the plea she made. "Teacher," they had likewise requested, "we desire you to do for us whatever we ask of you!"

And when he had asked what their desires might be, they had again echoed the request of their mother: "Grant that we may sit one at your right hand, and one at your left hand in your majesty and splendor!"

Sorrowfully the Lord looked at them. How far they were from understanding to what they had been called! They did not realise that the attainment of the kingdom involved bitter tribulation (Acts 14:22), whilst to attain to such positions of eminence as those for which they were asking, demanded a completely dedicated ministry of humble service to others (Mk. 10:43-45). At that stage, they were far from rendering such, for they had been among those whom the Lord had earlier caught disputing as to who was the greatest (Mk. 9:33-34).

"You do not know for what you are asking," he declared.

How true that was! They had made their request because they were blind to the purpose of God, even though it had been explained to them. Their eyes were closed to the warning of impending suffering that he had explained would be his lot, and they were blinded by the heady prospect of personal glory.

Thus, in their blindness, they requested a position which, but a few days later, they were to see occupied in shame and anguish by the two crucified thieves who would be at the right and the left of the Lord in his glory! They were to hear the request of one of those



thieves to the Lord asking that he would bear him in mind when he came again to establish the kingdom, and they were to hear that petition granted by him, because it was made in deepest humility and contrition.

The Lord continued: "*Can you drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?*"

The cup represented the cup of affliction. He was reminding them that to enjoy the kingdom, they must be prepared to suffer for it (Rom. 8:17; 2Tim. 2:11-12; Rev. 2:26; Phil. 3:8-12). The baptism to which he referred represented his sufferings (Lk. 12:50), and was, perhaps, drawn from similar expressions in the Psalms where suffering is represented as being submerged in overwhelming waters (Psa. 18:16; 69:1-2; 88:7). True baptism is linked with Christ's sufferings and death (Rom. 6:3).

Unthinkingly, without properly considering what this involved, they answered with confidence: "*We can!*"

In their ignorance, they perhaps interpreted the Lord's earlier reference to bitter opposition and death (vv. 33-34) as some temporary difficulties that would face him in Jerusalem, but which he would eventually defeat as he proclaimed his glory and established the kingdom. Having seen a preview of its glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, they were confident that such opposition would be easily swept out of the way. So they declared that they *could* drink the same cup of suffering as that which the Lord would drink in preparation of the glory that would follow. But, of course, they did not then realise the extent of the suffering he would be called upon to undergo.

Jesus continued: "*The cup that I drink you will drink, and you will be baptised with the baptism with which I am baptised; but to sit at my right hand and at my left hand is not mine to give; except for whom it is prepared by my Father!*" (Diag.).

Thus the Lord, at that time, promised them nothing but sorrow and suffering. His words were fulfilled. James was the first apostle to suffer martyrdom (Acts 12:1-2), and John, likewise, as a "brother and companion in tribulation" (Rev. 1:9), suffered much before following his brother into martyrdom.

When the Lord declared that those positions of eminence that James and John sought were not his to grant "except for whom it is prepared" (Lit. Greek; see Diaglott), he acknowledged that he had the power to elevate his followers to such positions of eminence as they sought, but revealed that it would be done upon merit, and not at the mere whim of a request, such as Salome and her sons had made. All judgment has been committed into the hands of the Lord (Jn. 5:22), but it must and will be exercised in righteousness, and according to the will of the Father (Jn. 5:19, 30; Acts 17:31).

**The Jealousy Of The  
Twelve And The  
Lord's**

**Rebuke (Mat. 20:  
24-28; Mk. 10:41-45)**

The request of James and John excited the hot indignation of the other apostles. Over-looking the example of patience and forbearance that had been manifested among them for so long by the Lord, they angrily turned on them, believing that they were

attempting to gain an advantage over them.

The Lord treated them all with outstanding tact and gentleness, trying to win them over to a better attitude of mind. He called them aside from the other disciples, and quietly and kindly spoke to them.

*"You know that those who desire to rule the nations, lord it over them, ruling with absolute power, and their great ones exercise authority and dominion over them. But this is not to be so among you; instead, whoever desires to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be most important and first in rank among you must become the slave of all!"*

This is quite a unique way of obtaining a position of eminence! In any case it answered the request of James and John. If they wanted positions of authority in the Age to come, they must demonstrate their ability to grace them by ruling themselves now.

The words of Jesus, therefore, constituted a rebuke to both James and John, who sought positions of prominence at the expense of their fellow disciples without demonstrating their ability to grace them as well, to the rest of the apostles, because of the jealous anger they showed which stemmed from the same source.

Those who desire to rule with Christ in the Age to come, must now demonstrate their loyalty by a self-sacrificing devotion to his cause, thus revealing the same attitude as he did.

**The Lord's Service  
An Example  
To His Followers**

The Lord drew attention to his own example. He is the chief over all, and yet he ministered as a servant. *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and*

*to give himself a ransom for many."*

Among those who listened to these words was Peter. He did not then understand their full significance, but later he came to do so very thoroughly. He then wrote: *"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (1Pet. 2:21).

The prophet Isaiah had predicted that the Messiah would appear as Yahweh's Servant (Isa. 42:1-6; 49:1-7; 52:13), and that he would, through suffering (Isa. 53:11), bring about the salvation of humanity. The apostles later came to realise the truth of those words, and in their early preaching of the Gospel, proclaimed that "God has glorified His servant Jesus" (not "son" as in the AV, but "servant" as in the Diaglott; see also Acts 3:13, 26, etc.), to be a "Prince and a Saviour,

for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).

The rebuke of James and John and the rest of the apostles at that time was part of the training that enabled them to more clearly see this truth later on.

Paul made reference to this in Philippians 2:5 where he exhorted his readers, to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." He showed that though the Lord was the manifestation (or form) of God, and therefore, more equipped to grasp at physical equality with God than was Eve, who attempted to do so at the beginning of creation (Gen. 3:5), he refrained from such action, and instead subjected himself to the will of the Father in all things. The apostle advanced seven points to illustrate this; he showed that Christ:

*"Made himself of no reputation;"*

*"Took upon himself the form of a servant;"*

*"Inherited Adamic condemnation in common with all mankind;"*

*"Was found in fashion, in manner of life, as ordinary man;"*

*"Was obedient unto death;"*

*"Submitted to the curse of the cross."*

The Lord manifested an attitude of humble submission to the Father, entirely different from that indicated by the ambitious, self-seeking request of James and John at this time, which was begotten of ignorance; or the anger of the other apostles who were moved by jealousy against them. Though the Lord is the Son of God and earth's future monarch, he was prepared to humble himself as the servant of all; and in doing so, gave an example for his disciples to follow.

All but one of the apostles, ultimately learned this lesson, and, in turn, provided an example of loving submission. They became changed men through their association with Christ.

**A Ransom For Many** In the course of rebuking the apostles, the

Lord tried once again, to bring home to them the reason why it was imperative that he die. He not only told them that he had come as a servant, but explained for what purpose: "to give his life a ransom for many." It was because this was the divine purpose in him, that he would submit to the indignities that would be heaped upon him in Jerusalem, and which would consummate in his ignominious death.

The Lord's explanation, however, seems to be somewhat at variance with that of Paul. Jesus declared that he would give his life as "a ransom for *many*," and Paul wrote that he did so as "a ransom for *all*" (1Tim. 2:6).

Who was right?

Both were right. Jesus was a ransom for all, but all do not accept the terms set down, and therefore do not come within its scope.

However, that was not what Jesus meant, as we shall show a little later.

Meanwhile, what is a ransom? It is a price paid for the release of a captive or a slave (Exo. 30:11-16). We are all slaves of sin, in that we inherit Adamic nature and permit it to govern us; but Christ, having paid the price in his blood, has made it possible for us to be purchased therefrom (Rom. 6:17-18; 1Cor. 6:20). In him, alone, is forgiveness of sins granted, and eternal life made possible.

In that connection, the Bible sets forth the hope, the problem, and the result of redemption.

#### **The Hope:**

*"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"* (Job 19:25-26).

#### **The Problem:**

*"None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever): that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption"* (Psa. 49:7-9).

#### **The Result:**

*"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction"* (Hos. 13:14). *"The ransomed of Yahweh shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"* (Isa. 35:10).

God is the Redeemer of humanity, for He, alone, was able to provide the price required: a perfect sacrifice. He did so in the Lord Jesus who was His servant to that end, and whom He strengthened to succeed (Psa. 80:17). So Paul taught: *"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself"* (2Cor. 5:19). It was the work of a merciful God, manifested through His obedient Son and Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many teach that Jesus died as a substitute, however. By that they mean that he was not related to that death in any way, and was not redeemed through his own offering. They teach that he gave his life as one might pay the debt of another, wiping it out completely. But if that were true, sinners should not be required to pay again that which

*The Death of Christ was not to appease the wrath of an offended God, but to express the love of the Father in a necessary sacrifice for sin, that the law of sin and death which came into force by the first Adam, might be nullified in the second, in a full discharge of its claims through a temporary surrender to its power; after which immortality by resurrection might be acquired, in harmony with the law of obedience. Thus sin is taken away, and righteousness established.*

already Jesus has paid in full on their behalf! And as sinners continue to do so, obviously something is wrong with this theory.

Moreover, a little thought will reveal that such a means of redemption would not be just. Would people applaud the justice of a judge who allowed a desperate criminal to go free, because a righteous man was prepared to endure the sentence pronounced against him? By no means; there would be a public outcry against such a travesty of justice!

But if a righteous man were able to dramatise to the criminal the enormity and cause of his crime, as to bring home to him, the need to seek forgiveness and make restitution, as well as to illustrate what he must avoid and do in order to effect a complete reformation, a merciful judge might grant some alleviation of sentence, to one who pleaded mercy on the grounds that he would apply the principles revealed.

This, perhaps clumsily, illustrates what God accomplished in His Son. Jesus did not die as a substitute for humanity, but as its representative. He demonstrated that human nature is evil, and must be put to death if man is to be redeemed therefrom. His death upon the stake literally demonstrated what every person must figuratively do to obtain life. Paul taught: *"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"* (Gal. 5:24).

On the other hand, if Jesus died as a substitute for others; if he completely wiped out the debt owing by sinners, as some teach, then those forgiven should not die (which they do), and because Jesus paid his life in cancelling the debt, he should not live (which he does).

In 1Tim. 2:6, where Paul teaches that Jesus was a "ransom for all," the preposition "for" is *huper* in Greek, and signifies "on behalf of." It has the implication of one bending protectively over another, so as to help him. If two persons are faced with death, one might help both to escape if he has the strength, or means, to do so. This more exactly explains the sacrifice of Christ than does the substitutionary idea. He, in common with all humanity, had to be redeemed from the nature he possessed in order to attain unto life. And, as he was sinless as regards actual transgression, he had the strength to redeem both himself, and others with him. Thus he died on behalf of himself as well as others, as it were, in his superior strength protectively bending over them to help them.

In Mark 10:45, however, where Jesus taught that he was a "ransom for many," the preposition is *anti* which signifies "over against," and denotes that which is in opposition, or equivalent, to another. It therefore, should be rendered "instead of," "for," "in return for."

At first sight, this seems to teach the doctrine of substitution; but if the passage is interpreted to do so, it would be at variance with the

consistent teaching of the Bible throughout, which repudiates the unjust doctrine of a substitutionary sacrifice.

Such teaching is repudiated by God, who is pre-eminently just as well as merciful. He warned Israel, through Ezekiel, that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze. 18:4), and clearly revealed that the righteousness of a father could not save the wickedness of his son, if the latter persisted in his way. Each one must reform and make restitution for himself. If that were done, God promised to forgive sins on the basis of a sacrifice made. But there would be no real necessity for forgiveness if Jesus offered instead of others, cancelling out their debts in full, for why should one seek forgiveness of a debt if it has been paid? On the other hand, Jesus, as a representative offering for humanity showed what each sinner must do to obtain forgiveness of sins. And so Paul taught: "*God that set forth Christ Jesus to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*" (Rom. 3:25-26).

The sacrifice of Jesus reveals God as just in demanding death as the means of restitution; whereas a substitutionary offering would be unjust. Jesus offered *for* those who accept him, not *instead* of them. They, likewise, have something to offer (1Pet. 2:5; Exo. 23:15; 34:20); even a measure of the same loving obedience that the Son revealed to perfection. Concerning his offering as a sinless representative of the human race, Peter wrote: "*Who his own self bare our sins IN his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed*" (1Pet. 2:24).

### **"Instead Of Many"**

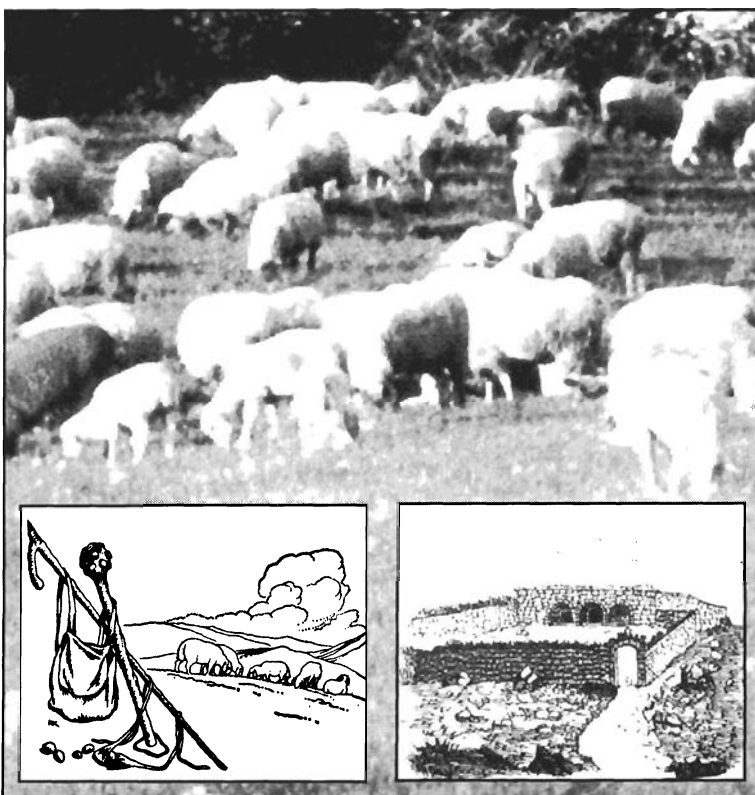
What then did Jesus mean when he said that he had to give his life "a ransom for" (Gr. *anti*) instead of "many." Obviously he was not referring to what Paul did when he said that he gave himself "a ransom for (*huper*), on behalf of all."

Jesus evidently referred to the many sacrifices under the law which his one offering fulfilled, and therefore he revealed to his apostles that he must go up to Jerusalem and be put to death to fulfil them. His one offering would then replace the many under the Law. Thus his words are in perfect accord with the teaching of Paul, and not at variance with it as would otherwise be the case.

Jesus was not merely required to die, but to die in such a way as to ensure his resurrection to life eternal. In fact, his death alone, in the absence of his resurrection, could not effect atonement. His life of obedience, even unto death, ensured his resurrection to eternal life. Though he possessed a nature common to that of all mankind, he did not succumb to it. Through the strength that was made available to

him from on High (for he could not accomplish what he did in his own unaided strength — see Psa. 80:17; Jn. 6:63, any more than we can please God by our own fleshly willpower — see Phil. 4:13), he triumphed over the flesh, and by his resurrection, over death itself. Paul taught: “*He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*” (Rom. 4:25).

As the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus dramatised what the sheep must try to do: follow him in such a way as to die to sin and rise to newness of life (Rom. 6:4). He obtained for himself redemption (Heb. 9:12, R.V.), and having saved himself, is able to extend salvation to others (Rom. 8:34). He died as a representative of all humanity, and in so doing offered but one sacrifice for the many that were offered under the law.



## Chapter 3

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### THE BLIND MAN NEAR JERICO (Luke 18:35-42)

*From the record in Matthew 20:29 and Mark 10:33, it is necessary to turn to Luke 18:35 to follow the sequence of Christ's life. Luke records that as the Lord and his disciples approached the outskirts of Jericho, they came upon a blind man whom the Lord subsequently healed. This incident is not recorded by any of the other Gospel writers, though Matthew and Mark do record the healing of two blind men as the Lord left Jericho. The circumstances of the miracle they record are so similar to those of the one described by Luke as to cause many to believe that all three accounts relate to the one incident. However, Luke is specific that the miracle he reports upon took place before the Lord reached Jericho, and Matthew and Mark are equally definite that the healing of Bartimaeus and his friend (which they record) took place afterwards. It is obvious, therefore, that there were three blind men who had their sight restored in remarkably similar circumstances, and it seems that this was done, to teach a very important lesson to the apostles, as our story will unfold.*

*The sequence of events, therefore, appears to be this. On approaching the city, the miracle recorded by Luke took place. Overnight, the Lord stayed with Zacchaeus, and told the parable of the nobleman. Meanwhile, knowledge of the miracle swept the city, bringing hope to two other blind men, one of whom was the well-known Bartimaeus. When the Lord left Jericho, they awaited him on the outskirts of the city, and when he came upon them, they loudly pleaded for help, which was ultimately granted. These incidents took place only about seven days before the crucifixion of the Lord.*

**T**HE city of Jericho is situated not far from the River Jordan, in a low-lying part of the country. It enjoys a tropical climate, in a fertile area that produces plentifully. In the days of the Lord, Jericho had a large population of priests and Levites who frequented the city because of its proximity to Jerusalem. Only about twenty miles (32kms) separated the two cities, the road from Jericho to Jerusalem winding its way up the steep white hills of Judea to the capital which is about 3,500 feet (1,066 mtrs) higher than Jericho.

The Passover was only a week away when the Lord, having crossed the Jordan, led the way towards Jericho. The route was thronged with pilgrims, all making their way to Jerusalem to celebrate



the feast. Large companies of people made their way slowly along, moving steadily towards the holy city, that they might remember the great deliverance Yahweh had effected on behalf of the nation.

It was an opportunity for the less fortunate to seek alms of people who, with minds centred upon the object of their journey, would be the more readily inclined to acts of mercy, for they would bear in mind their need of God's grace. Thus the pilgrims were frequently accosted by unfortunate beggars seeking relief.

### **Jericho: City of Priests and Publicans**

Six miles (10 kms) away from Jericho, the Jordan, after a tortuous descent, loses its water in the slimy mass of the sea of Death, and the harsh barren country leads to the fragrant fertility of Jericho. Across the eastern side of the river, the dark reddish hills of Moab stand, whilst on the left as one moves north, are the white limestone hills of the Land of Promise, now arid and bare. Jericho is 600 feet (163 mts) below sea level, Jerusalem 3000 feet (915 mts) above it, and the two cities are connected by a hot, winding road which was then the haunt of thieves and robbers.

Jericho was a rich, prosperous and important city of 100,000 people; the second largest in the land. It had been partially rebuilt, fortified, and adorned by Herod the Great and Archelaus his son who had erected a palace there.

Here grew palm trees, sycamores, and cypress flower, the myrobalans which yielded precious oil, and especially the balsam plant. The city thus presented a picture of prosperity and fleshly glory with its ample growth and its massive walls, amphitheatre, royal palace, and its splendid gardens.

All around waved groves of feathery palms rising in stately beauty. Gardens of roses, and especially of sweet-scented balsam plantations filled the air with fragrance. Set in the deep Jordan valley, Jericho enjoyed a tropical climate. It was the resort of priests, some 12,000 of whom had their residences there.



In addition, being on the main caravan route, a tax and customs house was there. Thus Jericho was noted for priests and publicans! The former must have known of the plots among the priestly class of Jerusalem against Jesus, and this, perhaps, was the reason that the Lord, at this stage, had so carefully warned his disciples of the tragedy shortly to be enacted (Lk. 18:31-32).

On the wayside, not far from Jericho, sat a blind man begging. His very affliction had accentuated his senses in other ways, so that though he sat there encased in his own darkness, he could discern by the excited comments of the people about him, that someone of unusual importance was passing by that day.

“What does it all mean?” he enquired.

“Jesus of Nazareth passes by,” some of the people answered him.

Jesus of Nazareth! The blind man had heard of him! He was the prophet who had performed marvels of healing on poor unfortunate, afflicted people! He was the rabbi of Nazareth, whose powerful messages of mercy excited the admiration of the common people, but whose expositions of the Law aroused the anger of the acknowledged rabbis and priests. So many were talking of him! His miracles had been described and retold so often!

The blind man, isolated in his darkness, had had all this and more to think upon, and because of his enforced inactivity, plenty of time to do so. He had thought deeply upon all that he had heard, and had come to the conviction that Jesus was the promised Son of David, and therefore heir to the throne. In addition, he was convinced that he possessed divine power to heal.

Perhaps he had sat in the synagogue, and listened to the wonderful prophecies of God’s Word that predicted the coming of the Messiah, and foretold how that he would give sight to the blind (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). Certainly such prophecies would have great significance to such as he.

One thing he did not know, and yet it was an important element in the significant drama about to be enacted, and that was, that his physical blindness exemplified the spiritual blindness of the apostles.

He *knew* that he was blind, they did not know that they were blind in a spiritual sense, to the purpose of the Master’s journey to Jerusalem in order to provide for the redemption of mankind through a sacrifice for sin.

It seems that it was for this reason that Luke recorded this incident, for it immediately follows on his comment concerning the apostles’ reaction to the Lord’s prediction that he was soon to be put to death. Luke observes: “*This saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken*” (Lk. 18:34).

In other words, Luke recognised that they were blind to the teaching of the Lord. Unlike the blind man by the wayside, they did not recognise their need.

### **Jesus Ignores The Blind Man’s Appeal**

Meanwhile, the Lord had reached the point where he was about to pass the blind man. For the latter it was a case of now or never if he was to be cured, and in the greatness of his need, the man

commenced to cry out again and again: "*Jesus, you Son of David, have mercy on me! Jesus, you Son of David, have mercy on me!*"

But the Lord ignored the appeal and slowly proceeded on his way.

It made the man more desperate than ever, so that above the noise of the crowd there was heard his continuing plaintive cry: "*Jesus, you Son of David, have mercy on me!*"

Still the Lord ignored him; and now, the onlookers, tiring of his cry, rebuked him, commanding him to hold his peace.

But the man refused. Louder, persistently, desperately, he kept up his cry:

*"JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!"*

At last the Lord dramatically stopped, and the crowd waited to see what would happen. Jesus did a strange thing. Instead of making his way over to where the blind man was standing as they might have expected, he stood where he was, and ordered that the man come to him!

Would we act like that if we had the power to heal? It is doubtful that we would! We would probably desire to demonstrate how kind and condescending we are by going out of our way to help the poor blind man, for flesh receives a feeling of self-satisfaction by so acting; it is very prodigal with God's gifts, and in taking the credit to itself.

But Jesus did not so act. He was about to confer the greatest possible gift upon the blind man that it was possible for him to receive; and the power to do so came from God. It was very important that the blind man should recognise this, and contribute, in some minor way, in obtaining that which he desired.

So the Lord commanded that the blind man make his way to where he stood waiting.

What a sight that was for the onlookers!

It was like a parable of the gospel: the blind man picking his stumbling way along with arms outstretched to where the Saviour of humanity stood waiting.

At last he stood before him, and heard the kindly voice of the Lord: "*What would you that I should do unto you?*" he asked.

*"Lord, that I may receive my sight,"* came the fervent request.

*"Receive your sight; your faith has saved you,"* was the gracious response.

The startled crowd saw the blind man jerk, then look around in amazement, the new-born brightness of his eyes, and his delighted expression testifying that he had been instantly cured. And what a wonderful moment it was for the formerly blind beggar! With sight granted him, he faced directly the noble countenance of the Lord. He saw in the kindly expression of his features, the penetrating, yet mild gaze of his eyes, the thoughtful character of his brow, one who

reflected all the qualities of the divine character as exhibited in the Holy Scriptures and manifested in mortal nature among men (Song 5:9-13). The one-time beggar thanked God for His goodness toward him, and as the Lord moved on towards the town of Jericho, he followed him, glorifying God. His delight in being healed was matched by the wonder of the multitude who had seen the miracle.

It was therefore a festive crowd, greatly enlarged in size, that entered Jericho. The people had been impressed with the goodness of God, and with minds thus excited, they made preparations for the morrow, when the last stage of the journey to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover would be undertaken.

### **The Lesson Of The Miracle**

The miracles of the Lord were not performed merely to demonstrate his wonder-working power, but rather to impress important principles of the Gospel. If it were otherwise, the Lord would have spent his time in healing people; but he did not do so. Instead, they had to seek him out.

What is impressed upon us by the miracle of the cured blind man?

It was performed, as Luke is careful to state (see Lk. 18:34), on the background of the spiritual blindness of the apostles. They could not “see” what the Lord meant as he warned them of his impending death. They differed from the blind man, however, in that they did not realise that they could not see, and therefore were not cognisant of their great need. The time would come when this would be forcibly impressed upon them, and then the miracle of the cured blind man would dramatise what they should do.

Firstly they must fully recognise their need. This, the blind man did because of the literal darkness that enshrouded him all his life.

Secondly, they must pray. This, the blind man did as he called to Jesus for help.

Thirdly, they must not become discouraged if they do not obtain instant results from prayer. Thus, the blind man continued to call, even when it seemed that Jesus ignored him and the people called upon him to cease.

Fourthly, they must show faith and determination. This, the blind man did in continuing to call for Jesus to help him in spite of the opposition of those about him.

Fifthly, they must learn to help themselves. The blind man did this as he answered the invitation of Jesus, and with difficulty made his way through the crowds towards him.

It was necessary for the apostles to learn these lessons, as Jesus knew. Within a few days they were to be tested as they had never been tested before. They would see their beloved Friend and Master, scourged, spat upon, derided, crucified. They had been warned of this,

but their eyes were blinded with prospects only of glory, and they failed to understand the things of which Jesus spoke to them.

Figuratively, they had more need of sight than did the beggar seeking alms by the roadside, and Christ's handling of this miracle showed them what they should do.

### **A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels.**

#### **CAIAPHAS, THE CALLOUS**

Caiaphas signifies *dell* (J. Strong), or *depression* (David), with the implication of *depth* or *diligent searcher*, as suggested by some. The record of his life shows that he diligently searched for his own ends.

He was son-in-law of Annas, to whom he was subservient, and was high priest of the Jews by Roman appointment for 18 years (see Mat. 26:3, 57; Lk. 3:2; Jn. 11:49; 18:13, 14, 24, 28; Acts 4:6).

Caiaphas was a Sadducee, the worst of the Jewish sects: proud, contemptuous, overbearing, self-indulgent. As a Sadducee, he denied the resurrection, and therefore felt that with the death of Jesus he had rid himself for good of his influence. As such, he also denied the influence of Providence (Acts 23:8), imagining that he possessed absolute power to do good or ill. Thus he was high-handed, callous, insolent — yet under the domination of Annas (Luke 3:2). With a high hand, and on the ground of expediency alone, he shamelessly forced a resolution on the Sanhedrin that Jesus be put to death (Jn. 11:49). At the subsequent trial of Jesus, he set aside all principles of justice to openly force his execution (Mat. 26:57-65). His house had become the centre of intrigue to that end (Mat. 26:3).

Later, he took a leading part in the examination of Peter and John when they were called in question over the miracle of curing the lame man. The miracle was so obvious that even Caiaphas could not deny it (Acts 4).

It is said that about two years after the death of Jesus, both Caiaphas and Pilate were deposed by Vitellius, then Governor of Syria, and later Emperor, and that Caiaphas, unable to bear this disgrace and perhaps moved by stings of conscience for the murder of the Lord, killed himself about AD35.

This callous criminal, who so completely disgraced the honoured office of high priest, and disregarded all forms of law and justice, and who, as a Sadducee, denied the basic doctrine of the resurrection, is yet to be raised to judgment (Mat. 26:64), to be called in question for the crimes he committed.

## **A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels.**

### **HEROD, OF THE FAMILY OF FOXES!**

Local rulership of Palestine in the days of the Lord was vested in the hands of the Herodians, an Idumean family that was elevated to power by the Roman Emperors.

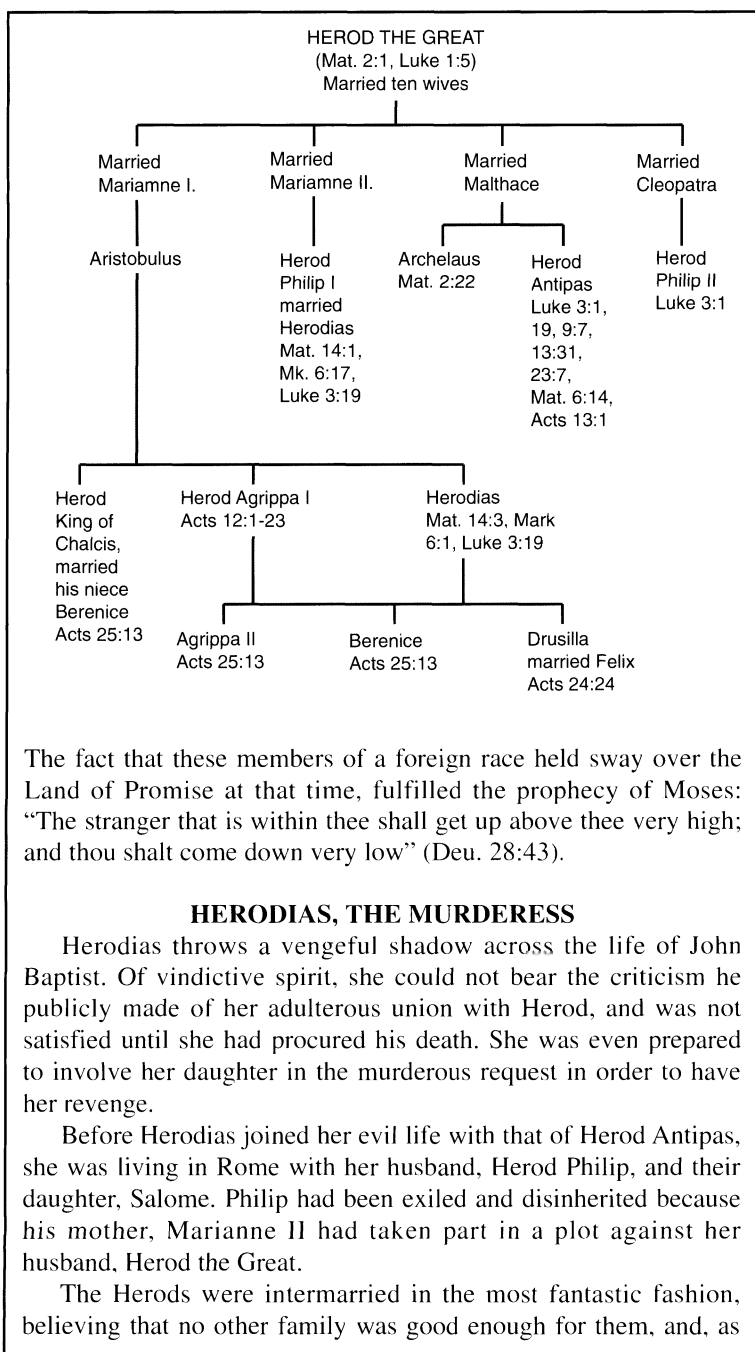
“Herod” was not the personal name, but the family, or surname, of a number of different rulers. Though they embraced the Jewish ritual and religion, they were always viewed with suspicion and prejudice by the Jews. Herod the Great, first mentioned in Mat. 2:1, endeavoured to ingratiate himself into the favour of the people by re-constructing the temple. It has been suggested that he had an ulterior motive in view, to destroy the records of the genealogies of the expected Messiah (preserved in the temple), rather than glorifying the building as an act of reverence to God, or to please the people. At every opportunity he wielded his power over his subjects. He is described as an Idumean in race, a Jew in religion, a Heathen in practice, and a Monster in crime. His jealous spirit drove him to commit many atrocities, including the vile murder of Jewish children at the birth of the Lord. See vol. 5, p. 133.

His son, Herod Archelaus, inherited half the territory on the death of his father, and proved a greater tyrant than his predecessor (Mat. 2:22).

Another son, Herod Antipas (brother of Archelaus), was given a tetrarchy, or a fourth part of the inherited kingdom. The family characteristics climaxed in this ruler, who was aptly described by an historian as “a wily sneak!” and by the Lord as “that fox!” (Luke 13:32). His administration was characterised by cunning and crime. He was intensely selfish and utterly destitute of principle. This was revealed by his elopement with Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, Philip I for which action he was reproved by John Baptist, whom he beheaded in consequence (Mat. 14:3-5).

A third son, a half-brother to the previous three sons, was Philip the Tetrarch, who also received a fourth part of the kingdom. Unlike the others in the family, his long rule was distinguished for its moderation and equity, and he received the favour of his people (Luke 3:1).

These rulers of the different parts of the land, had considerable effect on the life of the Jewish people, and caused difficulties in the labours of the Lord (Luke 13:31). Nevertheless, Christ considered his Father’s business of paramount importance, and ignored the threat presented by the transient reign of the Herods.



they handed on the same family names with monotonous regularity, their family tree is one of the most puzzling in history.

Herodias and her husband were both related to Herod the Great. She was a grand-daughter; he was a son. Therefore, husband and wife were also uncle and niece, or rather, half-uncle and half-niece, because Herod had ten wives, and these two people were only related on the male side.

Herod Antipas stayed with them whilst on a visit to Rome. He was half-brother to Philip, and became enamoured with Herodias, his brother's wife, and his own half-niece!

The ambitious Herodias preferred the prince to the commoner, and on her part she set out to supplant the legitimate wife of Herod. She prevailed upon him to divorce his wife, and she took up residence with him in Galilee as his wife, taking Salome her daughter with her.

The harsh, forthright censure of John Baptist publicly proclaimed that the union was adulterous. His criticism frightened Herod Antipas, but not Herodias. Like Jezebel before her, she sought opportunity to destroy this second Elijah, and this came on the night of revelry and dancing that so captivated Herod that he invited Salome, the most abandoned of the dancers, to select whatever she liked, and it would be granted her.

Urged on by her mother, she asked for John Baptist's head in a charger. Because of his oath, the weak, dissolute prince ordered the murder of this great man of God.

Herodias passes from notice in the Gospels thereafter. History records that she attempted intrigue at Rome against her brother, Agrippa, whose kingdom lay next to Galilee. Agrippa was king, whilst Herod was only Tetrarch. Herodias could not bear to be socially inferior to her brother, whom she despised, and appealed to Caligula, the Roman Emperor, against the injustice of their relative positions.

But Caligula was the friend of Agrippa, and instead of being promoted, Herod and Herodias found themselves banished, and their territory given to Agrippa. The Emperor did offer the beautiful Herodias her freedom and possessions because she was the sister of his friend, but she scornfully refused the favour. She preferred to go into exile, poor and disgraced, with the man whose life she had ruined, rather than accept a favour through the brother she despised and hated. We can have no sympathy for a woman so despicable and vengeful as the beautiful but terrible Herodias.



## Chapter 4

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### ZACCHAEUS: THE LITTLE MAN UP A TREE

*The whole crowd laughed at the sight of Zacchaeus high up a tree, vainly trying to hide among its wide leaves from the mocking ridicule of the people. But Zacchaeus was a man of outstanding determination which, when harnessed by faith, received the commendation of the Lord. He was a man for whom great things can be expected for he will find a place in the Kingdom of God. The people hated him because he was a publican, but hard-headed business man as he was, he did have this ability which many others lacked: he knew what profit meant, and when the prospects of greatest gain were set before him by the Lord, he was instantly prepared to sacrifice what he had, that he might ultimately obtain that which will be received in the future.*

**T**HE miracle of the cured blind man had greatly excited the crowd and increased interest in the person of the Lord Jesus. As he walked among the narrow streets of Jericho, people thronged about him, so that those on the outskirts of the crowd could not see him.

Jericho was a large city, and among its many citizens was one man who greatly desired to see Jesus.

His name was Zacchaeus, which name means *pure*.

#### **Zacchaeus' Desire Determination And Disabilities**

But Zacchaeus was wrongly named in the opinion of most of the citizens of Jericho. He was chief among the publicans, the tax-gatherers of Jericho, and as such, was hated by patriotic Jews who detested the subjection to Rome which the payment of taxes implied.

The people were only too glad to crush him out of the way. This was one of the several obstacles that stood between Zacchaeus and his great desire to see Jesus.

He was also rich, and as Jesus had earlier taught the apostles, riches can easily blind a person to his need of anything greater; it is difficult for a rich man to humiliate himself to seek the things of God. This was a further obstacle that Zacchaeus had to overcome if he were to "see Jesus."

Then, the thronging crowd that completely filled the narrow streets of the city, effectively prevented Zacchaeus from approaching the Lord.

And, finally, he was short of stature, and therefore could not see over the heads of the people.

These four obstacles: the hatred of the people, the pride that wealth normally generates, the thronging crowd, and his shortness of stature, would have been enough to deter most people.

But not Zacchaeus. He more than matched them by his great desire to see Jesus, and his determination to do so.

How important to develop these attributes in our lives! If we have a great desire to see the Lord Jesus in the Age to come, and the determination to do so, we will find the means to overcome all the natural obstacles that normally stand between us and this objective.

Zacchaeus had to use ingenuity to obtain his desire. He had tried to get through the crowd, but in vain; he sought desperately to raise himself on tiptoe to see the Lord, but was too small to do so. So, for the moment, he was filled with frustration, as he sought an opening, but could find none. But Zacchaeus had two qualities that more than counter-balanced the four obstacles: he had the desire to see Jesus, and the determination to do so. He thought upon his problem, and then he acted.

**Zacchaeus Up A Tree!** Ahead of Jesus was a sycamine tree. This is a species of fig tree, with large branches, and wide leaves. It produces a wild fig that was sometimes used for fruit, and it is said that this tree was originally imported from Egypt. Be that as it may, its wide-spreading branches and its leafy foliage provided Zacchaeus with just the help and covering he desired.

He did not want to appear foolish before the large company of Jews following the Lord, and he knew that those who recognised and detested him as chief of the publicans, would take every opportunity to ridicule him if they had the chance. Like Adam in the garden of Eden, he decided to hide himself behind a covering of fig leaves!

And so the poor little rich tax-gatherer, whose wealth could not buy that which he wanted, clambered up the tree to await the Lord Jesus as he passed underneath it. He was confident that no one had seen him climb up, and that he would be hidden from the prying eyes of any of the crowd.

**“Zacchaeus,  
Come Down!”**

The crowd moved slowly along the street until it came to the spot where the sycamine tree stood by the wayside, on a branch of which was perched the ludicrous form of the little tax-gatherer, peering down intently. The crowd was ignorant of his presence up the tree, but there was one who had followed with greatest interest every detail of the drama then enacted, and who could read the very heart of Zacchaeus.

This was the Lord Jesus. Unlike the rest of the crowd, however, he was not swayed by external appearances; he did not detest the tax-gatherer despite his profession.

Meanwhile, Zacchaeus saw the Lord pause beneath the tree, and the company with him. He literally had a bird's-eye view of the Master, and to that extent had satisfied his desire and determination. But then, to his consternation, he saw the Lord look up, searching among the leaves of the tree, until his eyes rested upon him.

How embarrassed he felt! He was now really "up a tree" in both a literal and a figurative sense! Moreover, all the company below were following the eyes of the Lord, and likewise searching among the leaves of the tree, curious to see at what Jesus was looking. And there, they, too, discovered the form of the little tax-gatherer, stretched out along the branch, with his face, probably a deep red among the green leaves of the tree, gazing back at them in his embarrassment.

Those of Jericho knew him well and hated him! How foolish he looked to them! How glad they were to see him in such a ridiculous pose! Any dignity he might once have had was now completely stripped from him.

But then the gentle voice of the Lord was heard: "Zacchaeus," he commanded, "hurry and come down, for I must abide at your house!"

Zacchaeus would hardly believe his ears! What an amazing privilege was imparted to him! He, chief of the publicans, a man hated by most other Jews, being offered the supreme honour of entertaining this amazing prophet of Nazareth!

The large concourse of people surrounding the Lord likewise listened in amazement. It was staggering to them that Jesus should seek to dine with a man like Zacchaeus, who, in their opinion, was so lacking in his understanding of that which was right, that he lowered himself to do service by collecting taxes for Gentiles. Surely they were mistaken in Jesus. Evidently he was not the prophet they thought he was! They found it difficult to understand that one who could perform such a miracle as he had done outside the city walls, should demean himself so as to associate with such as this publican!

Meanwhile, Zacchaeus had "come down" from the tree in a literal sense; he had also done so figuratively, in that he had been thoroughly humbled before all the people. He cared nothing for their opinion, however, but joyfully receiving the Lord, he offered to conduct him to his home.

But this did not please the people. They did not like to see the publican honored. They commenced to murmur among themselves concerning the Lord. "He has gone as guest and to lodge with that sinner!" they censoriously remarked.

Zacchaeus sensed this opposition, and to counter it made a public vow to make restitution for anything he might have done amiss

before. He stood up and solemnly declared his intention before the people.

"Behold, Lord," he declared. "From now, I intend to give the half of my goods to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone out of anything, I will restore four times as much to him again." This was in accordance with the law of Yahweh (Exo. 22:1; Lev. 5:15-16; Num. 5:6-7), so that Zacchaeus made public declaration that he would, in future, mould his life by the law of God.

The Lord, in return, gave public approval of his action. "Today," he declared, "is salvation come to this house, since Zacchaeus also is a son of Abraham; For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Zacchaeus was a true son of Abraham. On an earlier occasion, when some of the Jews had protested that they were sons of Abraham, the Lord had repudiated the claim, explaining that if they were true "sons of Abraham," they would act as he had acted. The fact that they did not, showed that though they had physically descended from him, they were not so spiritually, and therefore they were but "sons of the devil," or of the flesh (Jn. 8:37-44).

Meanwhile, a greatly rejoicing Zacchaeus, joyfully received into his house the Son of God, and Saviour of the world.

May it be our great privilege to meet Zacchaeus in the Age to come, to be received by the Lord in that house which he will have prepared for all those who abide in him (Jn. 14:1-2; Heb. 3:1-3).



## Chapter 5

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### THE PARABLE OF THE NOBLEMAN

*This parable was delivered in the home of Zacchaeus at the close of the day that the Lord entered the city of Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. Bearing in mind that a Jewish day commenced at 6 p.m. in the evening, and that the Lord entered Jerusalem the following afternoon, which was six days before the Passover (John 12:1), this evening commenced the ninth day of Abib.*

*The Lord stayed with Zacchaeus all that night. What a thrill it must have been for the one-time tax-gatherer to have the Scriptures expounded to him by Jesus himself, and to hearken to the re-assuring words that flowed from the Master's lips. How his heart must have burned within him, as he determined to dedicate his future life unto Yahweh that he might attain unto the kingdom.*

*And now the apostles must have enthusiastically entered into the general conversation confidently believing that the setting up of the kingdom would be announced when they arrived at Jerusalem. To their minds it was an appropriate time for such a proclamation, for Passover commemorates the Deliverance from Egypt, and they believed that the setting up of the kingdom would deliver them from the Roman yoke that rested so heavily upon them. For those two reasons: "because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (Luke 19:11), Jesus delivered unto them the Parable of the Nobleman who went into a far country.*

*As we today live at the time of Christ's second advent, this parable has a very special meaning to us.*

**"A** certain nobleman," declared the Lord as he commenced the parable, "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. Before leaving, he called ten of his servants, and delivered unto them ten pounds: 'Trade with these while I go, and return!' he instructed them."

"He left on his mission, and his servants commenced carrying out his instructions. But his citizens detested him, and sent an embassy after, to say, 'We do not want this man to become ruler over us.' This embassy failed in its mission, however, and the nobleman received his appointment. He returned, having received

the kingdom, and first ordered his servants to whom he had given the money to appear before him, that he might know how much each one had made by trading.

"The first one came before him, and he said: 'Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds!' 'Well done, you good servant,' replied the nobleman, 'Because you have been faithful and trustworthy in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' The second one also came, and said, 'Lord, your pound has made five pounds!' He said also to him, 'And you will have charge over five cities.'

"But another came and said, 'Lord, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up in a handkerchief. For I was constantly afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you pick up what you did not lay down, and you reap what you did not sow!'

"Sternly the nobleman looked at the presumptuous servant. 'I will judge and condemn you out of your own mouth, you disobedient servant,' he answered. 'You knew, did you, that I was a severe man, picking up what I did not lay down, and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put up my money in a bank, so that on my return I might have collected it with interest?' Turning to other of his attendants looking on, he said: 'Take the pound away from him, and give it to him who has the ten pounds!'

"They replied, 'Lord, he has ten pounds already.' 'Never mind,' replied the noblemen, 'I tell you, that to every one who gets and has, will more be given; but from the man who does not get, and does not have, will be taken away even what he has! As for those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence!'"

### **Why The Parable Was Given**

The teaching of the parable is both significant and vital. Its primary meaning is clear.

Jesus represented himself as a nobleman who had to go into a far country (heaven) to receive his authority, and then return to take it up. It thus clearly teaches the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to reign on earth.

The parable was called forth by the action of Zacchaeus, who had done very little, but that little having been performed in faith, had received much, in that salvation had been promised him. That is the point of Luke's comment that "he added and spake a parable." The Lord "added" the parable to the promise of salvation, already given to Zacchaeus, to show when that salvation would come (Luke 19:11).

A second reason given for delivering the parable is that "he was nigh to Jerusalem." This was a significant spot for such a parable to be given, because Jerusalem is "the city of the great king" (Mat. 5:35), the place from whence the Lord Jesus will reign when he

returns to earth.

A third reason was because “they [the disciples] thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.” They were filled with thoughts of the kingly glory that they believed their beloved Lord would soon manifest, and ignoring the constant warnings that he had given them of his impending humiliation and death, they anticipated that he was about to proclaim himself as Messiah and King, and to establish his rule throughout the land.

The parable was given to teach that a period of time must elapse before that would come to pass, that in the meantime his citizens would hate him, and that his servants would be left to themselves to test as to whether they would be worthy of the kingdom or not.

### **A Contrast With The Parables Of The Talents**

A few days later, the Lord delivered another parable to the disciples which is so similar to this one, that many confuse the two. But there are important differences as

we shall see.

This other parable is recorded in Mat. 25:14-30, and describes how a man, travelling into a far country, delivered certain money described as “talents” into the hands of his servants, and instructing them as to what they should do, took his journey. Again, on his return, he rewarded his faithful servants, but rebuked and punished those who had not fulfilled his will.

And, in both cases, the reward and the punishment were similar.

Despite the similarities, however, both parables are different, teaching two important lessons.

Consider some of the differences. In the parable of the pounds, all the servants received the same amount; but in the parable of the talents, they received different amounts “according to their ability” (Mat. 25:15). In the parable of the pounds, the rewards differ according to the success of the trading; but in the parable of the talents, all the successful receive the same reward.

These differences provide the key to an understanding of the two parables. In the parable of the pounds, all receive the same amount, and are told to trade with it; in the parable of the talents, differing amounts are given according to individual ability.

What do the pounds represent as distinct from the talents?

The pounds represent the Gospel, which is given alike to all Christ’s servants, though some use it to a better advantage than others, and, in consequence, will attain unto higher positions in the kingdom. The talents represent natural ability, the extent of which differs in each one, some having more ability than others. But, whether the ability be small or great, if it be faithfully used, it will

bring a common reward.

### **What The Parable Taught**

The Lord declared that the “nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.”

However, the context clearly shows that the kingdom is not in the “far country” but that the nobleman had to proceed there to receive the authority he exercised on his return, for it is not until then that he was able to appoint his servants to positions of authority.

The parable seems based upon the prophecy of Daniel 7, where the Son of man is represented as being presented to the Father to receive “dominion, glory, and his kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him... an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:14). In conformity with this, Peter wrote of Christ’s ascension into heaven: “*Jesus Christ is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him*” (1Pet. 3:22).

His servants, to whom had been entrusted the Gospel message, are the saints (Eph. 3:8-10), one of whom described himself as an “ambassador in bonds” for Christ (Eph. 6:20).

The parable clearly teaches, that the judgment of the household will precede that of the nations, because the nobleman first called his servants before him that “he might know how much every man had gained by trading” (v. 15). At his return, Christ will want to know what his servants have done with the Gospel message that has been entrusted to their care.

Other passages of the Bible confirm this. Peter taught that “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1Pet. 4:17), and the Psalmist taught that it will be the honour and privilege of saints to pour out the divine judgments on the nations (Psa. 149), which clearly implies that their judgment had already taken place (v. 4).

In regard to this judgment, Paul taught that “every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1Cor. 3:8), and the context shows that he is writing of the preaching of the Gospel. In this same chapter, he warns his readers to take heed as to how they preach (v. 10), for those who do so effectively “shall receive a reward” (v. 14), whereas those who do not do so “shall suffer loss” (v. 15).

That is the very principle stressed by the Lord in this parable. He taught the disciples that he must ascend into heaven, and that the responsibility would then rest upon them to proclaim the Gospel effectively, in faith that he will reward them for their services at the due time.

In the parable, Jesus described how that the citizens of the



nobleman “hated him,” and declared, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (v. 14). Those were significant and ominous words, particularly so for the disciples, who, a few days later, would hear the Jews angrily shout those words to the Roman Governor. When Pilate presented Jesus unto the multitude with the question, “*Shall I crucify your King?*” the people reported, “*We have no king but Caesar!*” (John 19:15). In other words, they proclaimed, “*We will not have this man to reign over us!*”

But in the parable, the nobleman returned to discipline, and punished his enemies among whom were the citizens who repudiated him. So it will be at Christ’s return. He will humble the Jewish people, and they will be severely punished for their wickedness and stubbornness (see Zech. 13:8-9), and if they remain obstinate, they will be destroyed.

It is important to consider both the attitude and the reward of the servants. Those who are approved are noted for their labour and humility. They are workers because they added to that which had been delivered into their care; they are humble as is shown by the way they addressed the nobleman. When the servant whose pound had gained ten pounds stands before his Lord, he does not say, “I have gained ten pounds,” but “Lord, *thy* pound hath gained ten pounds.” He did not claim that it had been his ability that had won something for his Lord, but the value of that which had been placed in his care.

So it is with the Gospel message.

The nobleman’s reply is worth noting: “*Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.*” His “little faith” had gained great reward. So it was with Zacchaeus; so it can be with us.

The third servant who was brought before the nobleman had nothing to offer, except the pound that he had carefully preserved in a handkerchief. He had not traded with that which had been left in his care, but merely kept it from pollution. Asked why he had not traded with it, he confessed to an entirely wrong conception of his lord. Out of his own mouth he was condemned, and his pound was taken from him and given to the servant who had been most successful. This would imply that the opportunity of trading with the Gospel will not cease at Christ’s return. There will still be the need to take it unto all people (Rev. 10:11), and the privilege of doing so will be given to those best qualified to perform it.

The unsuccessful servant was condemned because of his sin. But what was his sin? It was a sin of omission; he had not carried out the will of his lord. This teaches that there is a sin of omission, of not serving the Lord as he would desire us to do. It is not enough to have the Truth — this servant had the pound. It is not enough to

keep it pure — this servant protected it by carefully wrapping it up. There is a need to be “occupied” with it, to trade with it.

Where do we stand in that direction? Only three of the ten servants are mentioned. What of the other seven? There is an ominous silence regarding their fate, and only three are singled out as representatives of various classes. A great question mark remains as to in what category we might find ourselves, for there are ten such to fill. We must apply ourselves diligently to the work of the Lord.

The disobedient servant looked upon the nobleman as one to be feared, as a hard man, reaping where he had not sown. It is possible for us to feel like that toward Christ, believing that he has demanded impossible things of us; that he has called upon us to trade with the Gospel under circumstances where results are an impossibility. When we act or talk like that, we are like the foolish servant. He believed that success was dependent upon his own efforts, and did not realise the duty of performing the Lord’s will, come what may. The successful servant said: “*Thy pound has gained...*” The unsuccessful servant said: “*Thou reapest that thou didst not sow.*” If he really thought that, why did not put the money into the bank? If he thought the Lord was harsh and unreasonable, should he not have laboured to pacify him at his return? Christ is not hard or unreasonable, but if we act as though he were, we will be treated in that way at the judgment seat. Thus the Psalmist said of Yahweh: “*With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt shew Thyself upright; with the pure Thou wilt shew Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward. For Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks*” (Psa. 18:25-27).

### **Upon What The Parable Was Based**

Many of the parables of the Lord were based upon actual happenings which illustrated the spiritual truths he sought to convey. This parable was probably based upon the action of Archelaus, son of Herod the Great. On the death of his father, instead of entering immediately into the kingly inheritance that his father had bequeathed him, he shrewdly sought the permission of Rome to do so, in case the government afterwards opposed him. This entailed a long journey to the capital of the empire to present his case, a journey that proved very successful. However, his petition was vigorously opposed by a deputation of fifty Jews who were sent to Rome to plead that he be not granted his request. It was embarrassing to Archelaus to have those who were really his citizens, publicly rebelling against his authority, and warning that they would not submit to his rule, but he conducted himself with

humility before the Roman authorities, and presented his case to them so skilfully, that he was fully confirmed in his position, with the full weight of Roman power to support him.

He returned determined to reward his supporters and avenge himself on his opponents. The former were given positions of eminence with him; the latter were severely punished with death.

The incident was well-known to all throughout Palestine, and fitly illustrated the status of the Lord Jesus, and the purpose of God in him. Though he is a king (Acts 17:7), the Master has not yet entered upon his full duties, and this delay provides scope for that part of the parable that relates to the nobleman's servants, and the work they were called upon to do in his absence.

We are today awaiting the return of the nobleman, who will suitably reward his faithful servants, and "judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31).

## A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospel

### ELISABETH, THE GODLY

An index to the character of Elisabeth is found in the statement of Luke that both she and her husband “were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Lk. 1:6). We can picture Elisabeth, meticulously devoted to the temple worship, fulfilling all the requirements of the Law, and blameless to the extent that she fulfilled all its enactments (Phil. 3:6).

But she was a woman of faith, and not a mere legalist. In the early years of her marriage, she, with her husband, had ardently desired a son, and when this blessing was not received by them, had made it a matter of prayer (Lk. 1:7, 13). This was the desire of all faithful Israelitish women who looked for the fulfillment of the covenant of promise made in Eden (Gen. 3:15).

But with what awe Elisabeth must have received the news, in her old age, that she was to bear such a remarkable son as the forerunner of the Christ. With the modesty which was a feature of those times, she retired to the hill country of Judea, where her son was born. She had refused to believe the news at first (cp. Lk. 1:45 with vv. 24-25), but once it was obvious, she waited with impatience for the birth of her son, and of the birth of Messiah that would follow.

Her name means: *The Oath of My God*, and together with the meaning of her husband's name, and that of their son, is most significant. For Zacharias signifies *The Memorial of Yahweh*, and John's name means *The Grace of Yahweh*. When the Oath of God was joined with the Memorial of Yahweh it produced the divine Grace!

Elisabeth was of the house of Aaron, and bore the name of Aaron's wife, Elisheba (Exo. 6:23). She became the wife of the priest Zacharias, and though of a different tribe, she was a kinswoman of Mary, the mother of the Lord.

After the birth of John nothing further is told of his parents, and they evidently passed to their rest long before their son manifested himself publicly in the midst of Israel.

Just prior to the birth of John, Elisabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, welcomed Mary as the prospective mother of the Lord (Lk. 1:41-45).

She appears in the narrative as a gentle woman, yet with a firm determination to do what was right, so that when at the birth of her son, the assembled relations wanted to call him by a name other than the divinely appointed one of John, with a firmness that came from her faith, she insisted upon the will of God being done, and her action was endorsed by her husband, whose tongue was suddenly loosed so that he found that he could speak freely to endorse her faith.

