

EXPOSITORY NOTES
ON THE GOSPEL OF
MARK

By H. A. IRONSIDE, Litt.D

AUTHOR OF
ADDRESSES ON FIRST AND SECOND THESSALONIANS;
ADDRESSES ON THE BOOK OF ACTS;
ETC., ETC.

FIRST EDITION, JANUARY 1948

Printed in the Philippines

Printed By:



Ortigas Center Post Office

P.O. Box 1996

1659 Pasig City M.M.

Tel. # 656-85-61

e-mail: lifelinephilippines@postone.com

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INTRODUCTION

THE GOSPEL OF THE EVER-FAITHFUL SERVANT

IT is interesting to notice the special object the Holy Spirit has in view in His presentation of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ in each of the four Gospels. In them we have four pen-portraits of our Saviour. It was given to Matthew to set Him forth particularly as the King, the Messiah of Israel, hence the genealogy proving Him to be the Son of David and Son of Abraham. This also accounts for the many references to and quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures. Luke presents Him as the perfect Man, the unique Son of Man who came to seek and to save the lost. A singular feature of his record is that of the table-talk of Jesus. Is there any function where a man relaxes and opens up his heart like a dinner-party? And in Luke we see our Lord on many such occasions. Luke traces His genealogy back to Adam through Heli, the father of Mary and hence the father-in-law of Joseph (Luke 3: 23). John tells us plainly his object was to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, "believing ye might have life

though His name." John shows that He is the Eternal Word who became flesh for our redemption.

WHY THERE IS NO GENEALOGY IN MARK

To Mark it fell by divine appointment to show us the Son of God acting in lowly grace and devoted subjection to the Father as the perfect Servant and Prophet of the Holy One. He plunges at once into his subject. In the short space of sixteen chapters he sets forth the busy Servant engaged in one work of mercy after another, hastening from place to place as He does His Father's bidding. Because we are not concerned about a servant's forbears, but rather about his ability, there is no genealogy at all in this Gospel, but a marvelous record of activity in doing good and in making known the mind of God. It has often been pointed out that Mark uses a word variously translated "immediately," "straightway," "forthwith," and "anon," over forty times, and this word is found only about the same number of times in all the rest of the New Testament. "The king's business requireth haste," and Jesus was ever busy in the great work for which He came into the world.

The sacrifice of the cross is presented differently too in each Gospel—and that in accordance with the Levitical offerings (Lev. 1 to 7). John tells of the death of the Lord as the burnt offering, the Son laying down His life to glorify the Father in the scene where He had been so dishonored by sin. Luke portrays that great sacrifice as the peace offer-

ing, Christ making peace by the blood of His cross, that God and man may be reconciled and have hallowed fellowship together. Matthew, as becomes one whose theme is the government of God, clearly identifies the work of the cross with the trespass offering, where the Lord could say, as in Psalm 69, "Then I restored that which I took not away."

But in Mark's account we gaze in awe and wonder at the Holy One made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. It is the great sin offering that is before us, Christ dying not only for trespasses committed, but because of what we are as sinners by nature, which our practice but makes evident.

I dwell on these points because of the foolish things many have taught, for instance that Mark's was the first effort to try to recall and set forth the story of Jesus, and that this was amplified and altered by the writers of the other Gospels who may or may not be the persons whose names are linked with them. But we may be assured that all such speculations are idle and vain. The imprint of the divine mind is on every page of these records, and their very divergences (but never contradictions) as well as their agreements are but evidence of God's inspiration.

THE OBJECT OF MARK'S GOSPEL

Mark's supreme object was to show the Gentile world the active love of God in Jesus the Christ,

serving needy men, seeking after sinners and saving all who trusted Him. If one had no other part of Scripture but this brief Gospel, there is enough in it to show to any troubled heart and conscience the way of life and peace.

That Mark may, from the human standpoint, have been indebted to Peter for much of the information conveyed, need not be questioned, but all that is written is arranged by the Spirit of God and that with a definite object in view.

It was given to Isaiah to prophesy of Messiah as the Suffering Servant of Jehovah (Isaiah 52 and 53). Moses predicted the raising up of a Prophet whose word on all questions would be final (Deut. 18:15-19). Mark was the Evangelist chosen by the Holy Spirit to portray our Lord in these two offices, as Servant and Prophet. But we are not to suppose that this means the ignoring of other aspects of His nature and character. He was never more kingly than when serving, nor more divine than when He willingly limited Himself.

Peter the Great, after he had built up at great cost the Russian Empire, decided he must have a navy. But no one in Russia knew the art of ship-building. So Peter vacated his throne for a time, appointed his consort Catherine regent, laid aside his royal apparel, and, dressed as a common laborer, journeyed to Holland and to England, in which countries he learned ship-carpentry by working in the great shipyards side by side with the men

who little dreamed of the dignity of the apparently uncouth artisan who toiled with them day by day. Peter was none the less an emperor when he wrought with hammer and adze than when he returned to his throne.

In studying any book of the Bible it is well to have clearly in mind its main divisions, or outline. The outline given here may help us as to this Gospel.

Christ's prophetic ministry is emphasized throughout, but more particularly in the third division, where in chapter 13—as in Matthew 24 and Luke 21—He carries us on to the last things, viewing with the eye of the Seer the conditions He knew would prevail until His return in glory to set up His kingdom. It is noteworthy that when He speaks in this Servant-character as Prophet of Jehovah, He declares His self-limitation, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (13:32). As the perfect Servant He chose not to know what the Father was not pleased to reveal (Deut. 18:15, 18, 19).

MARK'S BACKGROUND

John Mark was the son of a wealthy woman named Mary, probably a widow, whose home was large enough to serve as a meeting-place for many of the early disciples after the Pentecostal outpouring (Acts 12:12).

Mark accompanied Paul, and Barnabas, to whom he was related, to Cyprus, but later returned to Jerusalem, a proceeding of which Paul thoroughly disapproved (Acts 12:25; 13:13; 15:37-39). Later, however, Mark redeemed himself and became a trusted minister of Christ and companion of Paul and Peter (2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13). It is like God to select the one-time unfaithful servant Mark to tell the story of the ever-faithful Servant, His own blessed Son!

According to a well-known tradition of the early Church, Mark was referring to himself when he told the story of "a certain young man" who followed Christ right up to His entry into the house of the high priest and then, when the guards sought to lay hold of him, left the linen cloth that had enswathed his body in their hands and fled from them naked (Mark 14:51, 52). The fact that no other Evangelist records this incident perhaps may not be sufficient ground for connecting it with Mark himself; yet, on the other hand, because of its wide acceptance in early days it may possibly be the truth. In that case it would imply that young John Mark had listened to the teaching of the Lord while he was in Jerusalem, and his heart had gone out to Him insomuch that he thought he was ready even to die with Him, but in the hour of testing he fled, as did the other disciples. How many there are who really love the Lord and yet lack that moral courage that enables them to go through with Him at all

cost! As we think of this fine young man and the difficulties he faced in getting really started in the service of the Lord, and yet remember that later on he proved himself an efficient minister of Christ, we may be encouraged to rise above our own fears and shortcomings, counting on God to make us true ambassadors of the gospel of His Son. As we study the record of Him who said, "I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke 22:27), may our own hearts be bowed in lowly subjection before Him, and may we truly yield ourselves unto Him as the One now risen from the dead, to serve in the same lowly spirit that characterized Him when He was in this scene, content with the approbation of the Father, even though we pass through this world comparatively unknown and unregarded.

The following simple outline of this Gospel may prove suggestive and helpful as we endeavor to analyze its contents.

**The Theme: JESUS THE SON OF GOD AS
SERVANT AND PROPHET.**

**I. Chapters 1 to 5. *The Active Servant Ministering
to Human Need and Distress.***

1.—1: 1-13. The Servant Presented.

**2.—1: 14—5: 43. The Gracious Work of the
Divine Servant.**

II. Chapters 6:1 to 10:45. *The Servant Rejected, but Ministering in Grace Still.*

- 1.—Chapter 6. Opposition Develops.
- 2.—7:1—8:9. Tradition *Versus* Revelation.
- 3.—8:10—9:8. Intimations of the Coming Glory.
- 4.—9:9—10:45. The Path of Discipleship.

III. Chapters 10:46 to 16:20. *The Consummation of Our Lord's Ministry.*

- 1.—10:46—13:37. The Rejected King.
- 2.—Chapters 14, 15. The Supreme Sacrifice.
- 3.—Chapter 16. The Resurrection: Christ *Serving Still.*

DIVISION ONE.—CHAPTERS 1 TO 5.

THE ACTIVE SERVANT MINISTERING TO
HUMAN NEED AND DISTRESS

Chapter One

SUBDIVISION ONE.—1: 1-13.

THE SERVANT PRESENTED

MARK begins his record very abruptly, as he introduces the Servant of Jehovah, and then tells us in a very few words of His forerunner, and of His baptism and temptation.

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; and preached, saying, There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him”—vers. 1-13.

"The gospel of Jesus Christ" is God's good news concerning His blessed Son who came into this world to reveal His heart to mankind and to offer Himself as the great sin-offering for our redemption.

Malachi had predicted the coming of the messenger who was to precede the Lord and prepare the people for His advent. This messenger was the voice crying in the wilderness, as foretold in Isaiah 40:3, calling upon Israel to prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight. The word here rendered "Lord" is really "Jehovah" in the Old Testament passage. So that we have here a clear affirmation concerning the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who came in such meekness and lowliness was the Everlasting One who had condescended to unite His Deity with our humanity apart from its sin, in order that He might become our Kinsman-Redeemer and purchase our deliverance from sin's bondage and the judgment to which we were exposed.

John came baptizing in the wilderness of Judea, immersing in the turbulent waters of the Jordan—the river that symbolized death—those who confessed their sins and thus professed repentance. Multitudes went out to him from all the surrounding and contiguous territory and were baptized in response to his message. Their baptism was not in any sense a meritorious act, but it was the acknowledgment that they accepted the message

and acknowledged their need of cleansing and forgiveness. We know from John 1:29 that these penitents were directed to the Lamb of God as the only One who could take away the sin of the world, and so make it possible for guilty sinners to become reconciled to God.

John was an Elijah-like character: a stern and serious man who dwelt in the wilderness and lived the life of an ascetic, subsisting on locusts and wild honey. He did not seek to draw attention to himself but proclaimed, "There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."

When this One appeared He would baptize with the Holy Spirit those who received Him. This we know was fulfilled on Pentecost and afterward when the risen Christ "shed forth" that which was then seen and known—the gift of the Holy Spirit who baptized believers into one Body and anointed them for service.

Next we read that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized of John in Jordan. We are not told here of John's objection and how this was overcome by the Lord's explanation. Of this we read in the other records. That baptism was our Lord's pledge to carry on to completion the work He had come from heaven to perform. This was ratified in heaven, and Jesus was publicly consecrated to this service when there came a voice from above saying, "Thou art My beloved Son, in

whom I well pleased." He who had been baptized as identifying Himself with confessed sinners was thus declared to be Himself the sinless One.

We have no details here of the temptation, or testing, of Jehovah's Servant. We are told only that immediately (note the word, for as mentioned in the Introduction it will be found often in this Gospel) the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness for forty days, where He was tempted of the devil, and was with the wild beasts. When Satan left Him angels came and ministered unto Him. He was their Creator, and they delighted to serve Him in His humiliation. I take it that it was the Holy Spirit who drove or moved Jesus to go into the wilderness in order thus to be tested. As Man on earth He chose to be under the Spirit's direction in all things. It was meet that He should thus be tested before He began His gracious ministry. His temptation was not to see if, perchance, He might fail and sin in the hour of stress, but rather to prove that He would not fail, because He was the absolutely sinless One. They do Him a grievous wrong who impute to Him either a sinful nature or the possibility of sinning. Scripture guards against any such misconceptions when it tells us that He was tempted in all points even as we are, yet without sin—or, literally, apart from sin. There was in Him no inward tendency to sin. The temptations were all from without and found no response whatever in His heart.

SUBDIVISION TWO.—1: 14—5: 43.**THE GRACIOUS WORK OF THE DIVINE
SERVANT**

In this section we are called upon to consider the response made by various persons to the call and testimony of the Lord during His ministry on earth. Some heard with gladness His gracious invitation to be with Him as disciples and messengers, and readily forsook all their ordinary vocations for love of Him. Others were hesitant and fearful lest too much might be involved in subjection to His yoke. Some sought Him out because of their personal need, whether physical or spiritual; others followed Him believing He was the promised Messiah and desiring to have part with Him in His kingdom. But whatever the motive that led them to cleave to Him, He received them and patiently instructed them, unfolding the real meaning of His mission and of that kingdom of God which it was "the Father's good pleasure to give" them (Luke 12:32). It was the Father who drew men to the Lord Jesus, and so there was a welcome for all who came (John 6:44). It is just as true today. One may come to Him because his heart is broken and he has learned that Jesus Christ heals broken hearts; another comes because of a yearning which he has sought in vain to satisfy in this poor world; another comes bowed down with shame and grief because of a

wicked, wasted life; and again another comes because he has heard that there is joy and gladness to be found in Christ. But all who come are taken up in grace and given a royal reception. All must come as sinners, though, for it is only such He came to call (Matt. 9:13).

Our Lord has no stereotyped way of dealing with souls. He reveals Himself by many different means and works, according to the special needs of each individual. The great thing is that the conscience be reached and the heart drawn to Him. Whatever the reason one may have for coming to Jesus, he can be certain that he will not be turned away. The Lord values loving devotion to Himself. It is in this way we may respond to His gracious entreaties and kindly commands.

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel"—vers. 14, 15.

It was after Herod had placed John the Baptist in confinement in the prison of Machaerus (if we trust early Christian writers and the testimony of Josephus) that Jesus, as recorded in John's Gospel, went up into Galilee after a brief stay in Judea; and there he began His public ministry by preaching the good news that the kingdom of God had come nigh. Referring doubtless to the great time-prophecy of Daniel 9 He exclaimed, "The time is fulfilled;" and He called upon all men to repent—that

is, to judge themselves before God, and to believe the glad tidings.

"Now as He walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him. And when He had gone a little farther thence, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him"—vers.16-20.

"He saw Simon and Andrew . . . casting a net into the sea." These brothers had met with Jesus a short time before, but had not then been called to leave all to follow Him. Now they had reached a crisis in their lives when they must make a great decision. Observe that it was the Lord Jesus, not they, who took the initiative (John 15: 16).

"Come ye after Me, and I will make you . . . fishers of men." It is a mistake to attempt to apply these words to all disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. In a special way He selected these two, and others later, for a great soul-winning ministry. But we may be assured that all who follow Him faithfully will be used of Him in some way that would not be true otherwise.

The Lord called the four fishermen to become fishers of men. He saw that they were expert at and diligent in their work on the Sea of Galilee, and He called and equipped them for higher and nobler service, even to win souls for Himself. We are not to conclude from this that all who follow the Lord

Jesus Christ will become great soul-winners. Some are called to serve in a much humbler capacity. Some have no ability to preach, or even to do effective personal work. But each one is called to serve in whatever place the Lord puts him, even if it be but to suffer for His sake. All can participate in the ministry of prayer and thereby be a real help to those to whom is committed the preaching of the Word.

"Straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him." Their hearts had already been won for Him. Now, when the call came for full-time public service, there was no hesitancy. It is true, they had not much to leave, but for His name's sake they turned from whatever they had in the way of earthly prospects, and He made them valiant and competent workmen in the great task of winning souls to Himself.

"He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother." These also were fishermen, and John at least had known Jesus before, possibly James also. It is evident that the Lord Jesus Christ recognized their fervency of spirit and the devotion of their hearts to himself.

"Straightway He called them: and they left their father . . . and went after Him." This was a real test. They doubtless loved their father, Zebedee, intensely, but they put Christ and His claims first, and so forsook home and business for His sake. Think what Peter, Andrew, John, and James would

have missed if they had failed to heed the command to leave all for Christ's sake. They gave up the fishing business to engage in the greatest work ever committed to man—winning souls for Christ.

Just how much time elapsed between the calling of the four fishermen-apostles and the present section, we can only conjecture. It would seem that all occurred within a very few days. In fact, the Sabbath upon which these mighty deeds were done may have been that immediately following the day of the miraculous draught of fishes.

The teaching and healing ministries of the Lord Jesus Christ were ever intimately connected. The latter complemented the former, and in a sense authenticated it. His works of power proved that He was the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world. He wrought no useless miracles, no merely spectacular wonders. He was not a magician seeking to astonish people by His mystic ability over the elements or the minds of men. In all that He did He had in view the Father's glory and the blessing of mankind. This Sabbath day in Capernaum is but a cross section of His entire life of service for which He had been sent by the Father, who anointed Him with the Holy Spirit that He might go about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10: 38). He recognized all diseases, every physical infirmity, as primarily the work of the enemy of God and man, inasmuch as there would have been no sickness in

the world if sin had not come in to mar God's fair creation. It was His prerogative to undo the work of Satan and to free sufferers from the effects of sin, both spiritually and physically. In this He gave to Israel a foretaste of the blessing to become universal when the kingdom of God is set up, and mankind will be delivered from the bondage of corruption (Rom. 8: 20, 21).

"And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as One that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him. And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her. And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him"—vers. 21-34.

"They went into Capernaum." To this city our Lord and His mother, and brethren had removed from Nazareth, and to Jesus it was therefore home (Matt. 4: 13; John 2: 12). It is called "His own city" (Matt. 9: 1). Here He taught frequently and

wrought many miracles. It was a city privileged above all others in Galilee; yet it rejected His testimony and against it He pronounced one of His most solemn woes (Matt. 11: 23). "Straightway on the sabbath day." Punctiliously Jesus observed the Sabbath of the law in the way God intended that it should be kept, but He refused to recognize the mass of traditions and legalistic additions to the Scriptures which the rabbis had connected with it, and which made burdensome what was intended for blessing. The synagogue was open to Him as a recognized teacher, and He entered into it and taught.

The Synagogue in Israel. The first mention of a synagogue is in Psalm 74: 8. The last is in Revelation 3: 9, where we read of a synagogue of Satan. The word itself means just a place of gathering or assembling together. Unlike the Temple which was divinely appointed, the synagogue was a voluntary display of loyalty to the law of God. The Jews felt the need of such places when they might come together for instruction and fellowship. There was but one recognized Temple at any given time, and that was in Jerusalem. There were synagogues wherever there were enough Jewish families to maintain them, and often several were in one city.

As a child Jesus was accustomed to attend the synagogue. He early began to participate in its services (Luke 4: 16). Note the words, "as His custom was." He honored the place where the Word of

God was read and expounded, and commanded others to do so, even though those who taught were not always men of consistent lives (Matt. 23:2). May we not learn from this to respect the place where God's name is recognized and His Word read, even though we may not endorse all that goes on there, because of human frailty? We are so prone to go to extremes, either in manifesting utter indifference to evil doctrine or unholy behavior, or else taking a supercilious and self-righteous attitude toward all who do not see just as we do or do not behave according to our standards. It is important to realize that while, as individuals, we are exhorted, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16, 17), we are not called to ascend the judgment-seat and censure others who may be as sincere as we, but have not learned to look at everything in our way.

"He taught them as One that had authority, and not as the scribes." These men were accustomed to give out what their teachers had said before them, and did not attempt to give any authoritative instructions themselves. Jesus spoke as One sent from God, who did not need to bolster His instructions by quotations from human authorities, but preached the Word as the mouthpiece of the Father, whose representative He was. This was teaching such as the people had never heard before.

"A man with an unclean spirit." The Scriptures plainly tell us of the reality of demon possession.

This was not just a Jewish superstition. On this occasion the service was interrupted by a man under the control of a wicked and unclean spirit.

"I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." The demon who possessed the man recognized the Person and authority of Jesus, and feared lest He was about to visit the evil spirits with judgment, confining them in the eternal prison-house of the damned. Men might be incredulous regarding Christ's claims, but fallen spirits knew Him for what He professed to be.

"Jesus rebuked him." Our Lord did not desire testimony from demons. He commanded the spirit to be silent and to come out of the frenzied man.

"When the unclean spirit had torn him . . . he came out." As with a last vengeful effort, the demon inflicted further suffering on his poor victim, and then in unwilling obedience to the command which he was powerless to disobey, he left the man free from his awful power. The deliverance was evident to all present.

"What thing is this? what new doctrine is this?" Those who filled the synagogue were thrilled when they recognized the power of Jesus over evil spirits, and questioned one another as to the meaning of it all and the source of His authority. Never before, as they had listened to the ordinary exponents of the law, had they known such a manifestation of the divine approval.

"Immediately His fame spread." One told another of the remarkable thing that had taken place in the synagogue of Capernaum, until the news had penetrated all that part of Galilee. But, as after events proved, it is one thing to recognize in Jesus a great teacher, prophet, or wonder-worker. It is quite another thing to bow in repentance before God and receive the Saviour He has sent, as the Redeemer from sin.

"They entered into the house of Simon and Andrew." Originally these brethren dwelt in Bethsaida. It may have been after Simon's marriage that he removed to Capernaum, possibly to share the home of his wife's mother.

"Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever." Everywhere Jesus went there were evidences of the havoc sin had wrought in Israel. Had this people been faithful to God, He would have taken sickness away from them (Exod. 15:26). But as a nation they had failed to obey His Word. Consequently sickness and disease were everywhere prevalent. Seeing the condition of this suffering woman, the disciples called Jesus' attention to her, confident that He would relieve the situation.

"He . . . took her by the hand . . . and immediately the fever left her." There was healing in His touch. In tender, personal consideration for the poor sufferer, He gently raised her up and "the fever left her." His hand calmed and soothed her and brought deliverance from the fire that burned in her veins.

In loving gratitude she who had lain there so helplessly, now arose and ministered to others.

"When the sun did set." As the day drew to a close, a motley crowd could be seen coming from every side, bringing the diseased and demoniacs that Jesus might manifest His healing power on their behalf.

"All the city was gathered together at the door." This is not mere hyperbole. Capernaum was not a large city. From every quarter its inhabitants went to the house of Simon and Andrew, impelled either by curiosity or a sense of need. Alas, the great majority of them never considered seriously their responsibility to Him who had come among them in the activity of His grace, not only with healing for their bodies, but also to proclaim salvation for their souls.

"Suffered not the devils (demons) to speak, because they knew Him." He healed many of their physical infirmities, delivered others from spiritual bondage to demon power, but He refused to allow the wicked spirits to declare His identity, for He would not receive testimony from the hosts of the evil one.

The life of our Lord on earth was one of ceaseless service. This does not imply that He was actively engaged always in teaching and healing. He found abundant time for quiet communion with the Father. Yet none of His disciples were so busily engaged as He. The record of this one Sabbath day

in Capernaum is but a sample of the many such days He spent in proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and meeting the needs of men and women, as a testimony to the divine interest in human concerns. In all this He has left us an example. We waste so much time upon things that do not profit. He made every moment count for the glory of God. In our lives there is so much that is of no real and lasting value. In all He said or did there was a worthwhileness that counted for eternity.

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee. And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and said unto Him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to Him from every quarter"—vers. 35-45.

Following that busy Sabbath in Capernaum the Servant-Saviour withdrew Himself very early a great while before sunrise, into a solitary place, and there spent some hours in hallowed communion with His Father. Prayer was to Him, as Man in per-

fection, the very delight of His holy soul as He talked things over with Him who had sent Him.

As the morning advanced Simon and others of the disciples came seeking Him, and when they had found Him they told Him that there were many others looking for and desiring to see and hear Him. It was their thought evidently to recognize Him as King and endeavor to force the issue, as it were, of a break with the Roman Government. But for Him there could be no kingdom without the cross. So instead of going forth to greet those who sought Him in this way He quietly said, "Let us go into the next towns." He intimated that He had a ministry to fulfil in connection with them, for He had been sent to preach the gospel of the kingdom to them also. Therefore, the little party went on from town to town throughout all Galilee, and He preached in the synagogues and cast out demons.

As he was ministering in one of these places a poor, unclean leper came to Him, and falling down at His feet besought Him to heal him of his dread disease. He was sure Jesus had power, but was He willing to do this for one so definitely under the curse of God? For such was the recognized status of a leper in Israel. He cried, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." With a heart filled with compassion Jesus turned to him in grace, and not fearing possible defilement by contact with one so unclean, He put forth His hand and touched the leper, as He exclaimed, "I will; be thou clean." In-

stantly the miracle was wrought. The leprosy fled away at the command of Jesus, and the erstwhile victim of this terrible disease departed rejoicing. Jesus, who had no desire to be hailed simply as a mighty wonder-worker, charged the healed man to tell no one of what had taken place, but to go, first to the priest in the temple at Jerusalem, and there show himself for an examination, and offer the two birds and other sacrifices which Moses had commanded, as recorded in Leviticus 14, "for a testimony unto them." One can imagine the wonder and amazement of the priest as this man presented himself for ceremonial cleansing, for it was something, for centuries, unheard-of in Israel.

We are told that he went, but he could not refrain from proclaiming abroad what he had experienced; and as a result so many thronged to see Jesus that He left the city and remained out in the country. Even there they came to Him from every quarter. It was not in human power to heal leprosy, but what no physician on earth could do Jesus had accomplished by a touch and a word! Leprosy was a constitutional disease. It worked outward from within. Because of its filthiness it is used by God as a picture of the uncleanness of sin.

Every unsaved soul is afflicted with this dread disease and is an unclean sinner in the sight of God. A man was not a leper because he had horrible ulcers and other sores upon his body. These were but manifestations of the disease within. And a

man is not a sinner because he sins: he sins because he is a sinner, and as such he is corrupt constitutionally. Only the power of the Lord can give deliverance.

Chapter Two

WE have noticed already that the miracles of our Lord were wrought in order to relieve human misery and to authenticate the Messiahship of Jesus. We would also emphasize the precious truth that these miracles were intended to reveal to men the grace and tender compassion of God, who was seen in Christ, fully telling out His deep concern for those who had brought such dire trouble and affliction upon themselves by turning away from Him. The entire human race was suffering because of sin. Israel in particular had been promised immunity from disease if obedient to the law of God (Exod. 23:25). Every blind, deaf, crippled, or diseased person among them was a witness to their failure in this respect (Deut. 28:15-23). In healing the sick, Jesus was undoing the work of the devil (Acts 10:38). And in doing this He was fulfilling what had been predicted concerning the Servant of Jehovah, Israel's promised Messiah-King (Isa. 35:4-6). Physical healing and forgiveness of sins were in the Old Testament intimately connected (Ps. 103:3; 67:2; Isa. 58:8). It was equally true in connection with our Lord's earthly ministry, as our present section makes clear. And there is a sense in which it is still true, even though our blessings now are spiritual (Eph. 1:3)

rather than temporal. But John prays for Gaius that physical health and prosperity of soul may go hand in hand (3 John 2). Where it is otherwise, we may be assured it is because God our Father is working out some hidden purpose of blessing. But we are always free to pray one for another that we may be healed (James 5:16). When Jesus was on earth proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, it was specially fitting that the blessings of the coming age should be manifested, and thus the people be given a sample of what Israel and the whole world will enjoy in its fulness when God's King reigns on Mount Zion and blessing goes forth to all the earth.

Every form of disease healed by our Lord Jesus seems to picture some aspect of sin, which is like a fever burning in the soul, a leprosy polluting the whole being, a palsy making one utterly unable to take a step toward God, and like a withered hand incapable of true service. Whatever form sin may take, Jesus can give complete deliverance from it.

All healing is divine, whether it be by miraculous power, by means of properly controlled physical habits, diet and exercise, or by direct medical treatment. It is God alone who can give renewed health and strength. He whose power brought us into being, giving us these marvelous bodies, with all their wonderful functions, is the only One who can keep us well or recover us from illness.

"And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them. And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this Man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion"—vers. 1-12.

The Lord's early Galilean ministry was still in progress, the events of the present section following closely upon those of the last one. Capernaum was the center from which Jesus worked out to other parts of Galilee, in the early summer or late spring of A. D. 28.

"It was noised that He was in the house." The presence of Jesus in any particular place soon became known, as on this occasion, when the word went out that the great Healer was again in the city which He had chosen for His home.

"He preached the Word unto them." To the throngs who filled the house and crowded about the door He proclaimed the message He had come from heaven to deliver, the Word of the kingdom. This

was His chief mission during His three-and-a-half years of ministry. Healing sick bodies was a secondary thing, though to the people it doubtless seemed to be the most important. But sickness of the soul is far more serious than physical ill-health, and to bring to men the message of life is far more important than delivering them from bodily ailments.

“One sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.” This poor, helpless paralytic could not make his own way unaided to where Jesus was, but he had four friends who were apparently firmly convinced that the Lord would give strength to the palsied limbs of the sick man.

“They uncovered the roof where He was: and . . . they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.” Finding all ordinary access to Jesus blocked by the crowd surging about the door, these energetic friends, determined not to fail in their endeavor to bring the afflicted sufferer directly to the wonder-working, compassionate Saviour, carried him up onto the flat roof (generally reached by an outside stairway) and there, lifting off the tiles and thatching, they made a space so large that they could let the sick one down, by passing cords under the pallet upon which the paralytic lay, to where Jesus was teaching. One can imagine the stir and excitement of the people as the recumbent man was carefully lowered to the very feet of Jesus. To Him it was no rude or unwarranted intrusion

or interruption, but mute evidence of the faith of the five, who counted upon Him to exercise His power on their behalf.

"When Jesus saw their faith." Faith is evidenced by works. The persistence and energy of these men demonstrated the reality of their faith in His readiness to meet the need. This He recognized, and seeing that the paralytic needed something far greater than healing of the body—namely, the forgiveness of his sins, "He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." It was a dramatic moment, and His words must have amazed the listeners, for never had they known man to speak like this.

The palsied man was literally "without strength" (Rom. 5: 6). In this he pictures all men in their sins. The word of Christ spoke strength into his paralyzed limbs, just as that same word gives new life to him who receives it in faith.

The four friends of the helpless man showed their faith by their works. Assured that their sick friend needed Jesus, they were determined that nothing should prevent his coming into the Saviour's presence. Are we as much concerned about bringing our unconverted friends to Jesus as they were? It was a joy to Christ when He saw the faith of these men, for faith always glorifies God. He recognizes its presence in every honest, seeking soul, and is ever quick to respond to the desire of the believing heart.

"Certain of the scribes . . . reasoning in their hearts." These were legalists who knew nothing of grace and who denied the claims of Jesus to be the Son of the Father. They do not go to the Scriptures for light, but they debated within themselves what it could all mean. Filled with prejudice and determined not to believe in Jesus, they at once took issue with Him.

"Who can forgive sins but God only?" To them it was the rankest kind of blasphemy for anyone to pretend to have authority to forgive sins. This prerogative belonged to God alone. They did not know that God manifest in flesh stood in their midst!

"Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves." They did not speak aloud, thus audibly expressing their indignation and objection to His words, but Jesus knew their thoughts (Ps. 94: 11), and He answered them accordingly. "Why reason ye . . . in your hearts?" To be able thus to read the inmost secrets of their thought-life was another evidence of Deity, for it is God only who knoweth our thoughts afar off (Ps. 139: 2).

"Whether is it easier?" So far as they were concerned, they could no more heal the sick than forgive the sinner. Jesus could do both. He chose to do the more important first.

"That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." He would perform a miracle to make manifest His authority to deliver from both sin and its effects.

"Arise, and take up thy bed." He therefore turned to the still helpless paralytic and commanded him to rise up and carry his bed—a pallet easily rolled together—and return healed to his home. There was power in His word. As He spoke, strength came to those limbs and the man arose, to the astonishment of all who were looking on.

"They . . . glorified God." As the people saw the erstwhile paralytic rise to his feet and go away carrying his bed, at the command of Jesus, they realized that divine power was active in their midst, and they gave God the glory for working so wondrously through His Servant, Jesus. Doubtless many wondered if He were not indeed the promised Messiah, as they exclaimed, "We never saw it on this fashion." It was a new and striking exhibition of the grace and power of God.

Leaving the house Jesus "went forth again by the sea side," and there taught the multitude who followed Him, unfolding to them the great truths connected with the forthcoming kingdom of God, for which Israel had waited so long.

"And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"—vers. 14-17.

Christ is not only our Saviour, He is also our Lord. Redemption involves much more than salvation from the guilt of, and the judgment due to, sin. It includes our deliverance from the power and authority of Satan, the god of this world, and our glad subjection to the One who has purchased us with His own precious blood. We read, "Ye are not your own . . . ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20). Because of this we are to own the Lord Jesus as the Supreme Master of our lives. Gratitude to Him for all His grace has wrought would, in itself, demand our wholehearted recognition of His dominion over us. We are not saved by "following Jesus," but because we are saved we are exhorted to follow Him. Loyalty to Christ demands that we surrender our wills to His and seek to glorify Him in all our ways. We often hear it said that our wills must be broken, but that is poor psychology and worse theology. A broken-willed man is no longer capable of making definite decisions. Tennyson sang,

*"Our wills are ours,
To make them Thine."*

And this is what Scripture emphasizes. We are voluntarily to yield our wills to Him who has given Himself for us, that thus our service may be the glad, happy obedience of those who delight in the will of God above all else. We need to beware of calling Jesus "Lord" if we are slighting His commands. It is by obedience that we prove our love

for Him (John 14: 15). We see in the ready obedience of Levi the publican, otherwise called Matthew (Matt. 9: 9-13), an example of what should be characteristic of all whose hearts have been won by Christ.

"He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom." Levi, or Matthew, the author of the first Gospel, was a member of the despised publican class. He was a tax-gatherer in the service of Rome. These were hated by the Jews because they farmed the taxes, grinding down their brethren to enrich themselves. At Capernaum there was a Roman custom-house, where all the fishermen had to bring their catches and pay over a certain per cent as tax. Levi was perhaps connected with this office. Evidently, he had heard Jesus before, and was convinced in his heart that He was the Messiah; so when the call came, "Follow Me . . . he arose and followed Him." There was instant surrender to the claims of Christ.

"Jesus sat at meat in his house." As he entered upon his new career, Levi made a feast, to which he invited many of his former friends, "publicans and sinners," and also "Jesus and His disciples." It was his way of testifying to the new allegiance, and must have made a great impression upon his old associates.

"The scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners." In the eyes of these religious formalists this was a very serious offense.

AVOID THE EVIL OF . . .

But it showed how little they understood the nature of the mission of Jesus.

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." As a physician ministers to the sick rather than to the well, so Christ had come to bring the message of grace to needy sinners, rather than to seek out those who fancied they were already good enough for God. Actually, there are none righteous (Rom. 3: 10), but there were many who prided themselves on a righteousness they did not really possess. For such there is no blessing. It is the confessed sinner who finds mercy.

A question then arose concerning fasting. Jesus took occasion to open up important truth in this connection.

"And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filleth it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles"—vers. 18-22.

It was the disciples of John and those of the Pharisees, the orthodox party in Judaism, who raised the question as to why the disciples of Jesus did not follow their example in regard to fasting. Both groups evidently thought of refraining from food at certain times, as being something of a mer-

itorious character, or at least advantageous in producing holiness of heart and life. It seemed, therefore, to them that Christ's disciples, in this respect at least, moved on a lower plane than they; but Jesus answered them by putting a question, "Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast"—that is, there was no occasion for His followers to mourn before God and to afflict their souls while He Himself, the source of all blessing, was with them. But He foretold the time when He, whom Jesus had likened to a bridegroom, would be taken away from them, and then they would fast in a very real sense, as abstaining from the follies of the world—that world which was to be arrayed against them in bitter opposition to the teachings of their Master.

Moreover, those who raised the question about fasting did not realize that Jesus had come to introduce an altogether new order. We are told elsewhere that the law was given by Moses, and there was much in the law that had to do with fasting; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. It was not in accordance with His program to call men and women to subject themselves to legal principles. To do so would be but to attempt to sew a piece of new cloth on an old garment, which would result only in making the rent worse; or it would be like putting new wine into old skin bottles. When the wine began to ferment the bottles would burst and

the wine be lost. It is not possible to put the new wine of grace into the forms and enactments of the law: the one necessarily nullifies the other, even as we read in Romans 11: 6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." By His answer, therefore, our Lord clearly distinguished between the legality of the past and the grace He had come to reveal. This was in measure illustrated in the incident next related.

"And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath"—vers. 23-28.

As the disciples walked through a corn-field on the Sabbath day they began to pluck some of the heads of wheat and to rub them in their hands, eating the grains. This was in full accord with the provision made in the law, for God had said through Moses, "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn" (Deut. 23: 25). But the Pharisees immediately found fault because

of the fact that the disciples were availing themselves of this provision on the Sabbath day, and so they immediately objected, saying, "Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?" There was nothing in the law that declared this act contrary to anything that God had commanded, but they had added so many traditions to the law that the disciples seemed to be violating a divine precept. In reply Jesus directed their attention to what David did when he and his men were hungry and came to the tabernacle in the days of Abiathar the high-priest. David asked for food for himself and his retainers. The priest, Ahimelech, the father of Abiathar, replied that they had no bread at hand except the shewbread which had been taken from the holy table and was the food of the priests (Lev. 24:9; 1 Sam. 21:6). At David's request, however, this was given to the hungry men, and no judgment followed. When God's anointed was rejected it was far more important to minister to him and to the needs of his followers than to preserve punctiliously the order of the tabernacle, for after all, men are more important to God than ordinances. It was so in this case. Jesus declared that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; "Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." By these words, if they had ears to hear, they would have understood that He announced His own Deity, for again and again the Sabbath is called "the Sab-

bath of Jehovah;" and when Jesus declared Himself to be Lord of that day of rest He definitely confessed Himself to be the God of Israel, manifest in flesh.

I do not here go into the critical question as to the expression, "In the days of Abiathar." This has been discussed by many, and perhaps it will never be fully explained until we know even as we are known. But it is well to remember that it would be a simple matter for some copyist to substitute by mistake "Abiathar" for "Ahimelech." On the other hand, there may be some divine reason for setting the father to one side and recognizing the son as the rightful high-priest at that time.

Chapter Three

A GAIN we find the Lord in conflict with the Pharisees as to the Sabbath question. His declaration that the Sabbath was God's gracious provision for man's comfort and never intended to add to his burdens but rather to relieve them, had made no impression upon these stern and crafty legalists.

"And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse Him. And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when He had looked around about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other"—vers. 1-5.

Among the attendants in the synagogue service upon this particular Sabbath was a poor, helpless man with a withered hand—that is, a hand which had become paralyzed and hung uselessly by his side.

Knowing the compassionate heart of Jesus, His critics took it for granted that He would take an interest in this man; and, instead of rejoicing in this evidence of divine love and consideration, they watched Him with jealous eyes to see if He would exercise His healing power on the Sabbath, secretly hoping He would do so in order that they might be

able to accuse Him of violating the tradition of the elders. Such is the heart of man, even though outwardly pious and religious, when a stranger to the grace of God!

Jesus, to whom nothing was hidden and who read their minds like an open book, bade the partially paralyzed man to "Stand forth!" One can imagine how eagerly and hopefully he would obey, expectantly looking to Jesus for the healing of his infirmity.

Then the Lord asked the question, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" No one answered. Knowing their hypocrisy He looked round about upon them with anger. It was holy indignation because of their pretence to honor God and their indifference to the needs of men. The hardness of their hearts grieved the tender spirit of Jesus. He then commanded the man to stretch forth his hand. At once, as he looked in faith to Jesus, he felt new life pulsating through that paralyzed member, and he stretched it out and found it was now as well and strong as the other.

One might have thought that such an exhibition of the grace and power that was in Jesus would have filled every heart with gladness and led to praise and thanksgiving to God for having visited His people so wonderfully; but it had the very opposite effect on these jealous advocates of human traditions as opposed to divine revelation.

"And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did, came unto Him. And He spake to His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him. For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues. And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known"—vers. 6-12.

Manifesting utter lack of conscience toward God and yet, withal, so punctilious concerning the observance of their traditions and their false conceptions of the will of God in regard to the observance of the weekly Sabbath, the Pharisees, stern champions of orthodoxy that they were, entered into collaboration with the Herodians, the worldly and corrupt politicians of their day, as to how they might lay hold of Jesus and put Him out of the way. Thus did extremes, meet then, as often since, in men of entirely opposite views, agreeing together in the rejection of Christ and consulting mutually as to how He might be destroyed. Such is the inevitable evil and opposition to God of the natural heart!

We are told Jesus withdrew Himself, and with His disciples repaired to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Learning of His whereabouts great throngs assembled, not only from Galilee itself but also from Judea and even from as far south-east as Idumaea, the land of Edom, and others from the north-west from the regions of Tyre and Sidon. The

fame of Jesus had spread far abroad. It was a time of expectation and speculative ferment among the Jewish people everywhere, who confidently looked for the predicted appearance of the long-desired Son of David who was to bring liberty and salvation to Israel. The hope that Jesus the Prophet from Nazareth might be the Messiah evidently was in the hearts of the multitudes that came from near and far to hear His words and to behold His works of power.

So dense was the crowd that they pressed upon Jesus as He stood on the narrow beach. He therefore asked of one of His disciples (Peter, we know from other records) the privilege of using his fishing-boat, which was anchored offshore, as a pulpit. Standing in this little ship He addressed the people who hung avidly upon His words. The hills rise from the shore in that particular section of the coast of the little inland sea like a vast amphitheater so that the voice of the Speaker would be heard readily by thousands.

Many sick ones were in that throng, and after finishing His discourse Jesus healed all who came. So great was their faith in His healing power that they stretched forth eager hands, believing that to touch even His garments would bring the deliverance for which they longed. None were disappointed. Even those possessed with demons were freed from their bondage, the evil spirits proclaiming the truth of His Deity, "Thou art the Son of God." But

He did not look with favor upon audible recognition from these vile powers, and so bade them refrain acknowledging Him in this way.

"And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: and Simon He surnamed Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him: and they went into an house"—vers. 13-19.

From among the many who had become disciples of Jesus He chose twelve who were to be intimately associated with Him and, with one unhappy exception, were destined to become His witnesses after His death and resurrection.

"He ordained twelve, that He might send them forth to preach" (ver. 14). It is not men who choose or appoint themselves to be servants of Christ. He chooses and ordains His own (John 15:16). Every one of the twelve apostles were what we might call "hand-picked men" (even Judas), being the special objects of divine interest.

"Power to heal . . . and to cast out devils" (demons). Helpless in themselves, the twelve were empowered by the Lord to do mighty works in order to accredit the message they were to carry to Israel.

The name of Simon, whom He surnamed Peter, stands alone in verse 16. He was in some respects

the prince of the apostles. His warm, energetic nature and fervency of spirit fitted him in a special way for leadership after he was endued with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. His ministry, as we know, was to the Jews particularly; although it was he who also opened the door of faith to the Gentiles by proclaiming the gospel in the house of Cornelius. Jesus surnamed him "a Stone."

Next in order are "James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and He surnamed them Boanerges." When Jesus gave a new name to anyone, it indicated some characteristic He saw in him or which He was to produce in him in days to come. "Boanerges" is interpreted for us as "sons of thunder." These young men were evidently of an electric disposition, easily stirred to quick judgments, and likely to be committed readily to decisive action. James was the first of the twelve to seal his testimony with his blood. John, evidently the youngest of the entire group, outlived them all, and after almost incredible suffering, died a natural death at Ephesus in the last decade of the first century of the Christian era.

Andrew was the brother of Peter, and it was he who led the latter to Christ, as we are told in John 1: 40-42. The names of Philip and Bartholomew (also called Nathanael) are linked together. They were friends before they met Jesus, and it was Philip who introduced the other to the Saviour. Matthew, also known as Levi, had been a tax-col-

lector in the Roman custom-house at Capernaum, but left all to follow Jesus. Of Thomas' earlier life we know nothing. He is chiefly remembered for his outspoken declaration of his doubt as to identity of the One whom the rest declared to be the risen Christ, but whom he confessed and worshipped as his Lord and God when Jesus appeared a week later. James and Thaddaeus (or Judas, not Iscariot) were brothers, sons of Alphaeus, and apparently cousins of Jesus after the flesh. Simon the Canaanite, elsewhere distinguished as the Zealot, had belonged to a radically subversive party of Jewish patriots working secretly, and at times overtly, for the deliverance of Palestine from the Roman yoke.

The last of the list is Judas Iscariot (the man of Kerioth) who was to be doomed to eternal infamy. He seems to have been the "gentleman" of the twelve, a man of culture, appointed to be the Treasurer of the little company; therefore, one who was trusted by the rest as deserving special recognition, but who proved to be unreal and hypocritical from the very beginning. Of him Jesus said later, "One of you is a devil."

After giving us this list Mark hastens rapidly on, as it were, to tell us of the further activities of God's Anointed Servant.

"And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself"—vers. 20, 21.

So many came to Jesus for healing and instruction that there seemed scarcely time for any physical relaxation on His part. He was kept so busy that neither He nor the twelve had leisure even to take quietly and restfully their ordinary meals. His friends—by that is meant His immediate relatives—actually feared for His reason and sought to dissuade Him from further service for the time at least, considering Him distraught. But He allowed none to interfere with the work He had come to do.

“And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils. And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit”—vers. 22-30.

As they beheld the miracles He wrought certain scribes, religious leaders who had come up from Jerusalem, looked on with envy and jealousy. Observing His growing power over the minds of the populace they feared for their own prestige and authority. Even when demons departed from their victims, exorcised by His word, the scribes and pharisees refused to believe that the Spirit of God was working in and through Jesus thus accrediting Him as the promised Messiah. Deliberate-

ly they declared, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons casteth He out demons!" It was an evidence of the utter hardness of their hearts and their complete rejection of His testimony. In declaring the work of the Holy Spirit to be that of the prince of the demons they crossed the deadline. Their hearts were hardened, and the day of repentance for them had passed.

This is what some have designated "the unpardonable sin." Actually there is no sin that is unpardonable if men repent and turn in faith to Christ. But it is possible to sin so that the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron, and men then lose all desire to repent and are given up to strong delusion that they should believe a lie and so be doomed to eternal perdition. It was so with these scribes. They had refused every witness God had given to the truth as set forth in Jesus.

The Lord exposed the wickedness and foolishness of their suggestion that He had cast out demons by the aid of their prince when He asked, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" And He declared that "if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand." Nor could a house so divided continue. Neither was it possible to believe that Satan would rise up against himself and seek to destroy his own kingdom. To do so would mean an end of his power over mankind.

As a strong man, Satan had held these poor victims in bondage for years until the Stronger

One came to bind him with His Word and so spoil his house. To refuse the Holy Spirit's testimony was to show that one allied himself completely with Satan in this great conflict.

Therefore, Jesus added solemnly, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal judgment." The explanation of this sin is given in the following verse, "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit."

These words were never intended to torment anxious souls honestly desiring to know Christ, but they stand out as a blazing beacon warning of the danger of persisting in the rejection of the Spirit's testimony of Christ, until the seared conscience no longer responds to the gospel message.

"There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him. And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee. And He answered them, saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren? And He looked around about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother"—vers. 31-35.

The relatives of Jesus, including even His mother who evidently had not yet fully understood the nature and destiny of her miraculously-conceived Son, now sent a messenger bidding Him come to them, as they stood possibly on the outskirts of the

crowd. In His answer the Lord showed how all merely natural relationships were to be superseded by those of a spiritual character. He asked, "Who is My mother, or My brethren?" Then looking about upon the eager faces of those who were listening earnestly to His words He exclaimed, "Behold My mother and My brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." Thus He emphasized the great truth which He had told Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). It is the new birth, manifested by obedience to the Word, which brings one into everlasting relationship to our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is well to observe that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit Mark was not led to record the events in the life and ministry of Jesus in their exact chronological order, but rather in a beautiful moral order, thus linking together certain facts and teachings that emphasize outstanding principles.

Chapter Four

THE use of parables by our Lord was for a twofold purpose. He set forth many deep and important truths in this form in order to test the reality of His hearers' interest. If truly concerned, they would seek to get the meaning of the story, and so would become earnest inquirers. If indifferent they would pay no further attention, and so would go on in their careless way, hardening their hearts against the truth (Matthew 13:11-15; Luke 8:10). But when the consciences of His hearers were exercised they would find that these vivid illustrations fixed in their minds the great truths that Jesus taught, making an indelible impression upon them (Matthew 13:16, 17). Our Lord was the Prince of preachers, and we are told that without a parable spake He not unto them" (Matthew 13:34). The human mind is so constructed that it receives instruction far more readily through apt illustrations than just by the setting forth of either arguments or definitions. Spurgeon has well said, "The sermon is the house; the illustrations are the windows that let the light in." Those who depend entirely upon abstract truth to reach the hearts and quicken the consciences of their hearers are far more likely to fail to accomplish their earnest desires than those who brighten up their dis-

courses by apt and enlightening incidents that tend to make clear the doctrines they are endeavoring to set forth. In this, as in all else, Jesus Christ is our great Exemplar; and His early followers, whose utterances and letters are recorded in the New Testament, used the same method.

The parables of the Lord Jesus Christ were remarkable for their fidelity to nature and to human life. He drew His illustrations from those things with which His hearers were thoroughly familiar, so that they could follow Him readily, and the incidents related would be fixed in their minds, with the lessons they illustrated, so long as there was a real desire to know that truth which makes free (John 8: 32).

"And He began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine, Hearken: Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"—vers. 1-9.

As previously observed, Mark does not follow a direct chronological order in relating the works and teaching of our Lord. This portion, which links with Matthew 13, gives us an account of parabolic

instruction delivered by the Sea of Galilee in the summer of A. D. 28, according to the most likely system of time reckoning.

"He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea." The land rises gently from the particular part of the Sea of Galilee where this took place; so that as the Lord Jesus sat in the fisherman's boat His audience would be before Him, conveniently seated or standing, as in a natural amphitheater, thus enabling all to hear the voice of the Teacher, whose message and personality had attracted them to Him.

"He taught them many things by parables." These parables were illustrations drawn from things with which the hearers were perfectly familiar, so that they could follow Him readily, if so disposed.

"Behold, there went out a sower to sow." Possibly even as He spoke the audience could see such a one not far away. The sower pictured Christ Himself primarily, though the application is true of every preacher of the Word.

"Some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up." We need not be discouraged if much of the seed seems to be lost, for even when the greatest of all sowers was here, there were many who paid no attention to the words of grace that fell from His Holy lips. Their hearts were utterly hard and unfeeling, like the well-trodden wayside paths.

“Some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth.” The soil in this instance may have looked fair, but it had not much depth of earth. Underneath there was hardpan, speaking of lack of repentance and exercise before God.

“Because it had no root, it withered away.” Where there is no divine conviction there will be no lasting effects following a temporary stirring of the emotions.

“Some fell among thorns . . . and yielded no fruit.” The careful farmer is commanded to “break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns” (Jeremiah 4:3; Hosea 10:12). This is best accomplished in dealing with individual souls. When addressing men in the mass necessarily there will be many who are so occupied with worldly affairs the good seed can find little room for lodgment.

“Other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased.” The good ground pictures hearts prepared by God to receive the seed of the gospel, though even then all do not produce alike. Much depends both on the depth of the Spirit’s work of conviction before conversion and the time given to soul-cultivation afterward.

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Thus in this solemn way, the Lord challenges our attention. It is easy to listen only with the outward ear and so fail to get the message into the heart. To those who had ears to hear and desired to under-

stand the parable Jesus readily gave a full explanation.

"And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. And He said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time; afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred"—vers. 10-20.

It was in the quiet of the evening in all probability, after the day's activities were ended, that the disciples and some others, who had been pondering in their hearts the story of the sower, came to Jesus privately and asked for light on its meaning. He at once expounded it to them, assuring them that the message He had to proclaim was not to be hidden from them unto whom it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; although to those who were content to remain in ignorance He would teach in parables without explaining their meaning, in order that they might go on in their self-chosen path of blindness and indifference to spiritual

verities. If they had no desire for instruction they were to be left in ignorance. This was the righteous judgment of God upon those who refuse to turn to Him and so find forgiveness of sins.

By the expression, "The mysteries of the kingdom of God," we are to understand the secrets concerning the coming days when the rejected King would return to heaven, but as the principles of His kingdom were diffused through the world there would be developed in the earth a system where Christ would be recognized as the rightful King, and His Word acknowledged as the rule of the kingdom. This is the sphere of profession commonly called Christendom, which means, literally, Christ's kingdom. In it are found those who are real and unreal, who profess subjection to His authority, whether truly born of God or not.

He explains the parable by saying that the seed referred to is the Word—the truth He came to proclaim. The wayside hearers are those who are utterly without exercise as to spiritual things. They hear the Word with the outward ear but are so under the control of Satan that he takes away all consideration for the seed sown in their hearts. The stony ground hearers seem at first to give evidence of real conviction but, like Bunyan's Mr. Pliable, they are easily persuaded to make a Christian profession and just as easily turned from it when difficulties arise. They are stumbled because they have no root in themselves.

The thorny ground hearers apparently receive the Word even with joy, but the quest for wealth and the desire for worldly advantage choke the Word so that it becomes unfruitful.

The good ground hearers are such as not only hear the Word but also receive it in faith in their hearts; and these bring forth fruit unto God, thus manifesting the reality of their confession. It is true that all do not produce to the same degree; but all bear fruit to some extent: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

In considering the work of preaching the gospel we must take into account God's blessed purpose of grace and the condition of the hearts of men to whom the message comes. To some it is a matter of no moment. They are indifferent to it from the first and never become concerned. Some are interested for a time. Their emotions are stirred, but there is no depth of exercise. Others, again, have a measure of concern, but they are men of double mind. They would like to make the best of both worlds, and so they never give eternal things their proper place. Others, prepared by the Spirit's convicting work, are eager to know the way of life, and so receive with "meekness the engrafted Word" (James 1: 21) and bring forth fruit unto God.

Following this explanation the Lord gives further instruction stressing the necessity and importance of reality.

"And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath"

—vers. 21-25.

It is possible that in these verses we have a portion of the Sermon on the Mount, but on the other hand we may well suppose that Jesus frequently used the same metaphors to enforce the truth of His messages.

A candle or lamp is not to be hidden under a bushel (which speaks of business), nor under a bed (which suggests the love of ease), but is to be displayed on a lampstand in order that it may give light to all in the house. The meaning is clear. If we profess allegiance to Christ we are not to allow the claims of business or selfish desires of any kind to hinder our faithful testimony to Him whom we have acknowledged as our Saviour and Lord.

All unreality will be manifested sooner or later. Nothing can be hidden from the holy all-seeing eye of the Lord, nor kept secret from Him who knows the innermost thoughts and intents of the heart. All will be revealed in the clear light of His judgment seat. Happy are we if we are among those who, having ears to hear, give heed to His words!

We are warned to be careful as to what we hear and how we judge, for we ourselves will be dealt

with as we deal with others; and as we hear in faith the truth of God, our knowledge will be increased. It is a law of that kingdom that to him who uses well what he has, more will be imparted, and he who has nothing but an empty profession will, at the last, be stripped even of that.

Two other parables are then recorded, though, as we gather from Matthew 13, not in the order given, but as related to each other morally.

“And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it”—vers. 26-32.

“So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground.” Preaching the Word is sowing the seed, whereby the kingdom of God, in its spiritual aspect, is spread throughout the world. “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1: 21).

“The seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.” Just as inexplicable as the mystery of life in the seed, leading to development of the plant, so is the wonder of the new birth (John 3: 6-8).

“First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” The law of growth in the natural

world illustrates growth in grace and in the apprehension of spiritual realities. Men do not suddenly become mature saints. While we are saved in a moment when we trust the Lord Jesus, our growth is a matter of years. It is as we assimilate the truth by study of the Word, prayer, and devotion to Christ that we bring forth fruit to perfection.

"When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." So the great Husbandman is watching over His tilled fields (1 Cor. 3:9, *margin*) until the yield is at its best—then He takes to Himself the fruit for which He has waited so patiently (James 5:7).

"Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God?" The Lord Jesus was about to use an altogether different illustration to picture an aspect which the kingdom was to take after He had gone back to the Father—an aspect very different indeed from the first picture of a field of wheat.

"Like a grain of mustard seed . . . less than all the seeds that be in the earth." It is not exactly that there are no seeds anywhere smaller than those of the mustard plant, but in a garden of herbs the mustard seed is the least of all. This pictures the small and seemingly insignificant beginning of the kingdom of God in the world, following the ascension of the Son of Man to the right hand of the Father.

"It . . . shooteth out great branches." The mustard tree is the largest of all the herbs and fitly

pictures the kingdom as a power to be reckoned with in the earth. In other words, it sets forth that which the Lord foresaw Christendom was to become—a vast all-inclusive society where “the fowls of the air,” which, we are told, are representatives of Satan and his emissaries (Matt. 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12), find a hiding-place. The fowls of the air, that were so busy devouring the good seed in the first parable, are now seen hiding in the branches of the mustard tree. How well the Lord knew the turn that events would take! The mustard-tree-growth of the professing Church looks well for a time, but its evanescent character will soon be manifested.

Contrasted Views of the Kingdom. There could scarcely be a greater difference in looking at the kingdom of God in its present mystical state than the distinction made by our Lord in these two parables. A field of wheat is made up of many thousands of stalks, all more or less alike, differing only in the heaviness of the heads of grain. This is what the Church of God should be in the world. The mustard tree is, in a sense, an imitation of a great world-power, such as the cedar tree of Assyria (Ezek. 31:3-6) or the great tree of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:10-12). In both instances, as in the parables, the fowls of the air—the emissaries of Satan—find lodgment in the branches. It might have seemed impossible that the kingdom of God could ever become like this. Yet that was what

our Lord predicted, and it has come to pass throughout the centuries since.

"And with many such parables spake He the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake He not unto them: and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples"—vers. 33, 34.

Jesus always took into account the moral and spiritual conditions of His hearers and gave the Word as suited to each group. He used illustrations of the most clear and yet simple character. "Without a parable spake He not unto them." If they showed any further interest He was glad to explain the meaning of any similitude which His hearers could not comprehend. He ever ministered to the needs of men. He never sought to charm or allure by "great swelling words," as do the representatives of evil systems, but He used language easy to be understood, and was ever prepared to instruct any seeking soul. In all this He was the Master-Preacher, an example to all who seek to serve Him by proclaiming His Word.

"And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"—vers. 35-41.

"Let us pass over unto the other side." All was settled in His mind. He did not suggest that they attempt to reach the other side of the lake, which was the country of the Gadarenes (5:1), but He spoke definitely of actually crossing over. If they had remembered these words later they would have known that no storm could alter His plans for them and for Himself.

"They took Him even as He was in the ship." He had been healing and teaching all day and no doubt was physically very weary as they received Him into the boat that was to carry Him across the lake. Note that "other little ships" were also with them.

"There arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship." To the natural eye, conditions had become very critical. But the Lord Jesus Christ slept in peace as the storm raged.

"Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" In their terror the disciples turned instinctively to the Lord Jesus and roused Him from His slumber with their cry of distress. Of course He cared, but, if they had only known it, they were as safe in the storm as on a smooth sea when He was in the ship with them.

"He . . . rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still." In all the quiet display of His creatorial authority He bade the wind die down and the angry waves, which were leaping about the vessel like mad dogs, to be "muzzled," as the command has been translated, and instantly the

elements obeyed their Master, and the storm subsided. Even so He speaks today to troubled hearts and tempest-driven lives!

"Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" It was as though He would call their minds back to His words ere they began their voyage. He had declared they were to pass over to the other side—not be drowned in the midst of the sea. This should have been enough to quiet their fears, and would have been, had there been real faith in His words.

"They . . . said one to another, What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" They did not yet understand the mystery of His Person, and so they questioned one another in perplexity as to His actual identity. All nature owned His power. Could He then be other than God incarnate?

Who raised the storm? Was the raising of the tempest that evening on the Sea of Galilee simply a natural phenomenon, or was it of definite Satanic origin? It would seem that it was an effort on the part of the Adversary to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ before He could fulfil the mission on which He came to earth. But just as when the people of Nazareth tried to shove Him over the cliff and kill Him but were unable to effect their purpose (Luke 4:28, 29), so, in this instance, Satan was again foiled. He had no power to take the life of the Son of God. That life could be laid down only volun-

tarily by Christ Himself in accordance with the Father's will (John 10: 17, 18).

The Miraculous in the Life and Testimony of Jesus Christ. Rationalists and rationalizing professors of Christianity all are fond of trying to explain the remarkable things credited to the Lord Jesus in the Gospels on purely natural grounds. A sample of this kind of reasoning is found in a widely-read book, *The Nazarene*. But the clear purpose of the Holy Spirit in recording these wonders is to show us that He who wrought so marvelously to heal and help suffering humanity was God Himself come down to earth as Man. No far-fetched explanations are needed if we consider who it was who did these things. All are perfectly normal manifestations of divine power at work in response to the needs of men. To deny the miracles is but an effort to belittle Him who wrought them.

Jesus Christ our Lord is Master of all circumstances and sufficient for every emergency. Winds and waves obey Him; demons flee before Him; disease and death are destroyed when He appears. Nothing can withstand His power. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. And the wonderful thing for us to know is that He is our Saviour and Redeemer. We who have trusted Him are bidden now to cast every care upon Him because He careth for us. Difficulties are but opportunities for Him to display His power. Emergencies give us the privilege of proving His loving interest in us as we confide in His grace and count on His might.

Chapter Five

THE first division of this Gospel comes to a conclusion with this fifth chapter. Throughout we see Jehovah's Servant ministering in grace to the needs of men, telling out the love of Him who sent Him, but meeting with constant opposition and ever-increasing rejection on the part of the leaders in Israel, though the common people heard Him gladly. But even on the part of these there were not a great many who received the Lord in faith and owned Jesus as their rightful Lord.

In this chapter we see Him manifesting His power over demons, disease, and death. We first behold Him in the country of the Gadarenes on the west side of the lake, or Sea of Galilee.

"And they came over unto the other side of the sea, unto the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, 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. For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion, for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into

the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts"—vers. 1-17.

Crossing the sea Jesus and His disciples entered the forbidding land of Gadara, where a mixed multitude dwelt; many of whom were engaged in what was considered by the stricter Jews as an illegal business, that of raising swine for the tables of the Gentiles.

Near where the boat landed, on the high plateau above the shore, was a graveyard, or a place of many rock-hewn tombs. In and among these there dwelt a demoniac of violent character, a wild, untameable man, made such by the evil powers that possessed him. He had terrorized the entire countryside for a long time; and, though often captured and bound with fetters and chains, he had snapped his bonds as with superhuman might, and thus freed himself from all control. Day and night his strange, weird cry could be heard as he roamed about on the mountains, cutting himself with stones and shrieking in his fearful agony. It is a terrible picture of a man completely dominated by Satan.

But he was soon to know the delivering power of Jesus. When he saw the Lord at a great distance

he came running toward Him and prostrated himself before Him, crying with a loud voice, "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." Though the lips of the man moved it was the voice of the demons that spoke. These evil spirits recognized Jesus at once and needed none to tell them the mystery of His nature. The Lord had commanded already that the demon come out of the man. Then He bade him confess his name. The answer was an astonishing one: "My name is Legion: for we are many." This indicated that not one alone but a vast number of evil spirits dwelt in the wretched man who had so terrorized his neighborhood.

Then came a strange request with which, more strangely still, the Lord complied. It was that the demons (who apparently dread being disembodied completely) be permitted to enter a herd of swine feeding near by. Leaving the body of the man they then entered into the swine; and the alarmed creatures, maddened and uncontrollable, rushed violently down a steep hill into the sea and were drowned. We need not attempt to explain this strange phenomenon; but we cannot but reflect on the possibilities of evil when we realize that one man could hold more evil spirits than two thousand unclean hogs!

The freed man, once so wild and fierce, now became gentle and quiet. Covering his formerly

naked body with clothing, he took his place in adoring love and gratitude at the feet of Jesus: no longer mad but now serene and in his right mind.

Having been apprised by the herders of what had taken place the owners of the swine came out to see for themselves. Instead of rejoicing because of the healing of the demoniac, they were angry over the loss of the unclean beasts, which constituted their wealth. As they looked upon Jesus as the cause of the disaster they besought Him to depart out of their coasts.

"And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel"—vers. 18-20.

"He that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him." He who had been delivered in a very wonderful way from a terrible state of bondage and distress. in the gratitude of his heart longed to leave all and go forth with the Lord Jesus as others had done. It was he who took the initiative.

"Jesus suffered him not, but saith . . . Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." It was not the will of the Lord that this man should be numbered among the twelve or even the seventy. His sphere of service was to be at home in the place where he was

so well known. His witness for Christ there would count for more than if he traveled farther afield.

"He . . . began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him." Decapolis ("ten cities") was the name given to a group of villages on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, the very towns from which the people had come who begged Jesus to depart out of their coasts. Through this man's testimony that attitude was changed when Jesus again visited that district. He was welcomed then in a very definite manner (7:31).

"And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him, and thronged Him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment. For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My clothes? And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me? And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague"—vers. 21-34.

From Gadara the Lord and His apostles crossed over the water to Capernaum. Here many were waiting for Him. As He began to teach them one

of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, fell down at the feet of Jesus, pleading with Him to come to his home to heal his little daughter who even then lay at the point of death. Acceding readily to the troubled father's request the Lord accompanied him to the house, while a great multitude followed in the way.

As they moved along a poor, afflicted woman joined the company. She had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years. Mark tells us that she had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all her living in the vain effort to obtain healing, but all had failed, and she was no better but rather worse. Anyone who is at all familiar with the accepted nostrums which were once supposed to be of value in treating such a diseased condition can well understand Mark's almost ironical expression. No one could use these abominable decoctions without suffering; yet they were powerless to cure or even give temporary relief.

Hearing of Jesus, hope sprang up in the sick woman's heart, and she exclaimed, "If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole." Pressing through the crowd she reached forth an eager, trembling hand, and the moment she touched the blue fringe of His robe she knew the work was done. She felt in her body that she was whole of that plague.

Jesus immediately stopped, and looking about, inquired, "Who touched My clothes?" He desired her to confess before all the miracle that had been

wrought in response to her faith. The disciples actually undertook to reprove their Master as they reminded Him that a great throng was pressing upon Him; why, then, inquire who had touched Him? They did not sense the difference between thronging Him and touching Him in faith.

Seeing she could not be hidden the woman came forward and fell down before Him, and told Him why she had been so bold and what the effect had been. Rejoicing in her confidence in His grace and power He comforted her, saying, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." Then He continued on His way to the ruler's house.

"While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And He cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And He charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat"

—vers. 35-43.

Before they reached the house messengers came bidding Jairus refrain from troubling the Master any further. It was now too late to heal the child,

they reported, for she was dead already. But Jesus reassured the distressed father, saying, "Be not afraid, only believe." What comforting words were these at such a time! Who but He, who was the Lord of life, could or would have uttered them, when all hope seemed gone and death had intervened already? When we are at the end of all natural resources the same blessed words come home to our hearts to give peace and confidence today.

"He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John." These three formed the inner circle of His chosen ones. Later, they were with Him on the mount, when He was transfigured before them (9:2), and again in the garden of Gethsemane (14:32, 33).

"He cometh to the house . . . seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly." The Lord Jesus Christ took notice of it all. Much of the mourning was only professional, and for that He had only contempt. But for the grief of the parents' hearts He had deep and tender compassion, and He was soon to change their sorrow into joy.

"Why make ye this ado, and weep?" It was a rebuke to the hired mourners, whose loud outcries betokened no real sense of loss on their part. And besides, as all live unto Him, He could declare with absolute truthfulness, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." He had come to awaken her from her sleep.

"They laughed Him to scorn." To them He was but a charlatan pretending to powers He did not possess. But He was soon to demonstrate the contrary. Banishing all from the house except the parents and His three chosen disciples, He entered the chamber of death to rob it of its prey.

"He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, *Talitha cumi*." He spoke in Aramaic, the language of His childhood in Nazareth. The words are interpreted for us, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." Literally, we are told, they are, "Little lamb, wake up."

"Straightway the damsel arose, and walked." There was instant response. To their joy and amazement, the parents beheld the color come again into the pale cheeks, as their darling sprang from the couch and came to their arms. She was about twelve years of age and her immediate deliverance from death amazed all who beheld her.

"He charged them straitly that no man should know it." He had no desire to be hailed simply as a great wonder-worker. What He did was out of regard for Jairus and his wife. It was not something to be blazed abroad. The newly-awakened one needed nourishment, so He "commanded that something should be given her to eat." Nothing could be more fitting nor afford clearer proof of the reality of the miracle wrought in her body.

The four distinct incidents in the gracious ministry of our Lord, recorded in the last part of chap-

ter 4 and in chapter 5, all bear witness to the Deity of Him who had stooped in grace to take the *Servant's* place. In the first one (4:35-41), we see His power over nature, eliciting the cry of amazement from His disciples, "What manner of Man is this!" The second scene depicts His power over Satan, as evidenced in the deliverance of the demoniac, who would fain have remained in His company, but who was sent back to bear witness among his own people to the deliverance that the Lord Jesus Christ had wrought. Though at the time the inhabitants of that district, distressed over the loss of their swine, begged the Lord Jesus to depart out of their coasts, we learn in a later passage that they received Him gladly when He came the second time into that same region (comp. 5: 20 with 7: 31-37). Who can doubt but that this redeemed man's testimony had helped to change their attitude?

The stories of the healing of the woman who had an issue of blood and the raising of Jairus' daughter are intertwined in verses 21 to 43, and set forth the Saviour's power over disease and death. The poor, sick woman who "had suffered many things of many physicians," but was worse off after their treatments than before, found in this Great Physician One who understood her case thoroughly and who healed her instantly when, in faith, she touched the blue border of His garment (Num. 15: 38). As a true Israelite, Jesus Christ undoubtedly obeyed to the letter this commandment, designed to show

the heavenly character of those who were linked up with Jehovah.

The little dead child was beyond all human help, but when He who is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25) entered the room where the body of the maiden was laid out in preparation for burial, death fled before Him and the daughter was restored to her parents.

This manifestation of our Lord's power over death made a great stir among the people, but Jesus charged them not to blazon it abroad. His message was more important than His miracles, and He would not have attention focused on the latter to the neglect of the former.

The three recorded instances in which He raised the dead are also very suggestive. All are dead in sin, and only He can give life. Whether it be a child in its comparative innocence; a young man in his youthful vigor, as in the case of the son of the widow of Nain; or one in his maturity, like Lazarus who had been dead four days, and whose body was in process of corruption—all needed the life that Christ alone could give. and He proved Himself sufficient for each case.

DIVISION TWO—CHAPTERS 6: 1 TO 10: 45.

THE SERVANT REJECTED BUT MINISTERING
IN GRACE STILL

SUBDIVISION ONE

Chapter Six

OPPOSITION DEVELOPS

WHILE the mighty works of Jesus had made a distinct impression upon the mass of the people who heard Him with eagerness, there were very few of the more cultured and outwardly religious classes who were prepared to acknowledge Him as the promised Servant of Jehovah who was to deliver Israel. Instead of owning His Messianic claims they became suspicious of Him as an impostor and arraigned themselves in definite opposition to Him, even going as far as to seek some method whereby they might destroy Him. This attitude becomes increasingly prominent in the second division of the book. We see it developing in the present chapter.

"And He went out from thence, and came into His own country; and His disciples follow Him. And when the sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this Man

these things? 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? And they were offended at Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marvelled because of of their unbelief. And He went round about the villages, teaching"—vers. 1-6.

By the expression "His own country" in verse 1 we are to understand the city of Nazareth and the region roundabout, where Jesus had lived as a child and as a young man.

He entered into the synagogue where He must often have met with His fellow-townsmen in the years gone by. There He taught in such a way that the people were astonished, knowing He was not a product of any of the rabbinical schools, but had lived among them as a carpenter. His family was well-known to them. They spoke of Him as the son of Mary, and the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon, and also mentioned "His sisters." This seems to prove conclusively that Mary had other children after the birth of Jesus, her Firstborn (Matt. 1:25). Romanists deny this, and speak of Mary as "ever virgin." They insist that the brothers and sisters here mentioned must have been children of Joseph by a former marriage, or possibly were cousins of Jesus. But this appears to be a mere subterfuge to evade the truth that Mary became actually the wife of Joseph.

Jesus answered the objectors by saying, "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house."

So intense was their incredulity that we are told He could there do no mighty work, except that He healed a few sick ones who came to Him in their distress. God works in response to faith. Unbelief ties the hands of Omnipotence, except in judgment, and the hour for judgment had not yet come.

Jesus marvelled that those who had known Him so well should be so distrustful of Him and even opposed to Him. Luke's account tells us that they even tried to hurl Him over the cliff on which the city was built, but, passing through the midst of them, He went His way, being grieved at their hardness of heart.

"And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. And He said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily, I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them"—vers. 7-13.

The twelve whom He had chosen already "to be with Him" were now commissioned to go through the villages of Galilee proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and calling the people to repent, and so be prepared to receive the King when He was mani-

fested to them. Jesus sent them out two by two that they might labor together in fellowship and testimony. He empowered them to heal the sick and to cast out demons, thus accrediting these disciples as His representatives.

Because they were going to their own people, Israel, and on account of the urgency of their errand, He bade them take nothing for their journey, save a pilgrim staff only;—no scrip, or provision-bag, no provisions, or money in their purses. They were to be shod with sandals, and not to be encumbered with two cloaks.

When they entered a city or village they were to accept entertainment by whomever offered, and were to remain in that house, if welcome, until they left the town. There was to be no ground for the suspicion that they were seeking personal comfort or special recognition. Where not received they were to shake off the dust from beneath their feet as a testimony against those who spurned their message. For such there could be nothing but judgment ahead—a judgment far worse than that which fell, of old, upon Sodom and Gomorrha.

Following their Master's instructions they went forth preaching that men should repent—that is, change their attitude toward God — and this of course involved a new attitude in regard to self and sin.

The twelve cast out many demons and healed many who were sick. It is of interest to note that

they anointed with oil those who came for healing, as commanded in the Epistle of James. This is the only other instance where this particular method is mentioned in connection with physical healing. Some have thought the oil was used as a remedy, and we know it did have a place as such, as indicated in the story of the good Samaritan who poured oil and wine into the wounds of the one who was left in a dying condition on the Jericho Road. But oil is the accepted type of the Holy Spirit, and it seems more likely that the anointing was intended to indicate the gracious action of the Spirit of God in connection with healing in answer to the prayer of faith.

“And king Herod heard of Him; (for His name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly”

—vers. 14-20.

The account of godless Herod’s perfidious treatment of John, the forerunner of Jesus, is calculated to fill one’s whole soul with horror, and yet it is but a portrayal of the capability of man’s natural heart.

Herod was interested in John's message at first, and sent for him in order that he might hear for himself the desert preacher. As long as John dealt with the gospel of the kingdom, his royal but corrupt auditor listened with some measure of attention, but when the Baptist dared to rebuke the crafty and licentious monarch for his incestuous relations with his brother Philip's wife the king's ire was stirred, and he endeavored to silence his reprover by shutting him up in a gloomy prison, probably Machaerus, on the cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea. There John was left to languish and even to question whether Jesus could indeed be the promised Messiah, unless we are to understand that his concern was for the establishing of the faith of his disciples.

Herod consented to the beheading of John in order to please Herodias, who fully exemplified the poet's line, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." When Herod heard of the miracles wrought by Jesus, his guilty conscience was aroused, and he said that John the Baptist had risen from the dead, and that therefore these mighty works were wrought by him. Others thought He must be the promised Elijah who, according to Malachi, was to come to call Israel to repentance before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Others said He was a prophet, or possibly one of the older prophets come back to life. But Herod was for the time being convinced that Jesus was none other than John revived. He lived over again the scenes in

which he had been reprov'd for Herodias' sake, the imprisonment, and finally the decapitation of the desert preacher, for he knew he had been guilty of a terrible crime before God and man in the infamous treatment he had meted out to the fearless proclaimer of man's need to repent.

The account of John's death follows:

"And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb"—vers. 21-29.

The celebration of Herod's birth was turned into a vile, oriental orgy of drunkenness and debauchery. To add to the carnal enjoyment of the military and civilian chiefs and other dignitaries who were present, the daughter of Herodias was called in to participate in what was undoubtedly a voluptuous dance, which so delighted the auditors and spectators that Herod impulsively bade the girl ask for any boon up to half his kingdom as a reward for her performance.

Moved by her wicked mother she asked for the head of John the Baptist on a charger, or a large platter. Shocked by such a request the king would have refused compliance, but for his oath's sake given before all those present he did not dare refuse lest he lose face and become an object of ridicule to his retainers. After all, it would be only one more murder added to the many of which he was guilty already! So he at once sent an executioner to decapitate the prophet and bring his gory head, as requested, to the dancer, who in turn gave it to her mother.

One can imagine how Herodias gloated over the gruesome object as she realized those cold lips would never again charge her with adultery or other sins. But she has not seen the last of John the Baptist. In the day of judgment he will rise up to condemn her because of her callous indifference to the call to repentance.

When John's disciples learned what had taken place they came and took the body of their master and gave it decent burial, and as another Gospel tells us (Matt. 14: 12), they "went and told Jesus," who entered into their great grief in tenderest sympathy.

We next read of the return of the twelve from their preaching tour and the report they gave to Jesus.

"And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart

into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things"

—vers. 30-34.

It was with exuberance of spirit that the apostles gathered about their Lord, and told Him all that they had done and what they had taught as they went about visiting the villages of Galilee. He saw that they were perhaps too much occupied with their own success, and moreover they were somewhat overwrought because of the strain under which they had been. So He bade them leave the multitudes and retire to a quiet country place and "rest a while." How much His servants need such seasons of quiet in company with Him! So they departed into a desert place—that is, a place in the open country away from any city or town, where they might obtain that physical recuperation and mental quiet which they needed so much. If we all took time for more such occasions, nervous breakdowns and heart-attacks would not be so common among the servants of Christ.

Just how long the little company enjoyed the privacy and restfulness of their time of retirement we are not told. But some who saw the direction they had taken carried the news to others, and soon a great throng came together out of all the near-by cities and gathered about Jesus. He could not turn

them away nor refuse to minister to them. To Him they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and His great heart was moved with compassion toward them, so that He began at once to teach them many things. With unwearied zeal He instructed them throughout all that day, seeking to make known to them the things concerning the kingdom of God.

"And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? Go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men"—vers. 35-44.

Of the promised Messiah it was written long centuries before He came into the world, "I will satisfy her poor with bread" (Ps. 132: 15), and again, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd" (Isa. 40: 11). The feeding of the multitudes on two separate occasions must have recalled these prophecies to the minds of the people and caused them to wonder whether Jesus Christ might not be the One whose coming had been so long foretold.

When God brought Israel out of Egypt He spread for them a table in the wilderness (Ps. 78: 19). The

Lord Jesus gave the hungry crowds, who had followed and listened to Him all day long, an example of the same omnipotent power. It is pitiable to note how unbelieving critics attempt to turn the edge of these testimonies of our Lord's creatorial glory by insinuating that, after all, it was just a case of each one sharing a lunch already provided with his neighbors who had forgotten or neglected to bring any—so that, as all ate together, it seemed to them as though the food had been multiplied in a marvelous manner! Scripture tells us that "at the mouth of two . . . or . . . three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deut. 19:15), and, strikingly enough, the first of these miracles is one of the few given by each of the four Evangelists. These men, whose integrity cannot be questioned and who were either present on the occasion depicted, or had been accurately informed by others, all describe it as a supernatural occurrence, when He who multiplies the corn on a thousand hillsides and the fishes in all the seas, did, in a few moments, what is ordinarily accomplished through His divine power and wisdom in weeks or months of time. Thus were the multitudes taught the compassion and the ability of God, as seen in Jesus Christ, to meet every need of the soul as He met the needs of the body.

"The time is far passed." The disciples were concerned about the hungry people who had been with the Lord Jesus all day, and many of whom were far from their homes. The night was coming

on, and it seemed to be the part of both kindness and prudence to urge them to return at once to their different abodes.

"Send them away, that they may go . . . and buy themselves bread." If they were to secure proper food before the night fell they should hurry away, for there was no provision made for them in that desert place, so far as the disciples could see.

"Give ye them to eat." Our Lord's command must have astonished His disciples. They had nothing to share with others, and they knew not where or how to obtain it. It was His desire to exercise them as to the need of the people and their responsibility in regard to it, even as He would have us concerned today about the spiritual dearth all about us, and our responsibility to seek to do our part in meeting its demands. We are all too apt to attempt to measure God's ability to meet our need by that which our eyes behold, instead of remembering that we have to do with One who created a universe from nothing and sustains it by the Word of His power.

"How many loaves have ye?" We know from the other records that Andrew had discovered a lad with five of the flat loaves to which the people were accustomed, and two small fishes. Someone has suggested that it was the boy's own lunch—all of which he gave up that others might be fed. Little as it was, Jesus Christ could use it in a large way. In our emergencies we generally ask "Whence?"

and "How?" forgetting that nothing is too hard for the Lord. He who multiplies the seed sown in the ground can take the little we bring and make it sufficient to meet the needs of many.

"He commanded them to make all sit down." With authority the Saviour ordered that the multitude should sit down in groups upon the green grass, where all could be properly served. His command was obeyed. "They sat down . . . by hundreds, and by fifties," doubtless wondering what would happen next and questioning why He had hindered their hasty return to their homes. Our Lord's command to make the men sit down was significant. Seated on the ground all are practically on one common level. Distinctions of stature disappear. It was the "no difference" doctrine acted out.

"He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake . . . and gave." Receiving the food from the hands of Andrew or of the expectant lad, the Lord Jesus gave thanks, and began to break the bread and to divide the fishes, handing supplies to the disciples, that they in turn might pass them out to the hungry folk as they looked wonderingly on. When the Lord Jesus broke the bread and gave to His disciples that they might pass it on to the multitude, no one would be excusable if he went away hungry. So today, as we offer the living Bread to hungry souls, none need go without eternal blessing.

"They did all eat, and were filled." There proved to be an abundant supply for all. None were disappointed. No one ever need go hungry from the table that the Lord Jesus Christ spreads.

"They took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes." Not only were all satisfied, but when the meal was over there were as many basketsful left as there were disciples, yet the twelve had wondered where food could be procured for so many!

"They that did eat . . . were about five thousand men." Matthew adds, "Besides women and children" (14:21). So that actually the number was even more than five thousand, though doubtless not many women and children would be out in the desert to hear the great Teacher that day.

We shall find, as we seek to serve our blessed Lord, that the more we pass on to others the more we have left for ourselves.

*"It never was loving that emptied a heart,
Nor giving that emptied a purse."*

"And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while He sent away the people. And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the ship, and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure,

and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened"—vers. 45-52.

We have here a very striking dispensational picture of what the disciples of Christ would have to endure on the stormy sea of time while the Lord is interceding for them above.

After the feeding of the multitude Jesus directed His disciples to cross the lake "over against Bethsaida," as the margin rightly reads. It was but a short voyage thence to Gennesaret on the north of the lake, east of Capernaum. He did not go with them; but after they had left He went up into a mountain in order to be alone with His Father, to commune with Him in prayer.

"The ship was in the midst of the sea." But it was under His eye, and His heart was concerned about His disciples who were laboring hard, toiling in rowing, as they sought to reach their intended destination, with the wind contrary to them. Another has pointed out that the word here rendered *toiling* is the same as that translated *vexed* in 2 Peter 2:8. It implies more than tense muscular activity. The disciples were in real mental distress and anxiety, as they feared their boat might be swamped, and they themselves drowned in the raging seas that threatened to engulf them. Possibly, too, they were vexed with one another and inclined to blame each other for the precarious condition in which they were found. What a picture is this of the state in which believers are found so

often in their conflicts with world circumstances during the personal absence of the Lord Jesus from this scene!

How little the disciples realized, as they struggled against wind and wave, that all the time the eye of their Lord was upon them and that His heart was concerned about them. And how easily we forget, as we "wrestle on toward heaven" (as Rutherford puts it), that our great High Priest is ever looking down upon us and making continual intercession for us!

As the earliest streaks of dawn were seen athwart the horizon "about the fourth watch of the night," which was what we would call from three to six A. M., Jesus came down from the mount and came walking upon the sea. Apparently He was about to pass them by when the affrighted disciples, terrified because they thought Him to be a disembodied spirit, cried out in alarm. He revealed Himself to them saying, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."

Astonished beyond measure they received Him into the ship and immediately the wind ceased. Details are given elsewhere that are omitted purposely here, in order that our attention may be focused upon the fact that His coming to them brought an end to the storm. So will it be when He returns for His own.

Amazed at what had taken place and forgetting so soon the evidence of His creatorial power in the

multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the disciples wondered in themselves concerning the mystery of our Lord's Personality.

"And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment: and as many as touched Him were made whole"—vers. 53-56.

Safely reaching the shores of Gennesaret at last, they hardly had left their boat before the people began coming to Jesus from all that district. He could not hide: His fame had preceded Him. So they came bringing the sick in beds, beseeching Him to heal them. As He moved about from village to village, from city to city, and even out in the open country He was besieged by the throngs who brought sick friends and relatives, begging that they might be permitted to touch even the border of His garment; and we are told that "as many as touched Him were made whole." God incarnate was walking about in the midst of His people, and it was His delight to relieve their sufferings and to cure them of their diseases. His saving-health was manifested wherever He went. Yet, alas, all this failed to convince the leaders that their long-awaited-for Messiah had come to deliver them.

The next chapter tells of developing opposition which, as we know, was to find its culmination in the cross.

Chapter Seven

SUBDIVISION TWO.—7: 1—8: 9.

TRADITION *vs.* REVELATION

TO the spiritual mind it is a question of unceasing wonder that men should be so ready to follow and even fearlessly contend for the authority of human traditions, while they are just as ready to ignore the plain teachings of the Word of God. On many occasions we find our blessed Lord coming into conflict with the prejudices of those in Israel who exalted tradition to a level with revelation, and in some instances, to a higher level.

In the chapter now before us we find our Lord dealing directly with this error. The first section has to do with the question of eating with unwashen, or literally, unbaptized hands.

"Then came together unto Him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brassen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they

worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do"—vers. 1-8.

Certain of the Pharisees and scribes who were ever on the watch for something with which they might find fault in the words or behavior of Jesus and His disciples, noticed that some of the disciples ate bread with what they considered defiled hands. This was an unlawful thing according to a tradition that had been handed down from early days. The more rigid Pharisees went through a long process, not only of cleansing the hands from any uncleanness but also of ceremonial washing, before they would partake of food.

We are told in the fourth verse that "when they come from the market, except they wash (or baptize), they eat not." This is one of the many baptisms referred to in Hebrews 9:10. The word rendered *washings* there is really *baptisms*. Many other similar rites were observed in connection with the cleansing of drinking-vessels, and dishes upon which food was served, and of the tables as well.

The observant legalists came directly to Jesus, and inquired why His disciples did not wash according to the tradition of the elders, but ate bread with unbaptized hands. Observe, it was not a question of that which was in accordance with the Word of God but simply human tradition.

In reply our Lord referred to the words of the prophet Isaiah, saying, "Esaias prophesied of you

hypocrites." This was strong language! A hypocrite is a man with a second face, really an actor, for the Greek actors appeared on the stage wearing masks in order to represent various offices and personalities. The Lord knew, through the dissimulation of His questioners, that while they were punctilious about such matters as those to which they referred, they were careless indeed in regard to things that were of far greater weight because definitely commanded of the Lord. Concerning such, Isaiah had written, "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." There is something very important here that we do well to lay to heart. It is always a great mistake for those who profess to be servants of God to take up with forms and ceremonial rites and traditions which have no scriptural basis. They may seem innocent enough to begin with, but little by little it will be found that they usurp the place of the Word of God over the consciences of those who follow them, and this is a most dangerous thing.

We are told in 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17 that, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly (or thoroughly) furnished unto all good works." If Scripture, carefully studied and obeyed, will furnish one as a man

of God unto all good works, then it should be clear that nothing is worthy to be counted a good work in the sight of God which is not authorized by Scripture. The recognition of this principle would save from a great deal of folly and worthless labor in connection with the things of God. The Lord pressed Isaiah's words upon the critics of His disciples by telling them that they themselves laid aside the commandment of God, substituting human traditions such as those to which they had referred, and He added, "Many other such like things ye do."

It is not only Romanists who exalt tradition to the level of Holy Scripture, or even above it, but there are not wanting many in Protestantism who do the same thing, directly or indirectly. How we need to get back to the place of teaching the Word of God; to inquire, "What saith the Scriptures?" when questions as to methods and teachings arise. For anything that is contrary to God's revelation can never be looked upon with favor by Him, however much good it seems to accomplish.

In so writing I would not for one moment ignore the fact that Scripture itself gives considerable latitude in regard to methods of procedure in reaching the lost and seeking to help believers. The Apostle Paul declared, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). What I would stress is the grave mistake of substituting human authority for divine. We need to be sure that not only our doctrines, but

also our practical ways are in accordance with the Scriptures. This alone is the path of safety.

Continuing His discourse the Lord pointed out how these Pharisees themselves ignored the plain teaching of the Word while giving full authority to tradition.

"And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. And when He called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Hearken unto Me every one of you, 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"—vers. 9-16.

Observe how strongly He speaks in verse 9, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." The natural heart revolts against that which is divine but readily accepts what is merely human.

Jesus then cites a very definite instance of conflict between tradition and the Scriptures. God had spoken through Moses, commanding that His people give honor to father and mother. The penalty of death was attached to the violation of this commandment. "Whoso curseth (that is, in any way harms or wrongs) father or mother, let him die the death." This would surely involve caring for aged parents who were unable to provide for themselves.

The least that sons and daughters could do would be to share with their parents that which God had given to them, but the rabbis had declared that a man might dedicate all his possessions to God, declaring it to be *Corban*—that is, a gift for the maintenance of the work of the temple. If his parents were in need he would insist that he had nothing with which he could help them, because all he possessed had already been devoted to God. This was the very essence of selfishness under pretended piety; and thereby the Word of God was made of none effect through tradition. This was only one instance of the violation of God's truth by the substitution of human regulations. Jesus again added, "Many such like things do ye."

We are told that He then took occasion to instruct all the people in regard to the true nature of defilement. He said, "Hearken unto Me every one of you, 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." And He solemnly added, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." By these words our Lord laid down a great principle and emphasized a tremendous fact. Hitherto the more conscientious an Israelite was, the more anxious and concerned he would be about what he ate or drank, lest he, even inadvertently, take in something that was ceremonially unclean, and so would be defiled and made unfit to join with

the congregation of the Lord when gathered together for worship in the temple. But Jesus declared that moral and spiritual defilement comes not from outward things such as food or drink but from within the man himself, from his own heart, that heart which the prophet Jeremiah declared to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (17:9).

"And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever things from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man"—vers. 17-23.

It is evident that these words of the Lord astonished even His own disciples, so accustomed had they been to looking at things from the ritualistic standpoint. So when they had left the multitude and were in the house alone with Jesus they asked Him to explain what He meant by speaking as He had done. In accordance with His regular methods of procedure—always to open up truth to sincere inquirers—He said to them, "Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him." These outward things, such as food and drink, were only material: they could not affect the spirit of the man. Of course, our

Lord was not denying that there are hurtful and even poisonous foods which might seriously injure one physically; but what He has in view here is defilement of spirit, unfitting one for fellowship with God. Food of any kind does not enter into the heart but passes through the digestive tract, making no impression whatsoever upon the soul or spirit of the one who has eaten or drunk.

"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man"—that is, from his very heart, that defiles him, for the heart itself is like a nest of unclean birds. "Out of it proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." What a list! Who can say that these things have never had any place whatever in his heart! Of course, there are some to whom several of these things are thoroughly repugnant, and yet every man is capable of falling into every sin here mentioned if he but allows his mind to dwell upon them. Yet there are men who deny the depravity of the natural man. They might well consider the list set forth here and answer the question honestly, Have none of these things a place in my heart?

When we speak of the total depravity of the natural man we do not mean necessarily that all men are guilty of all the sins enumerated here. We do mean that all men are by nature out of touch

with God, and that the capacity for all these things is found in their hearts.

Dr. Joseph Cook, on one occasion when challenged as to the scripturalness of the doctrine of human depravity, used the following illustration: He said that he was in possession of a very fine clock. It was a beautiful piece of furniture, and an adornment to the room in which it was placed. The works were very expensive; the face of the clock was beautiful to look upon; the hands were of excellent workmanship; and altogether it was an admirable clock. There was only one thing wrong with it: it would not keep time. As a timepiece it was totally depraved. So it is with the natural man. He is out of touch with God; his heart is at enmity with God, and from within that heart come forth sins of many different characters. Thank God, there is a remedy for this condition! David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps. 51: 10), and this is what God delights to do through the new birth.

All the evil things enumerated by Jesus come from within. These defile the man. How important it is that we recognize the fact that these things naturally find lodgment in the human heart, and that we judge all in the light of the cross of Christ.

In the next section we see the grace of God going out beyond the nation of Israel.

"And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no

man know it; but He could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her. Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed"—vers. 24-30.

The Lord Jesus had gone into the borders of Tyre and Sidon—that is, in the course of His peregrinations He had journeyed with His disciples to the northwest district of Galilee. Just beyond were these Gentile cities, but the Lord Himself, so far as we have any record, never stepped over the border that separated Palestine from the lands of the nations, except, of course, when as a little Babe He was taken down into Egypt by His mother and His foster-father, Joseph, to escape the wrath of Herod. He came into the world, as Paul tells us in Romans 15: 8, as a Minister or Servant of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and while it is true that He looked forward to the time when the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as the next verse indicates, yet during His life on earth He confined His ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But now we find Him in contact with a certain woman who is a Greek, a pure Gentile, a native of Syrophenicia. This woman had an afflicted daughter who was possessed with a demon. She had suffered

terribly because of this condition. Though a stranger to the covenants of promise, the Syrophenician woman had heard of Jesus, and she felt sure that He could deliver her daughter if He were willing to do so. She came, therefore, pleading that He would cast the demon out of the young woman. Elsewhere we are told that she based her plea on the fact that He was the Son of David. She had evidently learned through some of her Jewish neighbors of the Messiah who was to come in David's line, and she rightly believed Jesus to be He. So she came pleading, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David" (Matt. 15: 22). But He held His peace. As a sinner of the Gentiles she had no claim whatever upon Him as the promised Son of David. Finally, as she cried after Him, He said, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs." This may seem to us to be a hard saying, but even as Joseph charged his brethren with being spies in order to probe their consciences, so the Lord thus answered the woman in order to bring her to the place where she would recognize that her only title to blessing was on the ground of pure grace.

She responded in a wonderful way. There was no ill-feeling on her part, as though He had insulted her or spoken to her in a discourteous manner. Humbly she answered Him, "Yes, Lord: yet the dogs (and she used a diminutive here, the little dogs) under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

It was as much as to say, "Lord, I recognize the fact that I am just a poor, outcast Gentile, but, Lord, give me some of the crumbs that the children of the kingdom are refusing; allow me to take the place even of a puppy under the table and so obtain mercy at Thy hand." Nothing appealed to our blessed Lord more than faith coupled with humility. He replied by saying, "Go thy way; the demon is gone out of thy daughter." Hastening to her home, doubtless with a glad heart and with eager expectation as she entered the house, she found her daughter lying quietly upon the bed, the demon having left her.

"And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak"—vers. 31-37.

Leaving the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus crossed over the northern part of Galilee and entered into a boat, passing over the sea once more to visit Decapolis, the ten cities. It was in this region that the former man from the tombs, the demoniac of Gadara, lived. After Jesus delivered him, He told him to go home and tell his friends what great

things the Lord had done for him. So he spread the good news, we are told, throughout all Decapolis. Thus when Jesus returned there the people were ready to meet Him. Possibly the very ones who on the former occasion, had besought Him to depart out of their coasts, were among the throng who came eager to hear His words and to behold His miracles. We are told that they brought unto Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they besought Jesus to put His hands upon him—that tender hand that had so often been lifted in blessing, and at the touch of which disease and uncleanness flew away. But the Lord dealt with this man in a somewhat peculiar manner. Instead of healing him openly before all the people, recognizing the fact that opposition was developing, He took him aside from the multitude, and put his finger into his ears, and then spat and touched his tongue. We may wonder at this, but we need to remember that the Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ was absolutely holy and pure, untouched by sin or corruption of any kind. He was evidently indicating that the healing came from within His own being. Looking up to heaven He sighed as He recognized the ravages that sin had made on every hand; and then speaking in Aramaic, He said, "*Ephphatha*," which means "Be opened." Immediately the man was able to hear and also to speak. Jesus charged those that were about Him not to spread this abroad. As we have noticed before, He

had no desire to gain notoriety as a wonder-worker. While always ready to minister to the needs of men, His great mission was to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom as He went about from place to place. But so enthused were men by what they saw of His mighty power that the more He commanded them to say nothing about it, the more they published it abroad. We are told they "were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

Surely everyone who knows Christ in any measure will gladly join with these people of Decapolis in ascribing all honor and glory to Him who hath done all things well.

Chapter Eight

THE present subdivision closes with verse 9 of this eighth chapter. While the incident recorded in this section has no particular bearing on the controversies which the leaders sought to foist upon Jesus, it nevertheless brings to an end one distinct phase of His ministry.

"In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away"—vers. 1-9.

"The multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat." The circumstances were similar to the occasion of some months before; yet it is evident that the disciples had forgotten—as we often do—the remarkable manifestation of divine power which they had seen at that time.

"I have compassion on the multitude." The heart of Jesus Christ was touched by the need of the multitude, and His heart ever controlled His hand. For

"three days" they **had** flocked about Him, and paid attention to His teaching, until their food supplies had all given out, so that they were left with "nothing to eat." He could not bear to leave them in that desolate condition.

"If I send them away fasting . . . they will faint by the way." Many lived at quite a distance from the place in which they were. To go home hungry would work a real hardship on them.

"From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" It was the expression of the unbelief of the hearts of the disciples. That they should so soon have forgotten the former incident would seem incredible, if we did not know something of the untrustworthiness and the unbelief of our own hearts.

"How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven." It was the provision they had made for their own need, but they were to have the privilege of sharing it with others. Observe, that this time they did not procure the food from someone else.

"He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave." Following the same procedure as before, the people were arranged upon the ground, and after thanksgiving Jesus broke the bread and gave it to His disciples to distribute to the multitude.

"They had a few small fishes." Why were these not mentioned before? Could it be that they had been withheld by the doubting disciples until they

saw how the bread was multiplied? Apparently, the fishes were blessed separately and then distributed as the bread had been.

"They did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat . . . seven baskets." Again there was an over-abundance. For of what remained of the bread and fishes entrusted to Him to dispense, the disciples received seven hampers of food in return—sufficient to last a long time.

"They that had eaten were about four thousand." Again Matthew adds, "Beside women and children" (15: 38).

The Kinds of Baskets. It has been often pointed out that in the original Greek text two different kinds of baskets are indicated in these two accounts. In chapter six, after feeding the five thousand, there were twelve hand-basketsful left over—such as folk carried with them when traveling on foot. In the second instance, there were seven hampersful left over. These were large baskets such as were often used for carrying fish or transporting other goods.

Scripture Numbers. The number *twelve* is generally used in Scripture for administrative completeness, whereas *seven* is the number of mystical or spiritual perfection. The twelve baskets signified the abundant provision that will be enjoyed under Messiah's reign. The seven hampers tell us of the perfection of spiritual blessing when we learn that not by bread only do we live, "but by

every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4: 4).

One of Jehovah's names of old was *El Shaddai*—the God *All-sufficient*. Our Lord was manifesting Himself as the incarnate God, abundantly able to meet every need when He fed the multitudes who, on these two occasions, flocked to hear Him preach the gospel of the kingdom. His supplies are unlimited. What we need is faith to count upon the riches of His mercy and to draw from His abundant store. The bread He gave pictured Himself as the Bread of God come down from heaven, which if a man eat thereof he shall live forever (John 6: 33).

SUBDIVISION THREE.—8: 10—9: 8.

INTIMATIONS OF THE COMING GLORY

"And straightway He entered into a ship with His disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And He left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side"—vers. 10-13.

Returning to the western side of the lake, in the region of Dalmanutha, or Magadan, Jesus was met by some caviling Pharisees, who, ignoring all the marvellous works that He had performed, now came asking for a sign from heaven to authenticate His Messiahship.

We are told that He sighed deeply in His spirit, His inmost being was grieved to find such unbelief and determined opposition on the part of those who should have led the populace in the path of subjection to God and obedience to His Word. Why should they ask a sign? It was only an evidence of the state of their hearts. He declared that there should no sign be given to that evil generation. They were set in their attitude of enmity against Him whom God had sent to redeem Israel.

Leaving them to their unbelief and hardness of heart the Lord departed again to the other side of the lake; that is, to the region of Bethsaida Julias; for there were two cities called Bethsaida, one on the western, and the other on the northern side of the Sea of Galilee.

"Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?"—vers. 14-21.

Evidently in their haste in leaving Dalmanutha the disciples failed to replenish their store of bread—the flat loaves characteristic of that country, and

so easily carried about with them on a journey. Apparently there was some expression of apprehension as to what provision they could obtain when they disembarked. The Lord took occasion to warn them, when He knew their perplexity, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod. Conscience-smitten because of their carelessness in not having made proper provision for the needs of the group, the disciples leaped to the conclusion that it was a warning not to purchase bread from the parties mentioned. But the Lord made it clear that by using the term *leaven* He referred to the doctrines or principles of these religious and political systems, which, being corrupt, wrought corruption in all who imbibed these doctrines. The leaven of the Pharisees was hypocrisy and self-righteousness. The leaven of Herod was political chicanery and worldliness.

In order to ease the minds of the disciples as to suitable food for their bodies Jesus reminded them of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand on one occasion and the four thousand on another; when in each case there was not only abundance for all but many baskets of fragments were salvaged for future use. Why be anxious as to what one would eat on the morrow when the Creator of all things was with them? How ashamed the twelve might well have been of their doubts and fears, as Jesus put the pointed question, "How is it that ye do not understand?"

When they reached Bethsaida Julius they witnessed another evidence of the power of their Master.

"And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up, and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town"—vers. 22-26.

This miracle was of an exceptional character. So far as the record goes it is the only instance where healing was only partial at first and not instantaneous.

A blind man was brought to Jesus by friends who pleaded that He might touch the closed eyes and so give sight to the poor, afflicted one. Instead of doing this in the presence of all the people Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the city. It was as though, realizing that many in the throng were but curiosity seekers, He would take the man aside and minister to him alone. He then put His hands upon him and asked him if he was able to see. The man exclaimed, "I see men as trees, walking." Sight was but partially restored. He could behold different objects but could distinguish men from trees only by their walking. Once more Jesus placed His hands upon the man's eyes and bade him look up. Now he was healed completely, and he saw every man clearly.

Just why healing was not immediate, we are not told, possibly because of lack of perfect faith on the part of the blind man or his friends. The work having been accomplished Jesus dismissed the now happy man, bidding him not to go back into the town, nor tell of his healing to anyone there.

Our attention is directed next to Peter's great confession and his failure afterwards.

"And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ. And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him. And He began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, 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 shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels"—vers. 27-38.

"Whom do men say that I am?" The question was put to His disciples in order to lead up to a definite confession, on their own part, of His Messiahship and divine Sonship. As they moved about they heard many people discussing Jesus, and un-

doubtedly they had often debated in their own hearts the things that were said.

"They answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets." Herod, we know, goaded by a guilty conscience, felt sure that Jesus was John risen from the dead. Others shared the same view. Some, remembering the prophetic declaration as recorded in Malachi 4:5, thought He must be the promised Elijah; while another group simply thought of Him as a new prophet who had suddenly appeared in Israel.

"Whom say ye that I am?" It is not enough to be familiar with other men's views of Christ, be they right or wrong. Our Lord's question was intended to emphasize the responsibility of individuals to know Him for themselves. Peter's answer was the result of deep conviction, based on a divine revelation: "Thou art the Christ." The fuller confession given in Matthew 16:16 is a declaration of this disciple's faith in Jesus, both as the Messiah of Israel and the divine Son of God. He is both. In fact, He could not be the Messiah (Christ) were He not the Son of God, for the Christ was the Son given and the Child born, as prophesied in Isaiah 9:6. It is to Him the Father says, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Ps. 2:7).

"He charged them that they should tell no man of Him." Mark does not mention the Lord's com-

mentation of Peter, His prophetic words concerning the building of His Church upon the rock of His Deity, nor His giving of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which Peter used on Pentecost and in Cornelius' house to admit Jews and Gentiles into the kingdom in its present aspect. All that we are told here is that for the time then present they were not to begin the work of making Him known to the world in His true character. This must await His death, resurrection, and His ascension to God's right hand in heaven.

"The Son of Man must suffer many things, . . . and be killed, and after three days rise again." Our Lord knew exactly what awaited Him, and told His disciples in plainest language what the order of events would be. He had come into the world to die. While His death would be the manifestation of man's bitter hatred to God, it was also to be the supreme expression of God's love to man. This was to be followed by the physical resurrection of the body of Jesus, the proof that redemption was accomplished, and so the believer might be justified from all things. The foreknowledge of Jesus may be accounted for in three ways, all in perfect harmony with each other. In the first place, though He had become Man, He did not cease to be God, and therefore He knew from the beginning all things through which He was to pass. Then as Man He was a Student of the Word. He knew the Scriptures and came to fulfil them. So He based His predictions

upon the Scriptures. And, lastly, He was a Prophet speaking under the direct control of the Holy Spirit.

"Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him." He who so short a time before had confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, now ventured to rebuke Him as though He were a discouraged man and speaking from the standpoint of one crushed and disappointed by the continued opposition of His foes.

"Get thee behind Me, Satan." The Lord at once recognized in Peter's foolish, though well-meant words, the voice of the Adversary, seeking to turn Him aside from the cross, where He was to die as the supreme Sacrifice for sin. His sharp rebuke silenced the blundering apostle, but neither Peter nor the rest really entered into the revelation given.

The Necessity of the Death of Christ. In no other way than by His sacrificial death could our Lord make atonement for sin. The word so translated in the Old Testament involves the thoughts of appeasement, satisfaction, substitution, redemption, pacification, and reconciliation. It is far more than At-one-ment, which is accepted by many as its true meaning. In the New Testament, the Hebrew word translated by these various terms is rendered by a Greek word meaning "propitiation." All that these many terms suggest is involved in the vicarious death of the cross. But apart from resurrection, all would be meaningless.

"Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." A man carrying a cross was a man going out to die. The true disciple of Jesus is one who is prepared to refuse to own the claims of self, and is ready to "die daily" for his Master's sake (1 Cor. 15: 31). To deny oneself is more than to be self-denying or unselfish. It means the utter setting aside of the self-life, that Christ alone may be seen (Gal. 2: 20).

"Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." The professed follower of Jesus who is concerned with his own best interest, as men say, and lives to gratify his own natural desires will find out at the judgment-seat of Christ that his life has not counted for God, and it is really lost. On the other hand, Jesus said, "Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, . . . shall save it." A life laid down for Christ's sake is a life saved for that day when all that has been done to glorify God and make known His gospel will be rewarded richly.

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The Revised Version reads, "And forfeit his life." That is, present temporal gain will sink into nothingness if the soul, the real life, has been frittered away in things that do not profit. The only life that counts is that which has been lived for eternity.

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" This question is generally used as though it meant, "What shall a man take in exchange for his soul?"

But it is the very opposite. If the soul is lost, **what** shall a man give to reclaim it? His case will be utterly hopeless. He cannot buy back the life that has been forfeited because of sin and selfishness.

Jesus then solemnly declared that He will be ashamed in the final reckoning day of any who are ashamed of Him now. Everything for eternity depends upon our attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ. To confess Him openly before men means eternal life and salvation. To deny or be ashamed of Him means eternal judgment and everlasting ruin.

Christ is the touchstone of all hearts. As is our attitude to Him, so will be God's attitude to us when the day of reward shall come. In order that He might save our souls and have us wholly for Himself, our blessed Lord laid down His life. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). He considered no sacrifice too great in order to redeem us and make us His own. Surely, then, we should be prepared to go even to death in order to prove our love for Him. His death was atoning. By it we are justified when we trust in Him (Acts 13:39). Our sins are forever put away by His precious blood. We could have no part in making propitiation, but we are called upon to deny self and to lay down our lives, if need be, to attest our faithfulness to Him, and our love for a world for which He gave Himself (2 John 4:10, 11). If Christ died for all, then God saw all as dead, that they who

live through faith in Him might henceforth live, not unto themselves, but unto Him who died and rose again (2 Cor. 5: 14, 15).

Again and again Jesus told His disciples of His approaching death and resurrection; but they seemed utterly incapable of grasping the meaning of His words. Yet it was for this very purpose He came into the world and took humanity into union with His Deity.

All through His life He had the cross before Him. He became Man that He might die as our Kinsman-Redeemer (Lev. 25: 48) in order to bring us into life and liberty. Some time ago I read a sermon on "The Recklessness of Jesus," in which the preacher, while professing warm admiration for His earnestness of purpose, bewailed the sad impulsiveness that took Him to Jerusalem the last time, thus literally throwing Himself into danger and courting the opposition of the leaders in Israel, who were bent upon destroying Him. How much better might it have been for the world, suggested this unconscious blasphemer, if Jesus had remained quietly in Galilee, perhaps established a school for teachers in Capernaum, maybe written a number of books, thereby enriching the religious literature of the world, and died at last in a good old age, honored and loved by countless disciples, who could have been trusted to carry His instruction to the ends of the earth. One shudders as he repeats such wicked nonsense.

Had the Lord Jesus not died for our sins, there would have been no living message to carry to the world. He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). We are told that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). "Christ died"—that is history. "For our sins"—that is the central doctrine of grace. Ere He left the glory that He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), He said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:9). The will of God to which He referred specifically was the settling of the sin question. He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). Voluntarily He put Himself at the disposal of sinful men that this will of His Father might be carried out (John 14:31). No one took His life from Him; He laid it down of Himself (John 10:18). All was foreknown and predetermined, though this did not lessen man's guilt in rejecting Him (Acts 2:23). He sought to prepare the minds of His followers beforehand, that when they saw Him die, their faith might not fail.

Chapter Nine

THE first eight verses of this chapter form the closing section of this third subdivision, in which we have a foreview of the glory to be revealed at the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

"And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, 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 Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves"—vers. 1-8.

The first verse contains what must have been, to the disciples, a very startling declaration. Jesus said that among those standing with Him there were some who would not taste of death until they actually had seen the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory. This was fulfilled a week later, as the Apostle Peter makes clear when he tells us that they had not followed cunningly devised fables; when they made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but had been eyewitnesses of His majesty when they were with Him in the holy mount (2 Pet. 1: 16, 17).

"He was transfigured before them." The transcendent glory of His Deity shone out through the veil of His flesh, thus changing His appearance in such a way as to fill His disciples with amazement and impressing them with a sense of His mysterious personality.

"White as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." His very garments appeared to be etherealized, and glowed with a brilliancy such as no worker in linen or other material used for apparel could produce. The word rendered "fuller" originally meant a dresser of skins, or hides, but came to be applied in a wider sense, as indicated above.

"Elias and Moses . . . were talking with Jesus." These worthies had been in paradise for many centuries. They were living, conscious, and capable of conversing with the Lord and with one another. They stand as the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, and also of two classes of believers, those who will die before the Lord returns and those who will be caught up (or raptured) when that event takes place (John 11:25, 26).

"Let us make three tabernacles," that is, booths. Peter was so overwhelmed with what he saw and heard that he proposed to honor all the three who appeared in glory by building for them special booths. He did not realize the incongruity involved in putting even the greatest of God's servants on a level, as it were, with the Lord Jesus Himself. Moreover, he did not recognize the transitory char-

acter of the scene that enthralled him; so he would have erected three tabernacles in order to give some permanent place of dwelling to each of the three who conversed together. How many, since Peter's day, have thought to honor Christ by giving special prominence to His servants, whether prophets, apostles, saints, or angels, and have never realized that in thus recognizing them as worthy of such homage they have actually dishonored the Master Himself!

"He wist not what to say." How much better if he had been content to remain silent! But Peter was of that restless character which made him feel he must say something, and he spoke out of place and out of line with the mind of God, who would not have any others occupying the hearts of His people in such a way as to detract from the glory that belongs to Christ alone. What seems like piety and humility is oftentimes a subtle form of pride and unbelief (Col. 2: 18, 19).

"This is My beloved Son; hear Him." It is Christ whom the Father delights to honor. He would have all men recognize and obey Him.

"They saw no man . . . save Jesus only." Moses and Elias disappeared, and Jesus Christ alone remained to be worshipped and adored.

This beautiful and inspiring picture of the coming kingdom is worthy of the most careful examination. Consider the various characters and note how they picture the different persons or groups

who will have their place at the revelation of Jesus Christ. First of all, we see Him manifested in His glory as the Center of all the Father's counsels. Then we have the two men who talked with Him of that which shall be the theme of our praise forever, His death (Luke 9:31), which is the foundation of all our blessing (Rev. 5:9). These are archetypal men, as we have seen. Moses had died long before, but he appeared as in his resurrection body. In this he represents all who will die before Christ's return, but who will hear His voice when He descends from heaven, and be raised in incorruptible bodies (1 Cor. 15:52). Elijah had been taken up to heaven without passing through death, and so he becomes the representative of all who will be "alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15), who will never die at all, but will be changed in a moment and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. At His revelation in glory all these will be manifested with Him. They form the heavenly side of the kingdom. On the earth there will be saints in their natural bodies. These are represented by the three apostles who beheld the glory, but were themselves still in bodies of flesh and blood. They were all of Israel, and these will be the first to enter into the kingdom when set up on earth. The nations that have been torn and rent by Satanic power will then find deliverance, and so enter into that reign of peace and righteousness. This is suggested by what took place at the foot of the mountain.

SUBDIVISION FOUR.—9: 9—10: 45

THE PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP

"And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of Man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And He answered and told them, *Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things*; and how it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him"—vers. 9-13.

As the little party descended from the mount, which was probably Mount Hermon where they spent the night, the Lord Jesus very definitely charged them to say nothing whatever concerning that which they had seen until after He Himself, the Son of Man, had been raised from the dead. This, to them, was still mysterious, for though the Lord had spoken on several previous occasions of His dying and rising again on the third day, they could not seem to understand. As they went down the mount they questioned one with another as to what the expression "rising from the dead" could possibly mean. Evidently they were assured in their hearts that He was Messiah. But a question arose as to Malachi's prophecy which declared that Elijah would be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Familiar with the Scriptures, the scribes taught the people to look not primarily for Messiah, but first for Elijah, and so

the disciples asked Jesus, "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" He replied, "Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought." But He declared that "Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him." They understood then that He was referring to John the Baptist. John's ministry was Elijah-like. He came denouncing sin and calling the people to repentance, that thus they might be in condition to receive Messiah when He appeared. Elsewhere we are told that Jesus said, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come" (Matt. 11:14). John the Baptist was not received by all, and his ministry did not have the effect it should have had upon the entire nation because of their unbelief. Some would suggest that there is yet to be a further fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy, and that in the days of the great tribulation, after the rapture of the Church, another Elijah-like minister will be raised up of God to prepare the remnant of Israel to receive the Anointed One. This may indeed be true.

"And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him. And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them?"—vers. 14-16.

Reaching the plain, the attention of Jesus was immediately directed to a great multitude gathered

about the nine disciples who had not been with Him that night in the mount. Some of the scribes were questioning with them, evidently debating certain questions having to do with the possible Messiahship of Jesus. When He appeared the multitude turned toward Him, and we are told that they were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him. Just what amazed them we may not be able to say with certainty, but the suggestion has been made that there was still something of the glory shining in His face, even as when Moses of old came down from the mount after spending forty days with God. Turning to the scribes, we read in verse 16, He asked them, "What question ye with them?"

"And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit: and where-soever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answered him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto Me. And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast

him out? And He said unto them, **This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting**—vers. 17-29.

A man in the multitude spoke up and pleaded for help for his afflicted son who was possessed by a demon. The poor father's heart was rent with anguish as he told of the distressing condition under which the poor lad lived. The spirit that dominated him "taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away." In his desire to see the son relieved the father had brought him to the disciples, pleading that they would deliver the boy, but they could not cast out the demon.

Now Jesus had already empowered the disciples to do that very thing, and as they moved about the cities of Galilee they had on various occasions cast out demons, but in this instance they seemed utterly powerless. Turning to them Jesus rebuked them, saying, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"

Then turning to the father, He said, "Bring him unto Me." The lad was brought to Jesus, and when He looked upon the boy, the evil spirit that was in him immediately "tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming"—like one in an epileptic fit. The Saviour looked down upon the lad with compassion; then turning to the father, He asked, "How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters,

to destroy him." Looking to Jesus, he made the pitiable plea, "If Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." It is evident that his faith was very imperfect. He believed in his heart that Jesus might be able to help, but he was not sure that He would be willing to do so.

"If thou canst believe." Jesus turns things completely around. The "if" was on the seeker's part. Where there is genuine faith "all things are possible to him that believeth."

"Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." As the tears streamed from his eyes, the anxious father asserted his faith; yet recognizing its weakness, he cried for increased confidence, that the Lord might undertake on his behalf.

"Come out of him, and enter no more into him." With a voice of authority the demon was called to release his victim and never to control him again.

"He was as one dead"—so strenuous was the convulsion as the evil, malignant fiend withdrew that the lad fell to the ground as though dead, so that many supposed he was actually gone. But it proved to be the demon's last act ere the boy was completely freed from his malign influence.

"Jesus . . . lifted him up; and he arose." Reaching out His hand, Jesus laid hold on that of the unconscious youth and, as He did so, consciousness and physical strength returned, and to the father's joy his son came to his feet, healed, and in his right mind.

Leaving the throng the Master and His disciples entered the house, probably that of Peter, and when they were alone the disciples asked Him privately, "Why could not we cast him out?" Jesus answered, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." Some manuscripts omit the last two words, and yet there seems to be a measure of evidence for their authority. The great point the Saviour made was this: that no one can have power over unclean spirits unless he is in intimate touch with God.

"And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him"—vers. 30-32.

Leaving Capernaum where this event took place, they moved on to other parts of Galilee, the Lord endeavoring to avoid anything like vulgar publicity. As they walked along the roads He continued to expound the truths of the kingdom to them, and once more told them of the death He was soon to die, saying, "The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day." One would have thought no language could be clearer than this, and that anyone hearing it would have comprehended that which the Lord was seeking to make so plain. But we are told in verse 32, "They understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask

Him." That is, they felt reticent about exposing their own ignorance concerning a matter of which the Lord had so spoken so frequently, but whose meaning they could not seem to get. Doubtless the reason was that their minds were so set on the thought of the coming glory that the rejection and death of Him whom they believed to be Messiah seemed incredible.

"And He came to Capernaum: and being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me. And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward"—vers. 33-41.

Returning to Capernaum Jesus asked the disciples, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" They did not realize that their thoughts were known to Him. He did not need to hear their words to know what was in their hearts.

"They had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest." Failing to recognize the true character of the kingdom of God, they thought of it as a place for worldly advancement and so contended with each other as to their respective

merits and likelihood of prominence when the kingdom should actually be set up.

"If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." He who will be most highly honored in the kingdom of God is the one who seeks no honor for himself, but lays himself out for the blessing of others.

"He took a child, and set him in the midst of them." Children felt they could trust the Lord Jesus. His very grace and gentleness attracted them to Him. So the little one came at His bidding and wonderingly took his place among the surprised disciples.

"Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me." The little one was His plenipotentiary, for His is a kingdom of love and lowliness. And when He is received, the Father who sent Him is received. It is in the heart of the meek and contrite that God loves to dwell (Isa. 66: 1, 2).

"He followeth not us: and we forbad him." Evidently to emphasize their loyalty to Christ in spite of the implied rebuke, John spoke up and told how they had forbidden a man to cast out demons because he was not of their company. Such an attitude is common to many today who think more of sectarian affiliation than of the carrying on of the work of the Lord. We are all prone to over-estimate the importance of our own particular group and to underrate others who do not see eye to eye with us.

But the supreme test is the heart's attitude toward Christ. God is not dealing with any party to the exclusion of others. His presence, by the Spirit, is not confined to any one special company of believers, however sound they may be. He recognizes all as His children who trust His Son, and He owns everything that is of Him in each one, whatever their associations may be, although we on our part are responsible to separate from all known evil.

"There is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me." The very fact that this man acted in the name of Jesus Christ indicated his faith in Him. Where His name is thus acknowledged, He will be loved and honored, at least in measure.

"For he that is not against us is on our part." It is so easy to be sectarian in spirit. Jesus declared a great truth that we should never forget, when He said, "He that is not against us is on our part." On another occasion He said, "He that is not with Me is against Me" (Matt. 12: 30). That is positive, but here He speaks negatively. If one is not definitely arrayed against Him then he is to be considered as on His part. This is something most of us forget. But the Lord never spurns anyone who is seeking to know Him and to do His will.

"Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Notice that expression, "Because ye belong to

Christ." It is not a question of whether one belongs to our particular group, whether he follows our ways, or whether he pronounces *Shibboleth* as we do; but does he belong to Christ? If so, then whatever is done for such an one in the name of the Lord cannot fail of reward.

Jesus then proceeded to give some very solemn instructions concerning the importance of faithfulness and integrity in the path of discipleship.

"And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another"—vers. 42-50.

To stumble one of the little ones that believe in Jesus is in His eyes a heinous offence. He declared, "It is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." What a terrible thing it is deliberately to injure or mislead a little child; or, if one uses the term "little one" in a spiritual sense, a young convert. A fearful responsibility rests upon those who profess to know Christ, to do all they can to help rather than

to hinder these little ones. If one is tempted to injure them in any way let him keep in mind the solemn words of the verses that follow.

If the hand would cause one to stumble let it be cut off, for it is far better to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into hell; that is, into Gehenna, the place of eternal judgment, "Into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Notice how the Lord reiterates this expression. Though He Himself was the tenderest and most gracious Man who ever trod this earth, He had more to say about the awfulness of eternal punishment for the finally unrepentant than anyone else whose teachings appear in the Holy Scriptures.

"If thy foot offend thee, cut it off." If the feet would lead one into paths of sin, better far to be footless and enter into life, than having two feet to be cast into the Gehenna of fire. Or if the eye cause one to stumble—and oh, how often sin enters through the eye!—pluck it out. It is better far to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into the Gehenna of fire. The expression, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," was possibly based upon what was constantly visible at the lower part of the valley of the son of Hinnom, where all the refuse of the city was cast, and perpetual fires were kept burning, and the carcasses of dead animals were thrown, and those passing by might behold

the gnawing worms and the fire unquenchable. It is an awful picture of the judgment that awaits the Christ-rejecter.

Some ancient manuscripts omit a part of verse 49, retaining only the words, "For everyone shall be salted with fire." The thought is clear, however, even though the remainder of the verse might not rest on the best authority. Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. God had said concerning the sacrifices, "Neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking" (Lev. 2: 13). Salt preserves from corruption, and it would appear that the Lord is insisting here on that preservative power of righteousness which alone will deliver one from the judgment that sin so richly deserves. Jesus had already spoken of His disciples as the salt of the earth, and in this place He adds, "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?" Savorless salt is utterly useless. And so a professed believer who is not characterized by righteousness has no testimony whatever for God. The Lord said, "Have salt in yourselves"—that is, let there be in your life and behavior that righteousness which glorifies God; and instead of one seeking his own interest, seek the good of others, and thus have peace one with another.

Chapter Ten

PASSING down through Perea on the east of the Jordan, Jesus and His disciples came to the ford of Bethabara and crossed over into Judea on the way to Jerusalem, where He was to fulfil His mission by dying as the great Sin Offering on a cross of shame.

"And He arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again. And the Pharisees came to Him, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him. And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter. And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery"—vers. 1-12.

Although Jesus had been absent from Judea for some time His fame preceded Him, and multitudes of the people resorted to Him, ready to hear what He had to say. According to His custom He took the opportunity to teach them.

Some of the sect of the Pharisees came to Him and put a question regarding divorce. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" The

inquiry was not made sincerely. They were not looking for instruction, but rather for an opportunity to bring a formal accusation against Him. If possible they desired to expose Him as an unsafe and heretical teacher who taught contrary to the law of Moses.

He foiled them by asking them, "What did Moses command you?" They replied that Moses had permitted that a bill of divorcement be given and the unwanted or unloved wife put away.

Jesus declared that this had been allowed because of the hardness of men's hearts, in order that a wife who had no favor in her husband's eyes might not have to endure even greater indignities than being divorced. But this was not God's highest thought as to the marriage relationship.

From the beginning God intended one woman for one man, when He made our first parents male and female, and said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain—(not they three, or more)—shall be one flesh." Therefore when two are united in wedlock they are no more to be considered as independent personalities, free to go or stay as they please, but they are one flesh.

Jesus added, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Men may make laws that violate this divine order, but no human decree can nullify God's Word. Marriage is a life partnership. Elsewhere Jesus shows that if one

of the contracting persons proves unfaithful and by taking up with another in cohabitation breaks the tie, the innocent one is free (Matt. 19: 9). But apart from such a breach the tie is indissoluble save by death, as He made clear to His disciples when they were in the house again, away from the multitude. To put away one's wife and marry another is to commit adultery; and likewise if a wife puts away her husband and marries another man, she becomes an adulteress.

In the next section Jesus expresses His loving interest in little children.

"And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, *Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.* And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them"—vers. 13-16.

"They brought young children to Him . . . and His disciples rebuked . . . them." Parents who felt that the Lord would be interested in their little ones brought them to Him that He might lay His hands upon them in blessing. Not understanding the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, the disciples tried to restrain the parents, as though Jesus could not be troubled with the children. They considered this an imposition, as though it were below the dignity of their Master to be occupied with the little ones. But Jesus is the Friend of the children, as He at once made manifest.

"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." The Saviour was displeased with the attitude of the disciples, and invited the parents to bring the children, assuring them that the little ones were typical members of the kingdom, because of their implicit faith in Him. Children are the ideal converts. When old enough to understand the story of the Lord Jesus, they are old enough to come to Him in trustful confidence. They enter into the kingdom of God when, according to human standards, older and wiser ones refuse to do so. When our Lord said of the little ones, "Of such is the kingdom of God," this was not to imply that the children do not need to be regenerated in order to enter truly into that kingdom. They come of a lost race, and are by nature children of wrath. But their simple faith makes them subjects of the kingdom, and in this they are examples to us all.

"Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Only as we manifest the same childlike faith do we enter into the kingdom of God.

"He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." Even so, parents may be assured today that, though unseen by mortal eye, He takes our children in His loving arms and gives them His blessing as we bring them to Him in faith.

Conversion of Children. There are many today who, like the disciples of old, imagine that little children are too young to be brought to the Lord Jesus Christ. But His own words are too plain to be misunderstood. He invites the children to come to Him, and encourages the parents to bring them. Elsewhere He speaks of "these little ones which believe in Me" (Matt. 18: 6), and He gives a solemn warning to any who put stumbling-blocks before their inexperienced feet. We are right when we sing of Him, "There's a Friend for little children." He is their Friend, and He delights in their love and confidence, and esteems them as His friends. It is a well-known fact that by far the greatest number of those who are now earnest Christians came to the Saviour before they were twelve years of age.

The next incident to which our attention is directed is that which has been so aptly designated, "The Great Refusal."

"And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions"

—vers. 17-22.

Unlike many who questioned Jesus in order that they might trap Him in His words in some way, this young man seems to have been, up to a point at least, intensely in earnest. We are told that he came running, and then he fell upon his knees before Jesus, doing homage to Him as he inquired, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus took him up on his own legal ground. He first asked him why he used the term "good" in speaking to Him. Scripture says, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Ps. 14:3). Why, then, address Jesus as good, unless indeed one recognized in Him the divine Son of God, for God alone is good? To this the young man made no reply.

Jesus then quoted the six commandments that set forth our responsibility to our neighbors, including that which calls upon us to honor our parents, who, as we have seen, stand in the place of God to children in the home. The law said, "Which, if a man do, he shall live in them" (Lev. 18:5).

Without a moment's hesitation the young man replied, "Master, all these have I kept from my youth."

Outwardly, he, like Saul of Tarsus before his conversion, was blameless as touching the righteousness of the law. What he did not realize was that all human righteousness is but as filthy rags in the sight of God, because of the corruption of the heart.

To test him and expose the hidden evil of his heart Jesus said, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." It was a call to receive Christ as Saviour and own Him as Lord. But he, who seemed so earnest at first, could not rise to the opportunity put before him; he who professed to love his neighbor as himself was not prepared to give up his wealth for the good of others; nor was he ready to yield control of his life to Jesus. So he went away sorrowful, because his great wealth stood between him and allegiance to Christ. Did he ever repent? We know not. So far as Holy Writ is concerned we know only that he went away in nature's darkness, because he turned from the Light of Life.

"And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, 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 eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible"—vers. 23-27.

We can sense the pain in the heart of the Lord as He musingly said to His disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

They were astonished to hear this, for undoubtedly they thought, as many do today, that poverty

rather than wealth would be the greatest impediment to entrance into the kingdom. But Jesus explained that it is the danger of putting one's trust in his wealth which keeps many a one from taking his rightful place before God as a needy sinner who can be saved only through grace.

A camel could more readily pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man enter into the kingdom of God. Only those who judge themselves and come to God, acknowledging their lost estate and spiritual poverty, find entrance there.

In amazement the disciples asked, "Who then can be saved?"

In reply Jesus told them that all things are possible with God. Even the rich may be brought to the place where they no longer trust in their wealth but in the living God.

"Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath 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 lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first"—vers. 28-31.

The question naturally arises in our minds as to what prompted Peter to speak as he did. Was he concerned as to the future of himself and his fellow-disciples if the rich were not going to rally to the side of Jesus and assist Him in establishing the expected Messianic kingdom? Possibly so. He said, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee."

His words seem to imply that he wondered whether they had risked all on a forlorn hope.

Jesus replied with words of assurance, though not at this time fully correcting His followers' carnal ideas as to the nature of the coming kingdom. He gave the definite promise that no one would lose, but rather gain by sharing His path of rejection. He declared, "There is no man that hath 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 lands, *with* persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." But He warned them that many that are first shall be last, and the last first. That is, not everyone who gave promise of being a faithful and devoted follower would continue in the path of self-denial for Christ's name's sake, and some who seemed backward and whose devotedness was questionable, would prove real and self-effacing in the hour of trial.

To follow Christ means to share His cup of sorrow, to be misunderstood, and even hated and maligned by the world that lieth in the wicked one. But he who takes this path finds a joy in fellowship with the rejected King and in communion with fellow-sufferers, of which the worldling knows nothing; and he looks forward with assured hope to entering eternal life in the age to come. All be-

lievers now have eternal life abiding in them but in a decaying body. In the age to come we shall enter into life in all its fulness when the body as well as the soul is fully redeemed from the bondage of corruption.

"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again"—vers. 32-34.

As the little band moved on toward Jerusalem there was something in the bearing and appearance of Jesus that moved His disciples to fear and concern. Luke tells us (9:51) "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." He knew exactly what awaited Him there, and He went forward unflinchingly with a serious determination that evidently was manifested in His countenance, and caused the twelve to have a feeling of uneasiness. Were all their dreams of a coming glorious kingdom, in which He should declare Himself Messiah and deliver Israel from the Roman yoke, to be dissipated? Had they, after all, left everything they possessed and ventured all on a baseless hope?

Jesus sought to make them understand just what was before Him, but still they failed to comprehend His words, so obsessed were they with the thought that the kingdom should be set up immediately.

He told them that when they reached Jerusalem the Son of Man should be delivered unto the religious leaders, who were ever His enemies, and who should condemn Him to death, and turn Him over to their Gentile rulers who would mock and scourge Him, even spitting in His blessed face, and finally putting Him to death. But again He gave the promise, "the third day He shall rise again." That which follows shows how feebly the disciples had understood the things of which He had spoken.

"And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto Him, saying, Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared"—vers. 35-40.

Humility is one of the loveliest flowers that springs up in the garden of the regenerated heart. We are all inclined to pride and vanity by nature. When the Spirit of Christ possesses us, we manifest that lowliness and meekness which ever characterized our blessed Lord. Where this lowly spirit prevails, it is easy to extend forgiveness to those who have offended us. To many this seems like slavish servility, but it is the very opposite. Greatness is evidenced by one's readiness to deny self and to serve others for His sake, who came not

to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for all. We cannot share in His atoning or redemptive work, but we can and should follow Him in His life of patient service for the blessing of a needy world.

When James and John sought exalted positions in the coming kingdom, they showed how little they understood its true nature. The rebuke of the Lord Jesus was not in anger but in love, that they might learn the real meaning of participation in His sufferings, in order to share in the glories to follow.

"Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire." This petition was based upon selfishness and worldly ambition. While the two brothers were doubtless quite unconscious of their own true condition of heart, yet it gave evidence of how little they had entered into the mind of their Master.

"What would ye that I should do for you?" The Lord Jesus desired to bring to the surface what was in their thoughts; so He pressed them to put the request in their own words.

"Grant . . . that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory." They desired to have the choicest offices in the coming kingdom. They little realized how obnoxious to the Lord Jesus Christ were such ambitions.

Official Recognition and Responsibility in the Kingdom. It is quite true that our Lord will be-

stow special honors upon certain of His followers when He returns to set up His kingdom. He has made this clear in several of His utterances (Matt. 19: 28; Luke 19: 17). But those who will occupy the highest places then will be those who were content to take the lowly places in the King's absence, and who have been willing to suffer uncomplainingly for His sake.

"Ye know not what ye ask." Jesus would have them realize how little they understood what was just about to take place. He asked them, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" He referred to the cup of rejection and judgment soon to be pressed to His lips, and to the baptism of death He was to endure on the cross.

Not knowing what they said, James and John declared, "We can." Their loyalty was evident, but the full nature of that cup and baptism was hidden from them. Jesus replied that they should indeed drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism (for all who follow Him have to taste the cup of rejection by the world and are always delivered unto death for His sake), but to sit on His right hand and on His left hand was not His to give, save to those for whom such honor shall be prepared. No man can choose His own place in the kingdom when it shall be displayed in power and glory. Each one will have the place then for which his life and service on earth have fitted him.

"And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"—vers. 41-45.

"When the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased." The other disciples also had desires for prominence, and they were indignant that John and James had sought to obtain the highest offices, thus forestalling them.

"Their great ones exercise authority upon them." It was very difficult for the disciples to dissociate the thought of a kingdom from positions of prominence for themselves. But the kingdom of which Jesus Christ is Lord is a kingdom of love, where all are to seek the blessing of others, and lowly service takes the place of haughty authority. The kingdoms of the nations are not like this. There the great lord it over those of lesser degree.

"But so shall it not be among you." In the kingdom of God the very opposite rule prevails. Those whose greatness is recognized by heaven are those who labor for the blessing of their fellows.

"Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." Our Lord Himself is the pre-eminent example here. He who was Lord of all became servant of all, that men might be brought to God. We are called to follow in His steps.

"The Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many." He left the glory of the Father's side, and came into this world, becoming Man in order that He might die. Never once did He seek recognition from men. He was content to be despised and rejected, in order that He might accomplish His great mission of redemption. Dare we, who owe everything for eternity to His humiliation, aspire to worldly honor and seek the approbation of our fellows rather than the approval of God?

DIVISION THREE.—10: 46 TO 16: 20.

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE LORD'S MISSION

SUBDIVISION ONE.—10: 46—13: 37.

THE REJECTED KING

"And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way"—vers. 46-52.

"**B**LIND BARTIMAEUS . . . sat by the highway side begging." To this poor, sightless mendicant the coming of the Lord Jesus that day was to mean the opening of his eyes, both physically and spiritually. "He began to cry out, . . . Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He did not wait for Jesus to call him first, but "when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth," he immediately cried out for the help he so sorely needed. Surely, such faith must have gratified the heart of the Lord.

Many of those who were in the crowd that followed Jesus as He passed through the city tried to silence the blind beggar, but his was a faith which refused to be deterred by their objection, and he continued to cry out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Assured in his soul that Jesus was, in very truth, the predicted Messiah, the Offspring of David, he knew that Jesus could open his eyes if His attention could but be attracted.

Faith like that of Bartimaeus never pleads in vain. Jesus stopped and commanded the beggar to be called. It must have brought joy to the poor man's heart when they said, "Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee."

Casting away his outer garment in his haste, he arose and came to Jesus, doubtless guided by some kindly-disposed person in the crowd.

The Lord inquired tenderly, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He knew well the desire of Bartimaeus' heart, but He desired him to make a public confession of his need. "Lord," cried Bartimaeus, "that I might receive my sight."

"Immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." His faith was at once rewarded. Jesus granted his request and gave him the additional assurance, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." In his exuberance and gratitude Bartimaeus followed Jesus as He went along the way; though there is no evidence that he was called to give all his time to witnessing for Christ.

What a testimony he had to give to the **com-**
passion and healing power of Him whom he **had**
acclaimed as the Son of David!

Chapter Eleven

IT is interesting and profitable to observe how exactly the various outstanding events in our Lord's life were predicted by prophets, divinely inspired men of God (2 Peter 1:21), who lived hundreds of years before their words began to be fulfilled. Zechariah was one of the post-exilic prophets who spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (1 Peter 1:11; compare 5:1). Graphically he portrayed Israel's rightful King entering His earthly capital in lowly state, riding upon an ass (Zech. 9:9). But between this verse and that which immediately follows, there was to ensue a long period of rejection by His chosen people. Centuries were to roll by before the words were to be fulfilled which declare, "He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." Yet all will come to fruition in God's appointed time.

The Holy Spirit alone could have foreseen the crucifixion of our Lord following so soon after what is often called "the triumphal entry." Actually, it was not the nation that officially acclaimed Him as the promised King on that historic Palm Sunday. The leaders fiercely resented the homage paid Him and voiced their opposition in no uncertain terms.

But to Jesus this welcome by the "little ones" was as a cup of cold water to His spirit after the bitter hatred He had experienced. He had given thanks before to the Father that "these things"—the mysteries of the kingdom—were hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes (Matt. 11:25). This was confirmed in the reception accorded Him as He rode into the city of Jerusalem.

"And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and He sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve"—vers. 1-11.

The last journey through Perea was concluded, and Jesus and His disciples had ascended by the winding road from Jericho to Bethany on the slope of the Mount of Olives. From there He prepared to enter the city where of old Jehovah had set His name, knowing full well that the cross was just before Him. But for this purpose He had come

into the world. It was nearing passover-time in the spring of A. D. 30. He was about thirty-three years and six months of age — a comparatively young Man, destined to be cut off in the midst of His days (Ps. 102:24).

“Nigh to Jerusalem.” The Holy City is plainly visible from Olivet as one comes round the bend between Bethany and Bethphage. At this point Jesus tarried till the ass could be obtained on which He was to ride into the city in accordance with the prophetic Word.

“A colt tied, whereon never man sat; . . . bring him (to Me).” To Jesus it made no difference that this was an unbroken colt. He was the Creator come into this scene as Man, and as such all the lower creatures were subject to Him (Ps. 8:6-8). Only man, made in the image of God, rebelled against Him. All others knew Him as their rightful Owner (Isa. 1:3).

“The Lord hath need of him.” This was to be His disciples’ answer if any seemed to question their right to loose the colt. Evidently the owner of the beast knew Jesus and recognized His claims as pre-eminent.

“They . . . found the colt tied . . . where two ways met.” Many of the older commentators saw in this a picture of man himself, standing at the place of decision. The messengers had no difficulty finding the colt. All was as Jesus had said.

"Certain of them" questioned the right of the disciples to take the colt away as Jesus had foreseen. It is clear that these were not the owners, but simply bystanders who feared something wrong was being done. "Even as Jesus had commanded." There was no further objection when explanation was given as the Lord had commanded.

"They brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him." Improvising a saddle with their flowing robes, they prepared the colt to carry Jesus to the city.

"Many spread their garments . . . and . . . branches off the trees." In their holy enthusiasm these humble folk sought to give to the King a royal welcome.

"Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Divinely taught, they chanted the words of Psalm 118: 26, recognizing their application to the promised Messiah of Israel. Hosanna means "Save now," or "Deliver, we pray," answering to "God save the king!" a customary cry in recognition of regal authority (2 Chron. 23: 11).

"The kingdom of our father David." For one brief moment Jesus was acknowledged as the rightful Heir to the throne of David (Luke 1: 32). But the time had not yet come for Him to ascend that throne. Not until He returns in glory will He build again the tabernacle of David that is thrown down (Acts 15: 16; Amos 9: 11, 12).

"Jesus entered into . . . the temple," as Malachi had predicted (3: 1). Apparently, He simply looked about the temple on this first day of His last week; although it is not easy to be certain as to this. But the events recorded in Matthew 21: 12, 13, probably took place on His second visit to the city. "When . . . the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve." In self-imposed banishment, He did not spend a night in the Holy City during Passion Week. He recognized already that He was to suffer without the gate (Heb. 13: 12, 13). For Him there was no place in "the city of the great King" (Matt. 5: 35). He found a refuge among the poor and the lowly, and with those who waited for the consolation of Israel.

"And on the morrow, when they were come to Bethany, He was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find any thing thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And His disciples heard it"—*vers.* 12-14.

On the following day as Jesus and His disciples were going from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus was hungry. Having become Man in all perfection He was subject to all the sinless conditions under which men live. A fig tree in full leaf by the way-side seemed to offer prospects of a feast of figs, but when Jesus went over to see it He found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet.

Jesus said, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever" — or, for the age. This fig tree was a

type or symbol of Israel nationally, and its fruitless condition pictured the state of the nation—much religion but no fruit for God. So it remains barren and fruitless all through these centuries since Christ's rejection.

"And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people was astonished at His doctrine. And when even was come, He went out of the city. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto Him, Master, behold, the fig tree which Thou cursedst is withered away"—vers. 15-21.

This was the second time Jesus had cleansed the temple of those who were commercializing the holy things of the Lord. In John 2:13-16 we read of the first occasion, just shortly after He began His public ministry. But the abuses then corrected had soon taken advantage of His absence to be reinstated. No doubt in the beginning the sale of birds and beasts in the temple courts was intended simply as an accommodation for visitors to Jerusalem, who had come from distant lands to attend the annual feasts. The same was true of the money-changers. They were there to make it easy for these strangers to obtain the money which was used in Palestine, in place of the coins of other lands. But what may have begun innocently enough had de-

generated into a system of extortionate gains for those thus carrying on; and those of the dispersion who came to worship the God of their fathers were being systematically robbed of their savings—and that in the name of Jehovah!

Jesus dealt drastically with these covetous and dishonest merchants, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and driving out the sellers of doves and sacrificial lambs and other cattle.

One can visualize Him as He stood before the amazed and frightened mob, His holy eyes flashing with righteous indignation as He exclaimed, "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves."

Naturally, this aroused counter-indignation, but of unholy character, on the part of those who had upheld and profited by this commercializing of sacred things; and these scribes and chief priests formed a cabal with the express purpose of seeking to lay hold of Jesus and to destroy Him. But they did not dare act openly as yet, because the people generally were stirred by the teaching and works of Jesus and inclined to think of Him as the promised Messiah. Therefore, He was allowed to continue teaching that day in the temple courts, no one daring to interfere.

As evening came on He and His disciples left the city again, returning to the Mount of Olives, possibly to Bethany. In the morning as they re-

turned to the city they observed the barren fig tree now dried up from the roots. When Peter called attention to this Jesus used the incident to emphasize the power of faith.

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses"—vers. 22-26.

Faith is trust, or confidence. Such confidence should be in God, not in any human expedient. We can have faith in Him only as we rest upon His Word. In replying to his Sunday School teacher's inquiry, "What is faith?" the little boy was right in saying, "Please, Teacher, I think it is believing God and asking no questions."

When God speaks it is for us to take Him at His Word. If, therefore, He made it clear that it was His will to remove a mountain from its established place and cast it into the sea, real faith could count on Him to act, and so would dare to command the mountain to disappear. Doubtless, behind the natural figure our Lord had in mind mountains of difficulty, such as Zerubbabel faced in Palestine when the returned remnant encountered such fierce opposition in the days of rebuilding of the temple (Zech. 4:7). Nothing is impossible with God, and

he who is in fellowship with God can act in faith assured his request will be honored.

"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Faith counts the things that are not as though they are. But we need to remember that these words apply only when we delight ourselves in the Lord, and so the desires of our hearts are according to His holy will (Ps. 37: 4).

The state of the soul has much to do with the possibility of the prayer of faith. Hence the teaching as to forgiveness given in verses 25, 26. God has never promised to answer the prayer of an unforgiving heart. This attitude toward others effectually blocks the channel of prayer so that no answer is possible. In His family government God forgives us as we forgive our brethren. This is not the forgiveness of a sinner, but of a failing saint. Unless we forgive, our Father in heaven will not forgive us when we come to Him acknowledging our sins from day to day.

This teaching as to prayer was given as the little company walked toward the city. When they entered it, almost immediately Jesus was challenged by the irate scribes and chief priests concerning His action of yesterday.

"And they come again to Jerusalem: and as He was walking in the temple, there come to Him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and say unto Him, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority to do these

things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer Me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men, they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things"—vers. 27-33.

On this day Jesus found Himself opposed in various ways by the religious leaders, but in each instance He put them to silence by His answers.

They first challenge Him as to the source of His authority for cleansing the temple in the way He had done. He refused to answer, but questioned them instead. "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" The right answer to this would be the answer to their question. If they admitted that John was sent by God then the claims of Jesus were established, for John had declared Him to be the Promised One who was to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire—something which none but Messiah could do.

These cunning legalists debated among themselves as to how they should reply. If they admitted John was God's messenger to Israel they faced the inevitable question, "Why then did ye not believe him?" If they denied his divine commission they feared the people who firmly believed that John was a prophet. So they evaded the real question by answering, "We cannot tell." Jesus replied,

"Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things."

He was ready always to help honest inquirers. But these men were hypocritical objectors to His testimony, and were determined not to believe Him when His very works attested His Messianic title and proclaimed Him to be that Servant of Jehovah of whom Isaiah wrote, and for whom Israel had waited so long.

Chapter Twelve

THE parable of the vineyard follows. This portrayed in a very vivid and graphic manner God's ways with Israel and their response and ingratitude throughout the past centuries; as also the consummation so soon to be reached, in the rejection and death of the Heir, to be followed by His glorious resurrection.

"And He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our's. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And have ye not read this scripture, The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and they left Him, and went their way"—vers. 1-12.

The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, as we are told in Isaiah 5 : 7. Settled by God in the land of Canaan they had been cared for and ministered to by Him in a marvelous way, and

placed under the care of those who should have watched for their souls and sought to so cultivate them spiritually that there would be abundant fruit for Him. But the husbandmen, or vine-dressers, thought only of their own selfish interests, and failed to render to Jehovah that love and reverence which He had the right to expect. When He sent His prophets to them they either sent them away empty, treating them with utter indifference, or else persecuted them even unto death for daring to reprove them because of their wickedness. Throughout the centuries this had been their attitude. Now God had sent His Son who, in Himself, was the final test as to the love and loyalty of Israel. When the leaders saw Him they spurned His claim and sought His destruction, saying, "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be our's."

Verse 8 is prophetic and was fulfilled just a few days later. "They took Him, and killed Him, and cast Him out of the vineyard." It was thus that Jesus told them of His own rejection and death even before it came to pass.

Then He put the question to them, "What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do?" The answer was plain, "He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others." Israel was to be set to one side while grace should flow out to the Gentiles.

This was in accord with what was written in Psalm 118: 22, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." So He spoke not only of death but of resurrection, because as the first begotten from the dead Jesus has been made the Chief Corner Stone. "This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

The parable and its application stirred the leaders to additional resentfulness. They realized He had spoken of them, but for the time being they dared not proceed against Him openly because they feared the reaction of the people generally.

"And they sent unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest for no man: for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? Bring Me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at Him"—vers. 13-17.

The question of the tribute-money was a live one throughout Palestine. To pay this tax was a tacit acknowledgment of Rome's authority, something which was thoroughly repugnant to Jews of strong nationalistic feeling. The Herodians and some others advocated this recognition of the imperial government because of special favor they hoped to get by their subservience.

It was not any desire to know the right or wrong of the matter that led the representatives of the two opposed schools of thought to put the question to Jesus, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" Despite their flattering way of addressing Him they were only setting a trap for Him, hoping to ensnare Him into saying something that would give occasion either to accuse Him to their Roman overlords as an advocate of sedition, or to make it appear to the more intensely patriotic Jews that He had no sympathy with them in their yearning for deliverance from the Roman yoke.

He saw into their hearts and knew exactly why they had come to Him. His reply manifested this: "Why tempt ye Me? Bring Me a penny (that is, a denarius) that I may see it."

When they handed one of the coins to Him, He inquired, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." He said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Thus they fell into the pitfall they had digged for His feet, and they were amazed at His answer, and were silenced so far as that subject was concerned.

But others were waiting to question Him on another matter, as we find in the next few verses.

"Then come unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked Him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second

took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife"—vers. 18-23.

It was a group of Sadducees this time who sought to entangle Jesus. They represented a materialistic sect which denied the resurrection and the existence of angels and spirits. Whether the story they put before Him was true or not we cannot say. It seems most unlikely, and may only have been an imaginary tale designed to cast ridicule upon the doctrine of the resurrection.

According to them there was a certain woman who had been wife in succession to seven brothers, and had outlived them all. According to the levirate order, if a man died leaving no heir his brother was to take the widow to be his own wife; and the first child born of the new union would inherit the estates of the former husband. In the story they told, this law was carried to an extreme, seven brothers dying one after the other and all leaving the childless widow behind them.

Now came what these cunning casuists evidently considered an unanswerable refutation of the reasonableness of the idea of the resurrection of the dead. They asked, as recorded in verse 23, "In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife."

Jesus was unperturbed, for He saw through their sophistry at once. He declared they were **all** in error, and that for two reasons—their ignorance of the very Scripture which they professed to hold sacred, and also of the power, or might, of God. It was the Torah alone, that is, the books of Moses, that these Sadducees recognized as authoritative. So Jesus quoted from the book of Exodus in order to show the folly of their position.

“And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err”—vers. 24-27.

They denied the possibility of resurrection, because they taught that the soul of man died with the body. Jesus explained that those who are physically dead, are alive unto God, and that when the dead rise they do not again take up the same conditions that they knew on earth. They do not resume the marital state, but are as the angels in heaven: that is, they are sexless. The distinctions between man and woman will be done away in that new life.

Our Lord appealed to two great reasons for accepting the fact that the dead will rise. It is revealed in the Bible, which is God's inspired Word, and it rests upon the power of the omnipotent God. When

God has spoken, it is not for man to reason, but to accept His declaration with becoming reverence. To ask how anything can be done because contrary to the ability of finite creatures is to forget that all power belongeth unto God, with whom nothing is impossible (Luke 18:27).

"As the angels in heaven." The angels are sexless beings who do not have the power of reproducing their kind. In the resurrection the same will be true of mankind. In the eternal condition following the rising from the dead, marriage will have no place. Each will be a distinct individual capable of endless bliss or woe, but human relationships, as we know them here, will be ended.

"God spoke . . . saying, I am the God of Abraham, and . . . Isaac, and . . . Jacob." He did not say, "I was their God," but, "I am their God." He spoke of them as definite personalities related to Him by grace though their bodies were dead long since. In His own time they would rise again and be acknowledged as His own.

"He is not the God of the dead." If these patriarchs were reduced to unconsciousness, or annihilated by death, He would not still be their God. But "all live unto Him." Though they are dead as to the body and hidden from the eyes of men, He, the God of the spirits of all flesh (Numbers 16:22), sees and knows everyone in his present state between death and resurrection.

It was a crushing blow to their crass materialism, and they found no words with which to answer Him.

The Scriptures teach not merely the survival of the soul after the body dies (Matt. 10:28), but the literal, physical resurrection unto life, or else a resurrection unto judgment (John 5:28, 29). By this is not meant a reincarnation in some other form, as held by certain Oriental mystics and their misguided Occidental followers, but an actual rising again from the dead of the very same person who died. Our Lord Himself came out of the grave in the same body that had hung upon the cross, bearing still the marks of His passion (John 20:20, 27). In like manner death shall yield up the bodies of all men, even those which have been long since reduced to their chemical elements, for our God is the God of resurrection. He who created these bodies with all their marvelous powers can reassemble them and make them again when the time comes for the saved to be caught up to meet the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-17), and later for the wicked to rise and stand before the great white throne for judgment (Rev. 20:11-14). Surely nothing should have a more solemnizing affect upon us as we remain in this scene than the knowledge that this life is only a prelude for that which is to come, to be lived forever in the joy of heaven or endured amid the sad and gloomy horrors of hell. Faithfully Jesus Christ portrayed both aspects of the

life beyond the grave, that none might presume or be deceived by the vain hope of a happy immortality if living and dying in sin. He would have all men remember that there are two resurrections, and following these, two destinies. Therefore the importance of receiving Christ now, that we may be assured of felicity hereafter.

The next one to question the Lord was a man of different character to the crafty hecklers who preceded him.

"And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He: and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question"—vers. 28-34.

"One of the scribes came." He seems to have been an honest man. He had been impressed by the sincerity of Jesus Christ and the clearness of His answer to the questions of others. He came inquiring, "Which is the first commandment of all?" He meant, of course, not first in order, but first in importance.

"Jesus answered . . . The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." In these words, quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4, 5, our Lord epitomized all the commandments that deal specifically with man's duty toward God. He who loves God supremely will not willingly dishonor Him in anything. "The second . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This commandment was cited from Leviticus 19:18. It epitomizes all the precepts that have to do with man's duty toward other men. He who loves his neighbor will not desire to wrong him in any particular.

"Master, Thou hast said the truth." The scribe was deeply impressed, and at once declared his sincere appreciation of the answer the Lord Jesus had given. He had affirmed the unity of the Godhead. All Scripture-taught Jews held this as a cardinal truth. He went on, "To love Him . . . and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." There was real spiritual discernment manifested by this scribe. Nothing in the sacrificial ritual of the law was of any value in the sight of God if love were lacking. To love Him and to love one's neighbor wholeheartedly was that which pleased God above all else.

"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Nevertheless, with all his appreciation of the spirituality of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, this

scribe was not yet in the kingdom. He was, as we were, just outside the door. To step in would mean to receive Christ for himself—to trust Him as Saviour and own Him as Lord.

In the next instance it is Jesus Himself who asks the question and confounds His adversaries.

“And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He then his Son? And the common people heard Him gladly. And He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation”—vers. 35-40.

It is a matter of common knowledge in Israel, taught by the scribes and rabbis generally, that the Messiah would be a Son of David, in accordance with God’s promise to the psalmist-king that he should never want a man to sit upon his throne (1 Kings 2:4; Ps. 132:11). It is true that this promise depended upon the seed of David walking in obedience to the Word of the Lord, but an unconditional promise had also been made, as set forth in Psalm 89:1-4, 34-37. That the teachers in Israel were right, therefore, in declaring that Christ, that is, Messiah (the Anointed), was to be the Son of David, is clear. But there were other scriptures indicating that He would be also the Son of God, which they were ignoring. So Jesus challenged them by drawing their attention to Psalm

110, and asking for an explanation, "How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord (*Jehovah*) said to my Lord (*Adonai*), Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." He proceeded to elucidate this passage by pointing out that it was the Messiah of whom David had spoken, and whom he acknowledged as his Lord, a divine Person who was to sit on the throne of the Eternal—on the right hand of the Majesty on high. How then could such an one be David's Son? We know the answer. They did not, and were afraid to attempt an explanation. Jesus is both Son of David as to His humanity, and Son of God as to His divine nature; and as begotten in the womb of the virgin, without a human father. The whole mystery of the incarnation is wrapped up in this quotation from the psalm.

It is in this very connection that we get the words, "The common people heard Him gladly." They seemed even to enjoy the discomfiture of the scribes, whose manner of life was so contrary to their profession.

Jesus took occasion to refer to this and to warn the populace against the evil influence of these religious leaders.

"Beware of the scribes." They loved to be conspicuous and to be lauded and admired for their apparent piety. Their very garb marked them out as a special class presumably worthy of recogni-

tion such as others did not merit. They appeared in long clothing, and were pleased when they were the objects of the adulation of the common people. They loved the chief seats in the synagogues, and the best places at the feasts. Who can fail to see in all this, the pretentiousness of clericalism and the assumption that these scribes were worthy of particular recognition because of their office, whatever their lives might be?

For they were grasping and covetous, devouring widows' houses—that is, lending money on mortgage to needy widows and confiscating their property when their poor victims were unable to meet promptly their obligations. Yet all was done legally, so as to put them above the charge of fraud, and they covered their extortionate behavior by making long prayers in public places, thus maintaining an appearance of great piety.

But a reckoning day is coming when all the secret things of the heart will be brought to light, and hypocrites such as these will receive just retribution.

Significantly enough, following this denunciation of those who obtained riches but not by right, Jesus took occasion to commend the generosity of a poor widow, who may have been one of those despoiled as He had intimated.

“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him

His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living"—vers. 41-44.

"Jesus sat over against the treasury." He does this still. He takes note of all that is given for the maintenance of the testimony of God and the relief of human wretchedness. It is evident that a box for contributions was placed at or near one of the entrances to the temple courts, where the faithful might put their contributions for the upkeep of the worship and service of the Lord.

Jesus looked on and observed "how the people cast money into the treasury." He took note of the amounts put in and the manner in which this was done. Doubtless many gave very ostentatiously, anxious that others should give them credit for great generosity.

There came a poor widow who, as she passed the box, threw in "two mites, which make a farthing," possibly all she had earned that day by hard work in the service of some rich family.

Now heaven's method of computing values is altogether different to that of earth's. We are accustomed to judge by the amount given. The Lord estimates the value of the gift by the amount one has left! So Jesus testified, "I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury." He proceeded to show how He arrived at so amazing a conclusion.

The rich had cast in out of their abundance. After making their contributions they had vast sums left to use as they chose. But the widow had held back nothing. She had cast in all her living; that is, all her earnings for the entire day. Such is heaven's way of recognizing gifts for the work of the Lord!

Chapter Thirteen

THIS chapter should be read and studied carefully in connection with Matthew 24 and Luke 21. All three give us a report of our Lord's Olivet discourse, in which He traced prophetically the conditions that were to prevail in Palestine and among the Gentile nations after His rejection and resurrection, including the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus, and going on to the climax: the second coming of the Son of Man and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth in manifested power and glory. We look in vain for any mention in these chapters of the Church of the present dispensation. When Jesus spoke these words the truth as to the Body of Christ was still unrevealed. This mystery was not made known until given by special illumination to the Apostle Paul and through him to others some time after the present age of grace began.

Therefore in reading this great prophetic discourse we do well to recognize its strictly Jewish character. While it reveals much hitherto kept secret, there is no intimation in it of the origin, course or destiny of the Church, the heavenly people now linked by the Spirit with the risen Christ.

While many of those who heard this address were incorporated into that Church by the baptism

in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and after, yet all are viewed as the Jewish remnant waiting for the consummation of the Old Testament prophecy: the setting up of Messiah's kingdom, when the once-rejected Servant of Jehovah shall return to rule the nations with the iron rod of inflexible righteousness, in accordance with the declaration of the second psalm. The elect in view throughout are therefore the early saints, both Jews and converted Gentiles in the last days—the seventieth week of Daniel 9—who are to be gathered from all parts of the world to welcome the King when He sets up His throne on Mount Zion. If these considerations be kept in mind much confusion will be avoided.

The occasion of the discourse comes before us.

“And as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as He sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?”—vers. 1-4.

As Jesus and His followers left the city on the evening of the day in which He had been in controversy with the unbelieving leaders regarding several definite questions, the disciples took a pardonable pride as Jews, in calling His attention to the magnificent buildings of the temple and nearby palaces. Doubtless they thought that Jesus would soon take these over, and they with Him would

dwell in them as being associated with Him in administering the affairs of the kingdom. But to their amazement He declared that of all those great buildings not one stone should be left upon another, but all should be razed.

Pausing in their walk, Jesus sat upon the Mount overlooking the temple, and four of the disciples—Peter, James, John, and Andrew—asked Him privately to tell when these things should be, and what should be the sign that His words were about to be fulfilled.

“And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows”—vers. 5-8.

In these verses the Lord outlines the course of the present age, and speaks of the general characteristics that will prevail during the time of His absence. There will be no improvement in morals or in affairs of nations. The Prince of Peace has been rejected. Consequently there can be no lasting peace till He returns to reign and put down all unrighteousness.

Many false Christs were predicted and the predictions have been abundantly fulfilled, but the true sheep of the flock knew not the voices of these strangers. Wars and rumors of wars must needs be, because the only One who could have saved the

nations from these calamities has been spurned and crucified. Jesus clearly foresaw all this, and therefore pictured the exact state of things which we now see to have followed His ascension to heaven when rejected by the world.

Ever since He left this earth that which is outlined in verse 8 has been exemplified. Nation has risen against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. Great disturbances have filled men's hearts with dread, while famines and other sore troubles have made this world a scene of sadness and distress. But the worst of all suffering is yet in the future. These things are but the beginning of sorrows, even though they have continued for nearly twenty centuries.

Far worse are the dangers to which men are to be subjected in the time of the end, when God's final judgments are falling upon the earth. But even then in the time of Jacob's trouble and the era of trial which is to come upon all the world to try them that dwell on the earth, the message of the gospel will be proclaimed and will continue until the final consumation of the age.

"But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men

for My name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"—vers. 9-13.

The suffering saints referred to here are clearly those of Israel who will be God's final witnesses after the Church, as we know it, has been caught away to heaven, and the last week of Daniel 9 has begun. Then God will raise up a host of wise ones (the Maskilim of Daniel 12) to bear testimony and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom among all nations. These will be the special objects of Satan's enmity and will be exposed to fearful suffering and relentless persecution; nevertheless the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations ere the end shall come.

We of this present age may appropriate these words to ourselves when found in similar circumstances, but it is important to see their exact application.

While portraying this time of persecution, verses 11 to 13 also give comfort and encouragement to those who will suffer arrest and imprisonment in those dark days. The Holy Spirit of God will enable them to answer those who accuse them falsely, in such manner that their adversaries will not be able to gainsay or resist. This passage might seem to suggest that these words could apply only to this present dispensation of grace when the Holy Spirit indwells all believers, but we need to remember that even when His present work in the Church comes to an end, and He will be no longer personally dwelling in the saints as now, yet He is ever omni-

present and so will be with all who turn to Christ in those dark days, even as He was with Old Testament saints before Pentecost.

Betrayal by one's own relatives, even unfilial children giving evidence against godly parents, or *vice versa*, will call for great patience and long-suffering on the part of those who shall be witnesses to the coming King in that time of stress. Hated by all who are subject to the power of Satan working through the atheistic governments of the last days, those who confess Christ as earth's rightful King will be tried to the utmost, but "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." This is not to say that salvation in that hour of crisis will depend on individual faithfulness, but rather that endurance to the end is ever the evidence of reality. Mere profession will break down then, as now, but where one has actually been regenerated, power is given to continue in the path of devotedness to the Lord, no matter what he may be called upon to endure.

It is clear from the ninth chapter of Daniel that the last week will be divided into two parts. The entire period is called a "time of trouble" (Daniel 12:1), and "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7); but it is the last three-and-half years, beginning with the full manifestation of the Man of Sin, which is designated "the great tribulation." This will be ushered in by the setting up of the abomination of desolation predicted in Daniel 12:11.

"But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take anything out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, He is there; believe him not: for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things"—vers. 14-23.

We need to distinguish between "the abomination that maketh desolate" spoken of in Daniel 11:31, which refers to the image of Jupiter set up in the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in the distant past, and the "abomination that maketh desolate" of Daniel 12:11, which refers to a desecration yet to take place. It is this latter abomination of which our Lord was speaking. Whether it will be a literal image of the Beast (Rev. 13:14, 15) to be erected by the false prophet, the lamb-like Beast (the Antichrist) in the last days, or whether this image is itself a symbol of some secret agency acting on behalf of the blasphemous head of the coming world empire, we may not be able to speak positively. But in the light of the Lord's words the remnant living in that hour of trial will be able to understand, and they will know that the power of evil can last only twelve hundred and sixty days

thereafter, and at the end of that time the kingdom will be set up. The great tribulation, therefore, will go on throughout three-and-a-half years after this abomination is made manifest. This will be the time when the wrath of God will be poured out upon apostate Christendom and apostate Judaism. To Christians the promise is given that they shall not be exposed to wrath. We look for our Lord Jesus to snatch us away (literal rendering) from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10).

The instructions given in verses 14 to 18 apply particularly to the Jewish remnant in Palestine during the reign of the Beast and the Antichrist. As in the days of Titus, warning is given to avoid the city and to flee to the wilderness where they will be protected from the wrath of the devil as manifested through the Antichrist.

Daniel predicted "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Jesus here used similar language saying, "For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be" (ver. 19).

So terrible will be the catastrophe which shall fall upon the nations that except the Lord shorten the days "no flesh should be saved." But He tells us that for the elect's sake—referring to the elect of Israel and those who shall be spared out of the nations—those days shall be shortened.

Three-and-one-half years would come to approximately twelve hundred and seventy-eight days. But the power of the Beast will be limited to twelve hundred and sixty days. The eighteen days of "shortening" will permit the salvation of many from actual destruction.

In the light of the destructive power of the atomic bomb we can see readily how literally these words of Jesus can be taken.

In that awful time of strong delusion and hardness of heart many will be misled by false Christs and false prophets, as well as by the supreme Antichrist at Jerusalem; but the elect of God will be preserved from their deceitful and blinding influence. To these Jesus says, "Take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things."

It is certain that this prophecy of the great tribulation does not refer to any event already fulfilled, as for instance, the destruction of Jerusalem, or persecutions of the Church under either pagan or papal Rome, for the next verses tell us what will take place just as this period of wrath and judgment comes to a close.

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven"—vers. 24-27.

Observe that all these portents and the actual return of the Son of Man are to take place immediately "after that tribulation." Therefore, this condition has not yet taken place, for the Lord's second advent is still in the future. How near it may be none but God can say; but it is still the expectation of the people of God, and not something to which they can look back.

His coming to the earth will be attended with great natural convulsions, when everything that can be shaken will reel to and fro like a drunken man, and supernatural events will occur among the heavenly bodies. The expression, "The powers that are in heaven shall be shaken" is most significant in view of the atomic age upon which we have entered, for *uranium* is an element named from the Greek word for "heaven."

Note the difference between this stage of the second advent and that depicted in 1 Thessalonians 4. Here the Son of Man comes to the earth with power and great glory. There the Lord descends from heaven, but calls His saints to meet Him in the air. Here He sends forth His angels to gather together His elect (the remnant out of Israel and the nations who will be waiting for Him in that day) from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. There His heavenly election, the saints of the past ages and of the Church, the Body of Christ, will be raptured (caught up) to meet Him in the air, in

order to return with Him in glory when this passage in Mark is fulfilled.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is"—vers. 28-33.

In this section the fig tree is used as a symbol of Judah, or the Jewish people. It speaks, as we have seen already, of Israel nationally. When the fig tree puts forth her leaves one may know that summer is near. So when these things come to pass—when the Jews once more acquire national consciousness and the predicted signs begin to come to pass, all may know that the consummation, the coming of the King, is at hand. Until that day the unbelieving generation of the Jews will abide. All Satan's efforts will be unable to destroy them.

No matter how unbelievers may scoff, God's Word will stand. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His words never.

It is useless to try to work out some chronological system in order to locate the time of His coming. This is a secret, unrevealed even to angels, and as Man on earth the Son Himself chose not to know. It is the Father's prerogative to set the time, as Jesus also declared in Acts 1:7. How slow men have been to accept this, and what blunders they

have made by attempting to compute the time of His return!

It is for us to take heed to His words, to watch and pray, as we wait for the fulfilment of His promise.

"For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch"—vers. 34-37.

Like a man gone on a journey who gave instruction to his servants as to their duties in his absence but did not intimate the day or hour of his return, so Jesus our Lord has ascended to heaven, declaring that in due time He will come again but without naming the time. Meanwhile we are here to serve Him, who has appointed "to every man his work" and commanded the porter to watch.

Because of the uncertainty of the hour when He will come back to earth all His servants should ever be on the *qui vive*, waiting and watching expectantly lest, coming suddenly, He find them sleeping. To every one the word is spoken, *Watch!*

SUBDIVISION TWO—CHAPTERS 14 AND 15.

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

Events now move on rapidly to the consummation, when our blessed Lord was to die on the cross

as the great Sin-offering. In Matthew we have seen Him as the Trespass Offering, restoring that which He took not away (Ps. 69: 4). Here He gives Himself up to death in order to meet all God's claims against sin, viewed not only as actual trespass, but also as an innate principle in the heart of fallen man, hostile to God and manifested in acts of rebellion. The steps leading directly to the cross are all intensely solemn and deeply instructive.

We note the ever-increasing enmity of the chief priests and scribes in verses 1 and 2.

"After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people"—vers. 1, 2.

These wily hypocrites who served the devil in the livery of heaven were too crafty to risk arresting Jesus openly on the feast day as there would be too many of the common people in Jerusalem for them to cope with at that time; so they plotted secretly, waiting for a propitious hour in which to carry out their nefarious plans.

Meantime a little group of those who loved Him sought to honor Him in a special way. The home at Bethany, where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus dwelt, was, for our blessed Lord, one of the brightest spots on earth. It was one place where He was always welcome and where His mission was understood to a large extent. Mary, perhaps, entered into His thoughts better than the others, for she

learned at His feet what may have been hidden from her busier sister, and even from Lazarus himself. To these three, the Lord Jesus could allow His affection to go out in a way He could not always do toward others. We read that Jesus "loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (John 11:5), and it is very evident that they appreciated and reciprocated that affection, for, when the brother was ill, the sisters thought it was quite sufficient to send a messenger to Jesus to say to Him, "He whom Thou lovest is sick" (John 11:3).

I know that some take it for granted that there are two women involved in the different accounts of the anointing of the Lord in Bethany, but to me this seems utterly preposterous in view of the fact that practically the same conversation is given in each account. In each instance the disciples object to the waste of the ointment, on the ground that it might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor; and in each case the Lord defends the woman for what seemed to them like waste and expresses His personal appreciation of this woman's action. To me these words prove conclusively that it was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who anointed the Lord, and only she.

It is interesting to note how the Holy Spirit speaks of Bethany as "the town of Mary and . . . Martha." Doubtless, many important people lived in that suburban city, so nigh to Jerusalem, and one might

have identified it more naturally with them than with this quiet, unassuming family. But to God it was *their* town, because they loved and believed in His Son. May this not be more than a hint of the way the Lord looks upon our cities and villages today, valuing them, not as the places of residence of those great in the eyes of the world—whose names are prominent in political, scientific, or business circles—but rather as the place where some of His saints dwell who are numbered among the “quiet in the land” (Ps. 35:20), the poor of this world, rich in faith (James 2:5), unknown to men, yet well known to God (2 Cor. 6:9).

“And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on Me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her”—vers. 3-9.

“The house of Simon the leper.” We know nothing as to this man, but the presumption is that he had been a leper and was cleansed by Jesus. Some have supposed he was the husband of Martha; others that he was father of the three who were such intimate friends of Jesus. The “woman having an alabaster box of ointment” was Mary, of

whose act of devotion we also read in John 12. She considered nothing too precious for Jesus, upon whose head, and feet also (as John tells), she poured the spikenard as He reclined at the table. It was a beautiful tribute to the One whom she recognized as the promised Messiah.

"Why was this waste of the ointment made?" asked some. Judas, we know from John's account, was the prime spirit in this murmur of discontent. It indicated how little he and the rest understood of the events soon to take place, though Jesus had foretold them again and again. Mary anointed His body beforehand for its burial (v. 8).

"It might have been sold for . . . three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor." The Roman penny, or denarius, was a silver coin of a little less value than our twenty-five cent piece, but it had far greater purchasing power, and was the ordinary daily wage of a laboring man in those times; so that, according to the computation of Judas, the ointment represented a full year's wages, if the sabbath and special feast days be omitted. This seemed too much to lavish on Jesus, but true love knows no limit of what it delights to give and do for the Beloved. The suggestion that it might rather have been used in almsgiving did not mean, however, that Judas cared for the poor. We are told it was because he was a thief and kept the bag and bare away what was put therein (John 12:6, *literal rendering*).

"Let her alone; . . . she hath wrought a good work on Me." Jesus always appreciated every evidence of sincere affection, and He placed a high value upon Mary's act of devotion. Nothing is wasted which is lavished on Jesus our Lord. He deserves the best we have. He gave all for us. Mary's act of worship was an apt illustration of what we read in the Song of Solomon (1:12). She recognized in Jesus Israel's true King.

"Ye have the poor with you always . . . Me ye have not always." It is ever right and proper to minister to the needy, who can always be found if we desire to help them. Such ministry is commendable at all times. But Jesus was about to leave them, and Mary seemed to realize this.

"She hath done what she could." There can be no higher commendation than this. All cannot do great things for Christ, but it is well if each one does what he can as unto the Lord Himself.

"Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached . . . this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Mary had no thought that day that her kindly expression of love for the rejected King was to make her name known throughout the entire world; yet so it was, for the story is told in three of the Gospels and has been carried throughout every land where Christ is preached.

In these three friends of Jesus we have illustrated three things that should characterize all believers in Him. In Martha we see service, which is at its

best when free from worry and anxiety and done as unto the Lord Himself. In Mary we see discipleship and worship. She delighted to take the place of a learner at the feet of Jesus and to pour out her choicest treasure upon Him. Lazarus, who sat at table with Him (John 12:2), speaks of communion or fellowship. Blessed it is when all these characteristics are seen in any one individual!

The betrayal, mock trial, and condemnation to death of our blessed Lord form together the most colossal miscarriage of justice in all history. Yet everything was foreseen by God, and all was in accord with the sure Word of prophecy. Those who participated in this infamous crime were all playing the parts long since predicted, little as they realized it. It is not that they were foreordained to act as they did. They were free moral agents in one sense, because they acted deliberately according to their own wills. But they were slaves of Satan, the great arch-enemy of God and man, who led them on to do what God Himself had declared should be done. There is a difference between His foreknowledge and His foreordination—a difference that Peter made clear when, on Pentecost, he declared, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Every adverse actor in that most awful drama of the ages was individually responsible for his behavior toward the Holy

Saviour, even though it was by their means that He was brought to the cross, where He offered up Himself as a propitiation for our sins.

"And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray Him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him"—vers. 10, 11.

"Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve." He was the treasurer of the apostolic company (John 12:6), trusted by the rest, but all the time unrenewed in heart and life (John 6:70). Professing to be a son of God (Acts 1:17) he was really the son of perdition (John 17:12), destined, because of his own sins, to a lost eternity in endless woe. This was "his own place" (Acts 1:25). Though so highly privileged, it would have been better for him had he never been born (Matt. 26:24). He was, apparently, the only one of the twelve not a Galilean. Iscariot (Ish-Kerioth) means a "man of Kerioth," a city of Judah.

"They . . . promised to give him money." Covetousness, the love of money, is a root from which every form of evil may spring (1 Tim. 6:10). It led Judas to betray his Master to those who sought His death.

Simeon said of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he took the Holy Babe in his arms at the presentation at the temple, that through Him the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed (Luke 2:35). Jesus Christ is the touchstone of all hearts. Everything depends on our attitude toward Him. Judas, who

accompanied Him for some three years, basely betrayed Him; Peter, true in heart yet filled with the spirit of cowardice, denied any connection with Him: while Pilate, convinced of His innocence, weakly gave in to those who clamored for His death, and sentenced Him to the cross. They are all representative men, and set forth the various ways in which people still act toward the Christ of God.

"And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover? And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And whosoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the passover"—vers. 12-16.

When the day came that the passover lamb was to be sacrificed the disciples inquired as to where they should keep the feast with their Master. As visitors in Jerusalem they had no home of their own in which to observe this sacred rite. But it was customary for many households to provide a guest-room which strangers in Jerusalem might use freely in order to carry out the instruction given in the law regarding this service.

Jesus had foreseen all this, and He sent two of His disciples into the city with specific instructions to look for a man who should meet them, bearing a pitcher of water. This was far more definite in

the way of identification than we might think, for it was the women who ordinarily carried the water in earthenware pitchers or ewers upon their heads or shoulders. To see a man doing this was an unusual sight indeed. When this man met them, they were to follow him into whatever house he entered, and were to say to the host of that home, "The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples?" The host would show them immediately a large upper room furnished and prepared, in which they were to make ready the Paschal meal.

Following the instructions given, the two went into the city and found everything exactly as Jesus had said, and so they prepared the passover feast.

"And in the evening He cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? And another said, Is it I? And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born"—vers. 17-21.

In the evening, which was the beginning of the fourteenth Nisan (the same day on which Jesus was to die as the antitypical Paschal Lamb), He came with His twelve disciples, including the traitor Judas, and sat or reclined with them all at the table on which were placed the various dishes that were appointed in the law, as also certain cups of wine which had become customary.

As they observed the feast in solemn silence Jesus spoke saying, "Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me."

Startled by what seemed incredible, the eleven questioned Him with honest hearts asking, "Is it I?" Judas hypocritically put the same inquiry. Jesus replied, "It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with Me in the dish." Then He added that which one might think would have touched the hardest heart, as He declared, "The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

What were the feelings of Judas as he heard these words? We are not told, and it is useless to speculate; but when a little later, as John tells us, Jesus turned to him and said, "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27), he arose and went out immediately into the night.

It seems clear that it was following this exit of Judas that the Lord's Supper was instituted.

"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is My body. And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God" —vers. 22-25.

The passover feast, the annual memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage, was now about to close, when Jesus inaugurated another

feast which was to be the memorial throughout the entire Christian era of His own death and the redemption accomplished thereby.

He took up one of the flat, unleavened passover loaves and, after giving thanks, brake it, and gave it to the disciples that each might partake of it, as He said, "Take, eat: this is My body." Certainly no one there dreamed for one moment that Jesus meant that the bread was transubstantiated into His actual flesh. While they could not know all that was involved in that simple act, they at least knew that He meant the bread symbolized His body.

Later He took the cup in which was the fruit of the vine, the blood of the grape, and after giving thanks for this also, He passed it to the eleven, and they all drank of it. He explained the meaning of this by saying, "This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many." And He added, "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God." They could not understand the meaning of this at the time, but later all would be made plain.

The same Greek word here rendered "testament" is also translated "covenant." They knew God had promised to make a new covenant with Israel and Judah—a covenant of pure grace. The first covenant at Sinai was confirmed by the sprinkling of blood. The cup of which the disciples partook spoke

of the blood whereby the new covenant was to be sealed.

When all was over the little company left the upper room and wended their way to Gethsemane.

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death, tarry ye here, and watch"—vers. 26-34.

"When they had sung an hymn." This was, in all probability, what was known then as "the little Hall-el," consisting of Psalms 113 to 118. Think of Jesus, with the cross so near, and to Him so visible, leading the praises of the little company!

As they moved slowly along the way from the house in which they had eaten the passover, out through the gate of the city and across the viaduct to the Mount of Olives, Jesus warned the disciples of their coming defection. He, the Shepherd, was to be smitten, as Zechariah had prophesied (13: 7). They, the sheep of His flock, were all to be scattered because of the fact that they would be stumbled on account of what was about to transpire to Him.

But He gave again the promise of resurrection, and reminded them that He would then go before them to meet them in Galilee.

Self-confident and knowing not his own weakness, Peter declared, "Although all shall be offended (or stumbled), yet will not I." Jesus told him that ere the cock should crow twice he would thrice deny any knowledge of the One he had owned as Master. In the other Gospels it is reported that He said, "Before the cock crow." There is no contradiction. Cock-crowing was a definite time—three o'clock in the morning. Here we learn that He also indicated the crowing twice of a specific cock.

Unimpressed, Peter vociferated, "If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise." The other ten made the same affirmation.

At last they reached Gethsemane, the garden where Jesus had gone often to pray and commune with His Father. He left eight of the disciples near the entrance, bidding them sit there while He went on to pray. But He took Peter, James, and John with Him into the garden, and even as they beheld they saw a great change come over Him. His usual calm gave place to agitation of spirit, so that they realized He was entering upon some great crisis. But they could not understand even when He declared, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." He bade them tarry where they were and watch while He went farther into the depths of the olive grove.

"And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt. And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again He went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer Him. And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand"—vers. 35-42.

It was in anticipation of drinking the cup of wrath which our sins had filled that He prayed in agony that if it were possible that hour, and the cup, might pass from Him. His holy soul shrank from the awfulness of being made sin upon the tree. It was not death, but the divine anger against sin, the imputation to Him of all our iniquities that filled His soul with horror. There was no conflict of wills. He was in all things submissive as He prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

In this, the supreme test of subjection to the Father's will, He proved Himself, as ever, the obedient Son who did always those things that pleased His Father. But He could not have been the holy Man He was if He could have contemplated the cross and the bitter cup of judgment against sin with equanimity. The holier one is the more he suffers from imputation of sin.

Returning to the three He found them sleeping. Addressing Himself to Peter who had made such protestations of loyalty, He gently reproved him, asking, "Coudest not thou watch one hour?" Then He bade them all to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation, for while the spirit was ready, or willing, the flesh was weak.

Once more He went on into the darkness and prayed as before; and a second time He returned to the three only to find them asleep again. The third time He prayed and came again to them, His agony having passed, and looking sorrowfully upon the disciples, He said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." Then He added, "It is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." He then bade them rise up, as the betrayer was at hand.

Already a multitude were making their way through the trees of the garden, searching for Him.

"And immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straight-way to Him, and saith, Master, Master; and kissed Him. And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked"—vers. 43-52.

The infamous behavior of Judas in betraying Jesus to the leaders in Israel, fills us with indignation, that one so favored could behave so abominably. But it was simply the exemplification of what is in all our hearts, unrestrained by divine grace. Jesus bore it all with quiet dignity and with no evidence of anger or ill-will to the one who was treating Him so wickedly.

As Judas came, leading the multitude to the trysting place which he knew so well, he told them that he would identify the One they sought by greeting Him with a kiss. As he came to where Jesus was waiting quietly, Judas stepped up to Him and saying, "Master, Master"—that is, "Rabbi, Rabbi," he kissed Him repeatedly, as the original implies.

At this the soldiers laid hands on Jesus and bound Him in order to lead Him away. At sight of his Master thus betrayed and ill-treated, Peter's spirit was stirred, and he began slashing about with his sword, but all he accomplished was to slice off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high-priest—something that might have cost Peter his life later on. Jesus, however, as we learn elsewhere (Luke 22:51), put forth His hand and healed the wounded man.

Turning to the armed rabble, He inquired, "Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves (or, rods) to take Me?" He reminded them that He had taught openly in the temple. Why had they not arrested Him on one of those occasions?

But all was permitted of God that the prophetic Scriptures might be fulfilled.

Realizing something of the seriousness of the situation all the disciples fled panic-stricken, leaving Jesus alone with His captors.

There was one unnamed youth who followed closely, clad only in a linen cloth wound round his body; but as some in the company sought to lay hold on him also, he too fled, leaving the cloth in their hands, and disappearing naked among the trees of the garden. Who was this young man? Was it John Mark himself, the author of this Gospel? Many have thought so because of the fact that he alone mentions the incident, and does so without identifying the youth. We shall never know for certain until we stand at the judgment-seat of Christ.

"And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with Him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire"—vers. 53, 54.

The first terror over, at least two of the disciples—John and Peter—returned and followed the crowd to the house of the high-priest, where Jesus was to have His first hearing, if such it could be called. Mark does not tell of John who was related to the house of Caiaphas, and who ventured boldly inside the house. But Peter followed at a distance till all were either inside the palace proper, or in the porch.

"They led Jesus away to the high-priest." The arrest of the Lord Jesus Christ in the night-time, and His being dragged to the court of the high-priest before dawn was illegal, but these men, ordinarily so punctilious about obeying the traditions of the elders, could forget all such details in their desire to get rid of Jesus Christ.

"Peter followed Him afar off . . . and he sat with the servants." Peter's declension began months before, when he dared to rebuke the Lord Jesus (Matt. 16:22). He may have become exalted because of the very gracious commendation of Jesus a little earlier (Matt. 16:17, 18). From that time on we see one evidence of failure after another. Now, he who had boasted that he would never forsake his Lord followed at a distance, and sat in the company of the ungodly.

Yet it was love for his Lord that drew him back and led him to follow, though afar off, that he might see the end of the affair which was so contrary to all his hopes and expectations.

"And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee? But He held His peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high

priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands"—vers. 55-65.

In vain did the leaders seek for proof of any perfidy on the part of Jesus. Although they had suborned conscienceless, false witnesses to accuse Him, their testimony was so contradictory that it could not be used to discredit Him.

Finally, Caiaphas challenged Jesus as to why He did not reply or seek to clear Himself of these false accusations, but there was no answer.

Nonplussed, but determined to find some cause whereof to convict the Prisoner, the high-priest inquired, "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" To this Jesus replied with perfect calmness, "I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." This implied that He was the Son of Man spoken of in Daniel 7, who was to receive the kingdom from the Ancient of Days.

Filled with indignation and appearing to be horror-stricken, Caiaphas forgot the law that forbade a high-priest to rend his garments, and he tore his robe, as he declared that there was no need of any further witnesses, for all had heard the blasphemy uttered by the lips of Jesus. What did such an One deserve? Unanimously they condemned Him to death.

Then ensued a shameful scene that would have disgraced any court were the prisoner ever so guilty. Some spat on His sacred countenance. Others blindfolded Him, and then, as they slapped Him insultingly with the open hand, cried derisively, "Prophecy;" asking that He name those who were so mistreating Him. But no word came from His holy lips.

Meantime, Peter met his great test and failed, as Jesus had forewarned him only a few hours before.

"And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, *Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice.* And when he thought thereon, he wept"—vers. 66-72.

"Peter was beneath in the palace." His rightful place would have been in the company with his Lord, but fear kept him from openly identifying himself with the Saviour in this hour of testing.

"Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." It was one of the servant-maids who thus accused him. Evidently, she had seen him in the company of the Lord Jesus on some other occasion.

"He denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest." It was a complete disavowal of all knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this from the lips of one who had made such great protestations of loyalty.

"A maid saw him again, and began to say . . . This is one of them." Recognized by another servant-girl, she immediately pointed him out to others as a follower of Jesus.

"He denied it again." A second time the fearful disciple disowned all knowledge of Christ. Then others, led by a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off as he slashed about with his sword (John 18:26), accused him, even calling attention to his rough Galilean accent as an evidence that he belonged to the band of those who were known to be disciples of Christ.

"He began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom ye speak." Terrified, Peter reverted to the language of his unconverted days and declared with oaths that he did not know the Lord Jesus Christ at all. To what depths may the believer fall if he gets out of fellowship with his Lord!

"Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him." The crowing of a cock (the second time that early morning) brought Peter to his senses, and he remembered with grief the words of the Lord Jesus, who had forewarned him of this very failure.

Difference between Apostasy and Backsliding.

Note the difference is illustrated clearly in the records concerning Judas and Simon Peter. Apostasy is a complete rejection of the truth, and hence of Him who came to proclaim it and who is Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life. One may profess faith in Christ and give outward adherence to His teaching without ever being born again. In the hour of severe temptation, such an one may apostatize, completely repudiating all he once professed to believe. This is to become an apostate, and for such an one there is no promise of restoration. Backsliding, on the other hand, is a lowering of one's spiritual experience until in the hour of testing there is no strength to stand, and so failure may come in to mar one's testimony. But the Lord says, He is married to the backsliding one, and He will bring about restoration eventually (Jer. 3:14). Peter was a backslider. Though he fell into grievous sin, he soon realized his wretched plight and returned in deep penitence to the Lord he had denied.

We come now to the great crisis which had been ever before the mind of our Lord from the beginning of His sojourn here on earth, and which had in fact brought Him from the glory that was His with the Father before all worlds, into this scene where sin had for so long defiled the fair creation.

Details given in the other Gospels are omitted here. The scene moves rapidly on from the council of the Jewish leaders to Pilate's judgment-hall and

then to the cross. There is no mention of the court of Herod, nor of other matters on which the Spirit of God led the other writers to elaborate.

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused Him of many things: but He answered nothing. And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against Thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired"—vers. 1-6.

Early in the morning the high-priest summoned the Sanhedrin together and with their endorsement bound Jesus as though He were a dangerous criminal, and as soon as Pilate was prepared to hold court they delivered Him up to be judged according to Roman law, in order that He might be executed as an insurrectionist, for they knew that the trumped-up charge of blasphemy would mean nothing to the procurator, acting as representative of the Imperial Government.

Crafty, self-seeking, and relentlessly cruel, Pilate was a scheming politician, who regarded the rights of no man if to maintain them might prove an embarrassment to himself. Thoroughly convinced, both of the innocence of Jesus and the enmity behind the accusation brought by the leaders in Israel, Pilate quailed before the threat embodied in the words, "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Caesar's friend" (John 19:12). Fearing that his

political enemies might misrepresent him before the emperor, he chose to sacrifice the Lord Jesus, who in his eyes was an unimportant Galilean artisan, turned teacher, in order that he might retain the favor of Rome. Consequently, his name has gone down in infamy throughout the centuries, as embodied in the words of the creed, "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

As the leaders had declared that Jesus had given out that He was the rightful King of the Jews and had gathered a group of malcontents about Him with the avowed object of delivering Israel from the Roman yoke, Pilate put the question directly to the Prisoner, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Thou sayest it." That is to say, "You have said that which is indeed the truth." For King of the Jews He surely was; though the time had not yet come to claim the throne of David.

Vehemently the chief priests shouted out one accusation after another against Jesus, to which He made no reply.

Marveling at the calmness of the lowly Man who stood so meekly before him, Pilate asked Him, "Answerest Thou nothing?" Then he added, "Behold how many things they witness against Thee." But Jesus, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold, "opened not His mouth."

Pilate was perplexed. He saw through the pretended concern of the priests and scribes for the honor of the empire, and realized that they were

moved by a spirit of envy against this Man who had captivated the imagination of so many of the common people. For there can be no doubt but that Pilate had heard much of the sayings and miracles of Jesus. His agents were everywhere throughout the land. He knew well why the leaders in Israel hated the Nazarene.

In casting about how he might release Jesus without angering these haughty ecclesiastics, Pilate recalled that some time before, Rome had authorized him to release one political prisoner at the passover season, in order to placate the Jews, leaving the choice to them. He thought of an actual insurrectionist who was once followed by many, but who was now awaiting execution, and Pilate decided to offer the people the choice of this malefactor or Jesus.

"And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them"—vers. 7-11.

The name "Barabbas" means "Son of the Father." Some ancient manuscripts call him Jesus Barabbas. He becomes, as it were, a figure of the antichrist. He was well-known as a leader in a revolt against the Roman rule over Palestine and had participated in an insurrection in which he had been guilty of murder. Evidently he was a hero in

the eyes of the rabble, for they at once began to cry out, begging Pilate that he would follow the custom referred to above and give them their choice of a prisoner to be released.

To this Pilate agreed, but hoped it would mean to free him from any further responsibility concerning Jesus. So he inquired, "Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" The title was used by him sardonically, as though he recognized in Jesus a rebel against Rome, for in his heart he knew the real reason back of their hatred for Jesus.

"The chief priests moved the people," who were easily swayed in such a scene of excitement, and stirred them to ask for Barabbas, which they did.

"And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify Him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified"—vers. 12-15.

"What will ye then that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews?" As intimated above, Pilate was convinced that it was only the envy of the chief priests that had led them to accuse the Lord Jesus before him. He vainly endeavored to forego all responsibility in the matter, but put the question to them in such a way as to make them feel that the final decision was their own.

"They cried out again, Crucify Him." Because of His exposure of their own hypocrisy, these base,

religious leaders demanded a cruel death for Him who had so often rebuked them.

"Why, what evil hath He done?" The Roman judge knew Jesus had broken no law of the Empire and therefore did not deserve to die, but Pilate was too much afraid of the Jews to take a positive stand against them. The rabble, stirred up by the priests, demanded the crucifixion of the One against whom no evil could be proved.

"Pilate . . . released Barabbas . . . and delivered Jesus . . . to be crucified." He who should have maintained the right of the innocent was more concerned about conciliating the Jews than protecting the Christ. So he who had a little while before declared Him a just Person (Matt. 27:24) gave sentence that He should die by crucifixion.

If Pilate had been a conscientious judge, he would have refused to countenance the unproved charges of Christ's adversaries and would have set Him free, but God overruled and used him as the instrument to fulfil His Word as to the manner of Christ's death.

"And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross"—vers. 16-21.

After Pilate's pusillanimous behavior in giving in to the chief priests and condemning Jesus, the Lord was led from the judgment-hall to the outer court called the Praetorium, where they subjected the patient Sufferer to a season of rude mockery and torture.

They had heard the charge made that Jesus gave Himself out as a King; so with fiendish glee they pretended to own Him as such, clothing Him with a purple robe as a sign of apparent recognition of His royalty. They pressed upon His sacred brow a crown made of the wild thorn bush so common to the countryside. Bowing before Him in mock humiliation they saluted Him crying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" To these rude soldiers this was all an absurd jest. They were not half so guilty, despite all the barbarities they heaped upon Jesus, as those of His own people who had demanded His crucifixion.

Having satisfied their sadistic desire for pleasure in the sufferings of the Prisoner, they divested Him of the robe, put His own garments upon Him, and proceeded to lead Him out to the place of crucifixion.

A heavy cross was placed upon His shoulders that He might bear it to Calvary, or Golgotha. Tradition says He fell beneath the weight of it, but there is no such statement in Scripture. We are told only that Simon, a Cyrenian, passing by, a countryman, here designated as the father of Alexander and Rufus, but called elsewhere only by his own name, Simon a Cyrenian, was conscripted to

bear the cross and thus relieve the condemned One. The early Christians said that this Cyrenian and his sons all became loyal followers of Jesus in after days. Some identify one of the sons with the Rufus of Romans 16:13.

The next section of the chapter brings us to the hill of Golgotha. Golgotha, Calvary, The Place of a Skull—what sacred memories cluster around these words! Before our Lord was crucified they meant nothing to anyone except as designating a place outside the walls of Jerusalem for the execution of criminals—offenders against the laws of mighty Rome. But for more than nineteen centuries since the Son of Man was lifted up, the very name *Calvary*, or its equivalent in other tongues, has stirred the hearts of millions as the symbol of a love that was stronger than death, which the many waters of judgment could not quench.

From the moment when He came forth from the Father to the stable of Bethlehem, the cross was ever before our blessed Lord. It was in order that He might be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2) that He became Man. One of our hymn-writers has well said,

"His path, uncheered by earthly smiles,
Led only to the cross."

There the sin question was settled for eternity, when He, the sinless One, was made sin (that is, became a sin-offering) that "we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

We note with awe and reverence that for six dreadful hours the Son of God hung upon **that** cross of shame. These six hours are divided very definitely into two parts. From the third to the sixth hours—that is, from what we would call nine o'clock in the morning till noon, the sun was shining, and all could see what was transpiring. During those three hours Jesus Christ was suffering at the hands of man. It was not what men inflicted upon Him that put away sin (Hebrews 9:26). For all their malignancy men have to be judged unless repentance led them to turn for salvation to the One they crucified (Acts 2:23; Ps. 69:20-28).

From the sixth to the ninth hour darkness spread over all the scene. No human eye could pierce that gloom. It was then that Messiah's soul was made an offering for sin. What Elizabeth Barrett Browning has called "Immanuel's orphaned cry;" that is, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" when linked with Psalm 22, from which it was taken, indicates the awful abandonment of soul into which the Lord Jesus Christ went when He became the great Sin-bearer. It was then that God, the righteous Judge, dealt with Him as the Surety standing in the sinner's stead. Because of what He endured there, expiation has been made for iniquity, and now God can "be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). God grant that our hearts may ever be tender, and that our spirits may be deeply moved

as we consider anew the Saviour's death on Calvary.

"And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not. And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with Him they crucify two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors. And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth Elias. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this Man was the Son of God"—vers. 22-39.

"The place of a skull." Many now believe that this refers to the skull-shaped hill outside Jerusalem, near the Damascus Gate, known now as "Gordon's Calvary." Others understand the words to refer simply to the place of execution.

"Wine mingled with myrrh." This was a stupefying draught, prepared in order to assuage the suffering of those dying by crucifixion. The Lord

Jesus would not drink of it. He would not accept anything that might hinder His entering fully into all that the cross involved.

"They parted His garments, casting lots upon them." In this they were fulfilling unknowingly the prophecy of David, uttered over a thousand years before, as recorded in Psalm 22: 18. The criminals' garments were recognized as part of the perquisites of the soldiers officiating at a crucifixion.

"It was the third hour." Counting, according to Roman time, from sunrise, or what we call six o'clock.

"His accusation . . . THE KING OF THE JEWS." It was customary to fasten placards above the heads of those crucified, indicating the nature of their offense. Pilate ironically designated Jesus the King of the Jews, as one dying for rebellion against the Roman authority.

"With Him they crucify two thieves." These were actually guilty of crimes against the law of the land. Mark does not tell us of the conversation that took place between them and of the one who confessed his guilt and cried to Jesus for deliverance. We get that in Luke 23: 39-43.

"He was numbered with the transgressors." Isaiah had thus written of Him seven centuries before. Now his words were fulfilled literally (Isaiah 53:12).

"They that passed by railed on Him." With no pity for His grief and agony, the jeering mob dis-

torted His words and flung them in His face, taunting Him and calling upon Him to demonstrate His power by descending from the cross if He were indeed the Anointed of God. They did not realize that it was their sins that held Him on that tree, not the nails that were driven through His hands and feet.

"He saved others; Himself He cannot save." When the chief priests uttered these words in mockery they were declaring a tremendous fact. If He would save others He could not save Himself.

"Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." In cruel irony they addressed Him by the very titles that were His by right, but there was no response. To descend from the cross would have meant the eternal doom of all our fallen race.

"When the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." As that supernatural darkness spread over all the scene, a terrible sense of horror must have struck the souls of the ribald multitude. It was in those three hours that the cup of judgment was pressed to the Saviour's lips and drained to the dregs, that we might drink of the cup of salvation (Ps. 116:13).

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" The words are Aramaic, and are found in the first verse of Psalm 22. They tell us, as nothing else could, what it meant for Jesus Christ to take the sinner's place

and endure in His soul the sense of divine abandonment, which impenitent sinners will yet have to experience.

"Behold, He calleth Elias;" that is, Elijah. These were the words of one who did not understand the Aramaic and thought the cry, "Eloi," was addressed to the prophet Elijah.

"One ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar. This we know, from John 19: 28, 29, was in response to the cry of Jesus, "I thirst," as the darkness passed away. He recalled one prophecy yet unfulfilled (Ps. 69: 21), and in answer to His cry a sponge filled with vinegar was pressed to His parched lips.

The Two Cups. The Lord Jesus Christ refused the cup of myrrh and wine, but drank of the vinegar. The first was calculated to bring about insensibility. He would not permit this. The other spoke of the sourness and bitterness of man's attitude toward Him. He accepted this without a murmur.

"Jesus cried with a loud voice." He did not die from exhaustion. He dismissed His spirit when all was accomplished (Matt. 27: 50).

"The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." It was God's hand that tore the veil in two, signifying that the way into the Holiest had now been opened up (Heb. 10: 19, 20). God need no longer dwell in the thick darkness (2 Chron. 6: 1). He could come out in the light, and

man could go in to Him in all the value of the cleansing blood of Christ (1 John 1:7).

"Truly this Man was the Son of God." Convinced by what he saw and heard, the Roman centurion, in charge of the crucifixion, declared his personal faith in the supernaturalness of the holy Sufferer who had just died upon that cross.

The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus was far more than a martyrdom for truth; though it was that too (John 18:37). A witness *is* a martyr. But the cross was the display of God's hatred against sin and His infinite love for lost mankind. We should never think of Calvary as though it simply involved an innocent Man dying for guilty men. It was God giving Himself in the Person of His Son to bear the judgment which His righteous law declared to be the penalty of sin. There "the Offended died to set the offender free."

"There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him;) and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem. And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid"—vers. 40-47.

There is something tenderly pathetic about this little company of faithful women to whom the Lord Jesus Christ was precious, and who, bewildered and perplexed as they must have been, stood looking on, though at some distance, beholding the One whom they had believed to be the Messiah of Israel, God's Anointed King, dying on a cross of shame.

Mark mentions two women by the name of Mary: Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and of Joses—that is, of James and Jude, two of the apostles. He does not mention Mary the mother of our Lord. We know, however, from John's account that she stood by the cross until her dying Son commended her to the care of the beloved Apostle John.

Salome and other women were in that company, who had come from Galilee in order that they might be near Him and hear His gracious messages. What must have been the thoughts of their hearts when they beheld Him apparently powerless in the hand of His enemies! Did they remember what His apostles had forgotten: that He had promised He would rise again the third day? Apparently not, for we find afterwards that His resurrection was to them as great a wonder as it was to any of His other friends.

Isaiah wrote seven hundred years before that He should be with the rich in His death. And so when He had actually given up His life, Joseph of Arimathaea, a member of the high council of Israel, but one who was a disciple in secret, and who waited

for the kingdom of God, now came out into the open, identifying himself with the rejected Christ by going boldly unto Pilate and asking for the body of the crucified Saviour.

Those who were put to death in this way often lingered, not only for many hours, but even for days upon their crosses before death actually brought relief from their sufferings. So Pilate could hardly believe that Jesus was already dead. He called the centurion who had been in charge of the execution, and inquired of him whether Jesus had been any while dead. When he was assured that it was indeed true he gave commandment that the body should be intrusted to Joseph, who bought fine linen and reverently and tenderly took the body down from the cross, and in accordance with the Jewish way of burying, wrapped it in the linen and laid the precious form away in his own new tomb, a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock close by the place of crucifixion. Rolling a great stone across the entrance of the sepulcher he went his way.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary stood at some distance looking on, beholding where He was laid. It was their thought, as we know, to come back to the tomb as soon as the Sabbath was passed, and properly embalm the body which had been so hastily placed in the sepulcher, but this was not to be; for God was about to manifest His power and express His approval of the work of His be-

loved Son by raising Him in triumph from the tomb.

SUBDIVISION THREE—CHAPTER 16

THE RESURRECTION: CHRIST SERVING STILL

The dark night of death was not the end of the service of our blessed Lord. For Him the "path of life" led out of the tomb up to the glory where, at the Father's right hand, there are pleasures forevermore. His soul was not left in Hades—the unseen world, nor did His precious body see corruption in the sepulcher (Ps. 16). Isaiah had declared by the Spirit of prophecy, "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10). So He who was delivered up to death of His own volition for our offenses was raised again because of our justification (Rom. 4:25). It is not exactly, as in the A. V., raised for, or, in order to, our justification, but rather because His death had met every claim of the justice of God against us; and therefore His resurrection was the divine declaration of our justification from all things.

As we have seen heretofore, Jesus foretold again and again His rising from the dead after three days; but His disciples were dull of hearing and failed to comprehend the import of His words. Therefore the resurrection was unexpected, and it took them

some time to credit so marvelous a fact. Only the clearest demonstration that He who had died was alive again convinced them of the truth. Some were skeptical almost up to the end, as this chapter shows.

Several godly women were last at the cross and first at the tomb on that wondrous Easter morn.

"And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid"—vers. 1-8.

The last Sabbath of the law that God ever recognized had drawn to a close. During that Old Covenant Rest Day no one on earth knew whether redemption had been accomplished or not. The Jews observed it; although their hands were red with the blood of the Servant of Jehovah, whose death they had insisted upon, and in so doing they fulfilled their own scriptures without realizing it. Now the first day of a new week and of a new age had dawned. As the first streaks of light shone athwart the sky three women with broken hearts, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the

less, and Salome, left their homes and wended their way toward the garden wherein was Joseph's new tomb in which the body of Jesus had been placed, swathed in linen cloths, but which they intended to anoint and embalm in the Jewish manner.

As the sun rose higher they came in sight of the tomb, and as they did so, they thought of the great stone which had been rolled across the entrance. This was probably like a large millstone fitted into a slot cut in the limestone on an incline, so that it could readily be rolled down the groove so as to cover the door, but it would take considerable strength to roll it back and up again.

As they walked on the women questioned one with another as to how they would gain entrance to the crypt where the body lay. "Who," they asked, "shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?" None of the disciples were on hand to do this service. They mourned the death of Jesus and evidently thought there was nothing now that they could do to change things for the better.

But as the women came closer they were astonished to see that the stone was rolled back already and the entrance plainly revealed. Their first thought, we know from other accounts, was that the tomb had been rifled by the enemies of Jesus and the body stolen and carried elsewhere.

But as they entered the sepulcher they beheld "a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment." His presence filled the

women with a strange alarm. Little did they understand at the moment that this young man had been present at the creation of the universe, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). His was eternal youth, for he belonged not to earth but to heaven.

At once he reassured them, bidding them not to be afraid. He added, "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him."

As with wondering eyes they gazed upon the empty crypt where only the graveclothes remained. The angel (for such he was) bade them go their way and tell His disciples, and Peter, that Jesus was going before them into Galilee to that trysting-place of which He had told them ere He was crucified. There He would manifest Himself to them.

There is something peculiarly touching about those two words, "*and Peter.*" He must have spent the time of his Lord's entombment in grief and agony of soul as he pondered on his denial. He would not feel worthy any longer to be called one of His disciples. But the special message, "*and Peter,*" would be the assurance that Jesus loved him still and counted him as one of His own.

Hurriedly the women left and hastened toward the city, afraid to tell anyone what they had seen and heard. One of them evidently turned back, and as she lingered in the garden Jesus Himself

appeared to her. This was the one of the three who loved most because her deliverance had been so great.

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not"
—vers. 9-11.

"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene." There seems no scriptural evidence that this Mary was ever a dissolute, immoral woman, as so many have supposed. Down through the centuries a Magdalene has been looked upon as synonymous with a harlot. This is because many have sought to identify Mary of Magdala with the woman of the city, who came into the Pharisee's house, as recorded in Luke 7, and washed the feet of Jesus with her tears of repentance. But there seems to be no proof that the two are identical. What we are told here is that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary. Many an otherwise respectable woman has been demon-controlled at times. It is not necessary to suppose that demon possession implies unchastity.

Jesus revealed Himself to Mary in such a way that all her doubts were gone; and she hastened to tell His disciples, who were mourning and weeping over the death of their Lord, that He was indeed risen from the dead.

But as yet they could not credit her story, and though she confidently affirmed that she had seen

and talked with Him, they did not believe that He who had died was alive again. Mark does not mention the visit of John and Peter to the tomb, and their corroboration of the story of Mary. But he tells us in few words of that which Luke describes so fully—the meeting of Jesus with the two Emmaus disciples.

“After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them”—vers. 12-13.

From the words “He appeared in another form” some have drawn the erroneous conclusion that after resurrection Jesus no longer possessed the identical body in which He was crucified, but other scriptures forbid such a thought. It was their eyes that were holden, as Luke tells us, not that He had assumed a different body.

After His manifestation as they sat with Him at meat, they returned to Jerusalem and told the eleven that they had seen Him; but again we read, “Neither believed they them.” It was difficult to convince them that Jesus had overcome death.

The last appearance which Mark mentions took place in that same room as they were partaking of their evening meal.

“Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen"

—vers. 14-20.

"He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat." Whether this was on the same occasion as that mentioned by Luke (24: 36-43) and John (20:19) we may not be able to decide. In all probability it was either on the first evening, when Thomas was absent, or the second, when he was there. As some were still unbelieving, the Lord "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart," in that they had not accepted the testimony of the women, and of Cleophas and his companion, who only confirmed what Jesus Himself had told them would take place. It is important to keep their unbelief in mind as we go on to consider what He told them afterward. All this seems to fit in with the earlier occasion rather than the later one, for by the time Thomas was convinced all doubt seems to have gone from all of them.

The great commission was not given at one time only, but on several occasions, and in each instance there are differences that are of deep interest. Here He set forth His program of world evangelization in no uncertain terms. "Preach the gospel to every creature." They were to carry the good news of an accomplished redemption, not only to Israel to whom the message of the kingdom had

been largely confined during the Lord's earthly ministry (Matt. 10: 6), but "into all the world." Every barrier was to be thrown down that the river of grace might flow out to all.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Those who received the message in faith were to witness to it by being baptized, thus declaring themselves openly as His disciples. There was no saving virtue in the ordinance itself, but it was the expression of subjection to Christ. Those who refused to believe would be judged (see R. V.). Note that He did *not* say, He that is not baptized shall be judged.

"These signs shall follow them that believe." These were what Paul calls "the signs of an apostle" (2 Cor. 12:12). These miraculous powers were given to the authoritative messengers in order to accredit them as Christ's representatives (Acts 4: 30-33; 5:12). But they were not displayed by any who did not believe, and we have already seen that, even among the Twelve, "some doubted." It is a mistake to suppose that the signs followed those who believed the messengers. That is not the thought. To some, indeed, who themselves became witnesses publicly, such gifts were granted (1 Cor. 12: 7-11), but this was according to the sovereign will of God.

"He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." Mark does not tell us how much time elapsed after this commission was given

ere the ascension, but the other records indicate that nearly forty days transpired. At the appointed time the Man Christ Jesus was received up into glory (1 Tim. 3:16), where He now shares the Father's throne (Heb. 1:3).

"They went forth, . . . the Lord working with them." All that His servants accomplished for Him is actually done by Him as He works in and through them in the energy of His Holy Spirit. We are told, "They went forth, and preached every where." We know from the book of Acts that they were slow in doing this. It was some time before they could divest themselves of their Jewish prejudices in order to be free to go into all the world and make known the good news to the Gentiles. But as time went on they entered more fully into the mind of the Lord and so went everywhere as He had bidden them.

This work of world evangelization is in progress still, and will not be completed until all men everywhere have heard the message of the grace of God going out to a lost world. Interest in missions is not an elective in God's university of grace. It is something in which every disciple is expected to major. We who are saved have been entrusted by our risen Lord with the glorious privilege of carrying the gospel to the whole world. It is for this very purpose we have been left in this scene. As far as our own salvation is concerned, we were as secure as God could make us the first moment we

trusted in Christ. We might have been taken home to heaven immediately. But in the infinite wisdom of God we have been kept down here that we might be witnesses to His saving grace and that through us many more might be brought to share the blessings that are ours in Christ. Had the Church been faithful to its commission, the Body of Christ might long since have been completed and the Lord's return hastened, for it is because of His concern for the salvation of men He seems to delay (2 Peter 3: 9).

I do not dwell on the critical question as to the authenticity or otherwise of the last part of this chapter, verses 9 to 20. It is not found in two of the most ancient manuscripts, but it bears the stamp of inspiration, and the book of Acts and the history of Missions attest its credibility, so that I see no reason to assume that it is other than a part of that God-breathed Scripture which is for our instruction and blessing.

Mark does not go on to describe the ascension, but he closes his account with the risen Lord as the Servant still working with His followers as they go forth in obedience to His Word.