

MARK

INTRODUCTION

Mark was not an apostle, nor is there any evidence that he was at any time a personal attendant of Jesus.

Mark was the son of a woman named Mary, who was a prominent disciple in the city of Jerusalem at the time of the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter, and whose dwelling in that city was a well-known place of resort for the disciples.

Mark spent some years in most intimate association with Paul and Barnabas, laboring as their “minister,” or associate.

While Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus, intended to show that he was a son of Abraham through David, and follows this with a brief account of His childhood. Mark, omitting all the ground covered by the first two chapters of Matthew, announces Jesus at once as the Christ, the Son of God.

Then he hurriedly touches on his main theme with the commencement of the ministry in Galilee. He also omits other passages of the history of which Matthew treats at considerable length, such as the Sermon on the Mount, the denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees found in the 23rd chapter of Matthew, and the prophetic discourse found in chapter 25.

In his treatment of the material which is common to himself and Matthew, he is, on the whole more brief. Another peculiarity of selecting from a group of persons acting in a given scene, or from a group of miracles which were wrought on a given occasion, a single one which is described particularly, while nothing at all is said of the others.

John the Immerser was born about 5 B.C.; Jesus was born about 5 B.C.; the preaching of John the Immerser was during the summer and autumn of 26 A.D.; and the baptism of Jesus by John was in January, 27 A.D.

The temptations in the wilderness were in January and February 27 A.D.

The preaching of John the Immerser was in the wilderness of Judea—a wild, hilly, thinly-populated region (not a desert) lying east of the Dead Sea and the Lower Jordan. At the date when John the Immerser began preaching Tiberius Caesar, the successor of Augustus Caesar, was the emperor of the Roman Empire, and had been ruling for over twelve years.

Judea was a Roman Province with Pontius Pilate as the governor.

Mark does not begin his history, like Matthew and Luke, with the birth of Christ, or of John, but with the beginning of their public ministry. His object was to portray the official life of our Lord and he omits all that is not essential to this purpose.

Chapter 1 (The beginning of the gospel)

Verse 1

Gospel means “good tidings.” The “best tidings” the world has ever had is that we have a Savior who is able and willing to save us from sin and death.

Matthew writing with reference to the Jews, shows that Jesus is the son of David and of Abraham; Mark, writing for Gentiles, pays no attention to a matter so important to Jews, but at once declares him to be the Son of God.

Verse 2

John the Immerser, as well as Christ, was a subject of Old Testament prophecy. He is the only New Testament character, save the Son of God, of whom the prophets spoke. John was sent to prepare the way for Christ by preaching repentance, baptism, and the coming Divine of which Christ would be king.

Verse 3

After his birth we see him no more until the strange, startling, voice is heard in the wilderness of Judea, preaching a strange message with such power as to call all Israel to rush into the wilderness to hear him. He describes himself as a Voice.

He organized no body of followers, established no system, but broke up the old stagnation, roused a ferment of thought, and filled men with the expectation of the Coming One. He was well described as a Voice in the Wilderness.

Verse 4

This John was called the Baptist, because he baptized those who repented under his preaching.

The “wilderness of Judea” was bounded on the east by the river Jordan which was the place where John baptized at this time. John preached as well as baptized. The preaching came first. There must be a moral preparation before one was a fit subject of baptism. That preparation was a repentance, or a purpose to leave off sin and lead a better life.

There are steps leading to the pardon of sins. God does not pardon sins on baptism alone, nor on repentance alone, but upon the baptism of repentance, or of a penitent subject.

Verse 5

That which, no doubt, drew the whole population in such crowds to the desert shores of the Jordan, was the mysterious yet distinct assertion that the “Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.” This does not seem to have been merely “showing a contrite spirit,” “confessing themselves sinners,” but a particular and individual confession made before the people.

Verse 6

John’s robe of camel’s hair was well adapted to an open air life to protect against cold or rain, and for the fact it did not absorb water, suited for one doing the baptism.

Locusts were permitted as an article of food. The common brown locust is about three inches in length, and the general form is that of a grasshopper. Locusts are still eaten by the Bedouin.

After being dried in the sun, the locusts are eaten with butter and honey. Sometimes they are sprinkled with salt and then mixed with flour and water and made into cakes.

Honey made by wild bees, is still gathered from trees in the wilderness and from rocks in the wadies.

Verse 7

To preach is to proclaim like a herald. He was the King's herald.

Like all the true preachers of Christ, John points away from himself to the Lord. He hides behind the Master.

The shoe latchet was a shoe lace or thong that bound the sandal on the foot. To bear, to fasten or to loose the sandals of a great personage was the work of a menial slave.

Verse 8

I baptized you in water, but He (Jesus) shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Such a baptism was a proof of divinity. John's words are equivalent to the saying that the Coming One is divine.

Verse 9

Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee. This mountain town had been his home ever since the return from Egypt. It was about 70 miles north of Jerusalem.

Our Lord came to set us a perfect example, hence it was needful for Him, having taken the form of a man and a servant, to set us an example of obedience. He was baptized, not unto repentance, for He had no sins, but to fulfill all righteousness, and thus to show us what every disciple ought to do.

Verse 10

Jesus and John went down into the Jordan, John baptized Him and then Jesus "came up out of the water," praying. John saw the heavens rolled back

and then the Holy Spirit descending in a visible form, like a dove, and resting upon Jesus.

Verse 11

The great event of the Lord's baptism was emphasized by the presence of three Divine persons:

The Son was the subject; the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and the Father from heaven spoke in acknowledgement of Jesus as His Son.

It is also noteworthy that the three Divine persons are present in the baptismal formula of every person baptized. They are baptized "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

"Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This is the first formal acknowledgement of Christ as the Son. If the Father was pleased with the Son when He thus obeyed, is He not also pleased when we yield our wills to His and humbly obey?

Note: "Every child of Christ should seek to prepare the way of the Lord. If they can make the rough ways smooth and the crooked ways straight, lead men and women to repentance, honesty of heart, and submission, then the Lord will enter."

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS VERSES 12-13

Verse 12

The next event after the baptism was the temptation.

What a strange thought it is to read of the Holy Spirit anointing Jesus and filling Jesus and then immediately driving Him into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan. This is to teach us that God's ways are not our ways.

The Holy Spirit did not lead Jesus into temptation. The Holy Spirit thrust Him out into the wilderness where Satan tempted Him.

Verse 13

Jesus was tempted by Satan for forty days. Mark says nothing of the fasting mentioned by the other writers, nor do they mention that the temptation extended over the whole forty-day period.

Mark is also the only one mentioning that Jesus was with wild beasts. This seems to suggest the desolation and danger of the temptation period.

Matthew mentions that the angels ministered to Jesus. Of just what this ministering consisted we are not told—it must indeed have been a source of comfort and strength to our Lord in His need.

Note: Every Christian is promised such comfort and help; and from the same source. Hebrews 1:14

THE BEGINNING OF HIS MINISTRY VERSES 14-15

Verse 14

Mark omits the marriage at Cana (our Lord's first Passover); His discourse with Nicodemus and John's testimonies of Him, passing promptly to our Lord's public, official ministry.

Remember that Christ begins to preach when John ceases!

How beautifully Mark here describes our Lord's first preaching, as distinct from John's which was under the Law of Moses, and a mere heralding of something better to come. Christ preached the "good news" of His Divine of grace—the new dispensation in which He was to reign.

They had other ideas of His Divine, that it was temporal and consisted in earthly power and show.

Verse 15

The nation had expectations of the Messiah about this time. The seventy weeks of Daniel (or 490 years) were now accomplished. The time and place of

our Lord's birth agreed with the interpretations of prophecy common among the Jews.

John preached repentance. So did Christ, but not without the gospel as the burden of preaching. He preached repentance and faith. They were commanded to turn from sin and from all their false views, and to embrace the gospel.

THE CALL OF THE FISHERMEN VERSES 16-20

Verse 16

Notice the harmony as John points out two of his followers, Simon and Andrew. They were first made acquainted with Christ, and this explains their prompt compliance. They left all and followed Christ wherever He went.

Verse 17

Jesus said to them, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men."

Verse 18

They immediately left their nets and followed Jesus.

Verse 19

James and John were mending their nets when they received the same call and followed Jesus.

Verse 20

They left their father Zebedee with the hired servants and went away to follow Him. This would intimate that they were not of the poorest class.

A SABBATH IN THE LIFE OF JESUS VERSES 21-34

Verse 21

Christ was now attended by the disciples whom He had just called from their nets and boats upon the Sea of Galilee. As long as His ministry continues, they

attend His footsteps. All came on Friday into Capernaum in order to attend the synagogue service upon the Sabbath. On Saturday, the Jewish day of rest and worship, our Lord (born under the law) kept the Law of Moses blamelessly, was even circumcised, attended the feasts and observed the Jewish Sabbath, but at the same time proclaimed Himself Lord of the Sabbath.

Note: There is no mention of synagogues in the Law of Moses, or in the prophets. They are supposed to have been introduced during the Captivity, on account of the need for special teaching, and so have been continued afterwards wherever Jews were found.

Verse 22

They were astonished at Jesus' doctrine. Never had such a Teacher stood before them. Jesus taught with the authority of one who knows all the facts and all their bearings. Being Divine He knew all about heaven and hell and the way there, all about God and the truths He had revealed to the Jews, and all His plans and purposes for His Kingdom in the future.

Verse 23

The address of the Great Teacher was interrupted by a piteous cry of a demoniac. In the audience was a man with an unclean spirit. Some have held that the possession of unclean spirits and of demons was only a way of describing epilepsy or lunacy. There is described here, a real and actual possession of the soul by a fallen spirit.

Verse 24

"The Holy One of God," this term expresses the character in which this being recognized his deadly enemy. Christ is the exact opposite of the unclean spirits, being holy, and producing holiness in others.

Verse 25

Our Savior chides or rebukes the evil spirit. He never on any occasion gave any quarter to anything demonic. He silences the devils, even when they spoke the truth, lest he should seem to approve of witnesses who were liars by nature.

It was to bring the truth itself into suspicion and discredit, when it was borne witness to by the spirit of lies.

“Come out of them.” Two distinct personalities are here recognized. The demon is treated as a person as much as the man.

Verse 26

The unclean spirit had torn him, thrown him into convulsions. The evil spirit seems to have resisted to the last, the obedience to the Master’s command.

Verse 27

Each turned to his neighbor in astonishment, to ask his opinion, saying, "What is this new teaching with authority? He commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed Him!"

Verse 28

The report of Jesus spread abroad. It flew as it were, on the wings of the wind, into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

Verse 29

The day’s work was not nearly ended. As soon as they left the synagogue, the Lord comes in contact with a case of suffering as He entered the house of Simon Peter.

Verse 30

Simon Peter’s mother-in-law lay sick by this great fever. She was entirely prostrated by it. Malaria fevers of a malignant type are common in the vicinity of Capernaum since it was surrounded by marshy land, especially at the entrance of the Jordan River as it drained into the lake.

Verse 31

Jesus went to Peter’s mother-in-law, took her by the hand, lifted her up, and the fever was rebuked by the Lord of Life, and it left her and she began to minister unto them.

Verse 32

The close of the Sabbath ended with the setting sun. There are two reasons why the time should be specified.

1. It was natural that the sick should be brought in the cool of the evening, rather than in the scorching heat of the afternoon.
2. It was the Sabbath, and the feeling which made the Pharisees question the lawfulness of a man's carrying the bed on which he had been laying on the Sabbath, would probably have deterred the friends of the sick from bringing them as long as it lasted.

Verse 33

The effect was to rouse and gather the entire population of the city, to obtain healing for themselves or friends, or at least to see and hear the new Teacher, at the door of Peter's house where Jesus was.

Verse 34

Jesus healed many and cast out many devils. He came as the Great Healer. Disease is the result, the outgrowth, the representative of sin; and Christ's healing of the maladies of the body is an exhibition of His power and willingness to heal the maladies of the soul.

HEALING OF THE LEPER VERSES 35-45

Verse 35

On Sunday morning immediately after the busy Sabbath day, Mark graphically brings the scene before our eyes. The previous day had been a long day of conflict with and victory over the kingdom of sin and death. He now retires to refresh himself in the haven of prayer—in communion with his Father. He prepares himself in the desert for a second great mission of love, this time accompanied by his first four disciples.

Our Lord always prepared Himself for special work or for trial by solitary prayer. Prayer is a holy conference with God. Prayer gave Him power. No man is strong enough or spiritual enough to be able to neglect it.

1. By daily food his body lives, and is able to perform its functions.
2. By daily prayer the soul lives, and only by prayer performs its work of grace.

Christ communed in the wilderness with His own soul and with the Father for forty days before He began His ministry, and here He waits before the Lord before beginning His special work in Galilee.

Verse 36

Simon Peter is now with Jesus. The others with Him were probably Andrew his brother, and James and John.

When they awoke in the morning and found Him gone, they seemed to have become alarmed lest He should have left them, taking Himself to some other sphere of labor. The four pursued Him, as if He were fleeing from them.

Verse 37

They found Him. He had retired to an unfrequented spot. The people in general had no sooner risen in the morning than they thought of the wonderful Preacher and Healer and Demon-expeller.

They wanted to hear more, and to see more, and so they came, one after another, to the house where He had been lodging in quest of Him. The emphasis is on the word "seek".

Verse 38

The disciples had pressed the Lord to return to Capernaum, because all men there were seeking for Him. Jesus said, "I must preach the Divine of God in other cities also." "Christ had no ambition to be a metropolitan preacher. Having awakened spiritual desires in the people of Capernaum, He went elsewhere that He might awaken them also."

Verse 39

Jesus went into the synagogues in the cities of Galilee and on the Sabbath preached to them. Galilee, the northernmost province of Judea, was the scene of Christ's most abundant labors.

All those except Judas Iscariot were Galileans. Its inhabitants were simple-minded and comparatively free from the control of the priestly class, which ruled Judea.

The greater part of Mark's Gospel is confined to our Lord's ministry in Galilee.

Verse 40

A leper came to Jesus. This disease is nothing short of a foul decay, rising from the total corruption of the blood. Being the worst form of disease, leprosy was fixed upon by God to be an especially bad type of sin, and the injunctions regarding it had reference to its typical character.

It was accompanied by the emblems of death.

It involved ceremonial uncleanness and exclusion of the leper from the congregation and strikingly typified the separation of the sinner from God's presence.

The leper had faith in the miraculous powers of Jesus, but had a doubt about his willingness to exercise it on such an object as him, on one so unclean.

It has been well said that the language of faith always is, not "if" You can, but "if" You will. He was willing to leave the whole matter in Christ's hands.

Let us pause on that little word "if." "If" embodies doubt and faith. In its earlier stages, almost always involves doubt, but when the soul can use "if," it has made great progress in faith.

"Cleanse me." He felt the impurity of his disease, not merely ceremonial, but actual—as we should feel the impurity of sin, and pray not merely, forgive but cleanse!

Verse 41

Jesus felt compassion for the leper—what He and His Father feel for all sinners, and unutterable compassion and love.

To have touched him was, in the eyes of a Jew, to have made Jesus unclean. Making a touch, which till then, had entailed the worst uncleanness. Jesus' hand became not unclean from the leprosy, but the leprous body was made clean by His holy hand.

Verse 42

The leprosy departed at the touch and command of Jesus. The leprosy immediately departed and the man was well.

Verse 43

Jesus sternly warned him and immediately sent him away.

Verse 44

Jesus warned him to say nothing to anyone. Jesus wanted to repress the fame of His miracles. Show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded.

At Jerusalem, those things which Moses commanded in Leviticus chapter 14, were:

1. Two birds, alive and clean
2. Cedar wood
3. Scarlet
4. Hyssop

This was the preliminary ceremony. On the eighth day further offerings were to be made.

1. Two male lambs without blemish
2. One ewe lamb
3. Three-tenths of a bushel (deal) of fine flour

4. One log (approximately one pint) of oil

If the leper was poor, he was permitted to offer one lamb and two doves or pigeons, with one-tenth of a bushel (deal) of fine flour. The law was still in force and the Lord strictly enjoins that it be observed.

Verse 45

The Lord's work was hindered, so He was compelled to go into the desert places. He was unable because the moment His presence was recognized in a town, He was likely to be surrounded and hemmed in by a surging crowd of ignorant, and ignorantly expectant, gazers, wonderers, and volunteer followers.

One sees now how wise it was to tell the leper to hold his tongue.

The people kept coming to him, notwithstanding the difficulty of reaching Him, and the inconvenience connected with a sojourn, even for a very limited period in an unpopulated district.

FORGIVENESS AND HEALING CHAPTER 2:1-12

Verse 1

Again, Jesus entered Capernaum. It was "after days," sometime after having been occupied in His teaching and healing tour of Galilee. Jesus evidently entered Capernaum quietly, but the tidings soon spread that He was in the house of a family member or the home of Peter.

Verse 2

Many were gathered together. Those present were the Pharisees and doctors of the law from Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem. They had evidently gathered by a concerted arrangement to examine the claims of a teacher who was creating so profound a sensation, and were moved by hostile purposes.

They sat by as spectators, censors, and spies, to pick up something which could be used to ground a reproach or accusation.

The Savior was in a private house, and sat talking to the people.

Verse 3

Four persons bear the paralytic, who was perfectly helpless, to the house while Christ was engaged in teaching.

Verse 4

The throng of multitudes crowding after the bodily presence of Christ hindered the teaching of the gospel; while many could not “get at Him by reason of the press,” and even some, might go “away empty.”

Unable to enter the house they climbed to its roof either by an outside staircase, a ladder, or from the roof of an adjoining house. They had merely to scrape back the earth from a portion of the roof, take up the thorns and short sticks, and let down the couch between the beams at the very feet of Jesus.

Verse 5

Their faith was shown by their action. A living faith is always a power that moves. It is not a strong conviction of any doctrine about Christ, but a strong trust in Christ. These men had confidence in Him as the Great Healer.

The Jews held that all disease was a punishment for sin and in a deeper sense all evil of every kind is the fruit of sin.

Verse 6

The doctors of the law had come from Judea and Jerusalem. They had come to criticize and condemn, and therefore had eyes and ears open to discover a fault.

Verses 7-8

“Why does this man speak this way?” “He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?”

“Blasphemy” says George Mackenzie, in his Laws and customs of Scotland in Matters Criminal (Tit. iii., 1), is committed either:

1. By denying that of God to Him that which belongs to Him as one of his attributes.

2. By attributing to Him that which is absurd and is inconsistent with His Divine nature.
3. By assuming one's self, or ascribing to others, what is an incommunicable property or prerogative of God.

It is with reference to this third form of the offense that the word is used in the passage before us.

Christ had not yet said that He forgave sins; only that his sins were forgiven. Nor could He claim to forgive sins, were He only a man, without blasphemy, and when He asserts the power to forgive sins, He declares that He is the Son of God.

Verse 9

To say, "Your sins are forgiven," was easy, for no visible result could test the saying. "Take up your pallet and walk," was not apparently so easy, for failure would cover the confusion.

This official application of the term accounts for the remarkable and interesting fact that it is never used by any person in the gospel, except Christ.

Christ has authority on earth to forgive sins. He had authority from the Father who had sent Him, and who had committed judgment to His hands on earth. Not merely authority while on the earth to forgive sins, nor authority to forgive sins committed on the earth, but authority to exercise the function of forgiveness of sins upon the earth; that is, that you may know that this is the Messiah's earthly mission.

Verse 11

Arise and take up your bed, a light mattress. Other men brought him on the bed; he can now carry himself away, bed and all. Christ's argument here affords a fair test of all priestly claims to absolve from sin.

If the priest has the power to remit eternal punishment of sin, he should be able, certainly, to remit the physical and temporal punishment of sin.

This Christ did; the priest does not, and cannot do.

Verse 12

They were amazed at the high claims of Jesus, and at the demonstration that his claims were well founded. The scribes had whispered in their hearts the charge of blasphemy, but the people saw a manifestation of Divine power and glorified God.

Note: This whole incident illustrates:

1. The difference between the spiritual authority of Christ and that of His, none of whom assumed to forgive sins.
2. It affords a test for all claims of priests or bishops to pardon sin, or to officially pronounce the absolution of sin.

Romaic priests claim a prerogative that was never claimed by Peter or the other apostle, which belongs to the Lord alone, and which it is not only presumption but blasphemy for any man or set of men to claim who cannot manifest Divine credentials to confirm their claims.

THE CALL OF MATTHEW AND HIS FEAST VERSES 13-17

Verse 13

Our Lord often is found in the open air preaching to the multitudes—especially was this true beside the Sea of Galilee.

Verse 14

There were many who fished in the lake—there were many more who came in and out of the city—from all of these would Levi (Matthew) collect taxes.

Jesus had already healed one leper. He is about to heal another, a social leper of the society of His day. Here was a Jew hired to collect taxes of his own people for the despised Romans.

If such tax collectors were paid a common wage for their work it would have been scorned as an occupation—but when all knew they assessed beyond the

amount prescribed and kept the overcharge for themselves, it became a position of utter contempt. By Mark alone is he called the son of Alphaeus.

Verse 15

Matthew prepared a meal in his house, a meal prepared in honor of Jesus.

Verse 16

This is the first mention of the Pharisees in Mark's Gospel. They were a sect of separatists. The group began in the Maccabean period, in the second century before Christ. The Pharisees were trying to withstand the rising tide of Hellenism in Palestine. They stood strongly for close adherence to the Law, including strict observance of all the ceremonial requirements. But like all such groups, the sect became more and more legalistic in its emphasis.

Verse 17

"They that are healthy," was used by Jesus to describe the Pharisees' attitude about themselves. Since they felt self-sufficient, they need not concern themselves over the work of the Great Physician.

Jesus plainly states His purpose—His work. His concern would be among sinners—His call. His healing would be for them. if this offended the Pharisees, so be it!

DISPUTE ABOUT FASTING VERSES 18-22

Verse 18

John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Perhaps they chose the very time of the feast for a fast. This would indeed produce a contrast and conflict.

The Law of God prescribed only one fast—the great Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 23:37

During the captivity of the Jewish nation fasting was practiced by many. Fasting undoubtedly was associated with the repentance John the Baptist preached.

Verse 19

What a beautiful way to describe the attitude of our Lord for His work! Jesus was as happy as a bridegroom—His disciples shared His Joy. How could they be sad or fast when they had just made the greatest discovery in time and eternity? It was time to rejoice, they had found the Messiah!

Verse 20

“Then they will fast in that day.”

We now live in that day. We look for the coming of the bridegroom for His bride—there are many occasions when we need to fast. The church in Antioch fasted. Acts 13:1-2

This is not a legal requirement but it can be a wonderful spiritual exercise. There are mental, emotional, physical and spiritual benefits for the sons of the bride-chamber who will commit themselves to a period of prayer and fasting.

Verse 21

“No one sows a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment.” This is an answer to the question about fasting. Jesus is saying His mission is entirely new. The Messiah was not sent to patch up the old but to offer an entirely new garment. “The garment of praise for the worn-out garment of law.”

Verse 22

“No one puts new wine into old wineskins.” This is a Hebrewistic manner of presenting parables—two with the same point of emphasis. The point in the use of “parables” is that the using of the ill-chosen patch and the unsuitable bottles defeats the purpose of him who resorts to it, and the purpose is defeated because of an unwise uniting of the new with the old.

The new is the living, expanding, Divinely-vigorous Divinity of Christ; the old is that which pertains to the Jewish dispensation, which was decaying and ready to vanish away. Hebrews 8:13

THE SABBATH DISPUTE Verses 23—3:6

Verse 23

Matthew mentions the hunger of the disciples as the cause for plucking the grain. Both Jesus and His disciples had been so stressed with work that they had not taken time for eating. Deuteronomy 23:25, makes provisions for the poor and permits eating a few ears from the neighbor's field. We do not know if this was a wheat field or a barley field.

Verse 24

The Pharisees were accusing the disciples of working on the Sabbath—actually of harvesting on the Sabbath.

Verses 25-26

“The reply as given by all three evangelists, cites a violation on the ground of necessity, and one in which the necessity, as now, is that of hunger. Our Lord's argument is again, as so often, an appeal to the Pharisees on their own ground.

The visit of David to the tabernacle was on the Sabbath, for the previous week's bread was just being changed for the fresh, and this was done on the Sabbath. So David violated the sanctity of the Sabbath (if the Pharisees were right), and at the same time the law that gave the sacred bread to the priests alone. Here was a double violation on the ground of necessity, and the Scriptures nowhere condemned it; nor were the Pharisees ready to condemn it.

David was no Sabbath-breaker for gathering and eating the ears of grain.

Verses 27-28

The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, implies that when the welfare of man conflicts with the observance of the Sabbath, the latter must give way. But of this, man himself is not to judge, because he cannot judge with impartiality his own interests. No one is competent to judge in the case who does not know all that pertains to the welfare of man, and this is known only by the Lord. Jesus adds, “Therefore the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath;” that is, as the Son of man came to provide for man's welfare, and as

the Sabbath law might need modification or even abrogation for the highest good of man, therefore lordship over the Sabbath was given to the Son of man.

HEALING ON THE SABBATH CHAPTER 3:1-6

Verse 1

Mark records another charge of Sabbath-breaking, probably to show how various were the outward occasions of such opposition; to illustrate the variety of Christ's defenses; and mark the first concerted plan for His destruction.

A man entered the synagogue with a withered, literally a dried-up hand, a pining away of the human body. It was not a congenital infirmity, but the effect of a disease or accident and was the more calamitous because it was the right hand that was disabled. Luke 6:6

Verse 2

The opposition to our Savior was becoming more intense and settled. His enemies watched for some occasion to find fault with Him. The motive of their watching was not simply curiosity, but a deliberate desire to entrap Him.

Verse 3

The direction to the patient would be rendered more impressive by the sight of the man standing in their midst, that is, among them, and no doubt in a conspicuous position. "Come forward" or "Stand forth" means to arouse another or one's self, especially from sleep.

Verse 4

Before proceeding to perform the miracle, Jesus appeals to them as to the question of its lawfulness. Is it lawful, not right in itself, but consistent with the law of Moses and with your acknowledged obligation to obey it.

The meaning is, "You will surely admit that it is lawful to do right in preference to wrong on the Sabbath, as on any other day." The obligation of

the Sabbath rested on authority, and might by that authority be abrogated or suspended.

This implies that such authority belonged to Jesus, and that He was not acting as a mere man, or a prophet, but as the Son of man, and as such Lord of the Sabbath.

Verse 5

Jesus was looking around with anger and yet sympathizing with them. In the very act of condemning their sin, He pitied the miserable state to which it had reduced them.

The specific object of this sympathetic grief or pity was the hardness of their heart, including intellectual stupidity and insensibility of feeling.

Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand," and he stretched it out and the hand was restored.

Verse 6

One of the most important circumstances of this case, for the sake of which it was recorded, is the effect which it produced upon the Pharisees whose religious tenets brought them into constant opposition to the Sadducees. They immediately went out and counseled with the Herodians as to how they could take advantage of Jesus' words and acts, to rid them of so dangerous an enemy.

THE FAME OF JESUS VERSES 7-12

Verse 7

Jesus' hour had not yet come, so He went with His disciples to the borders of the Lake of Galilee, where, if pursued, He could escape to some other part, out of the reach of His persecutors.

Verse 8

The multitude from the neighboring Galilee, in which He had been preaching and healing, followed him; as well as the multitudes from Judea and

Jerusalem, and from all the regions bordering on the Holy Land, attracted by the fame of His miracles, “came” to Him.

Notice how Mark is careful to inform us that they were attracted, not by His preaching, but by His miracles.

Verse 9

Jesus told His disciple that a boat should “stand ready” for Him. “Stand ready” means that the boat should always be at His beck and call, so that by escaping the pressure of the multitude, He would not be unduly hindered in the exercise of His ministry.

Verses 10-12

He had healed many so there might be a rush towards Him of all who had plagues. Plagues are (literally “scourges”) describing the painfulness and distress of disease; as if it were scourging inflicted on man as a punishment for his sin.

“To touch Him.” It was the Lord’s will most frequently to heal men by contact with His body. “Unclean spirits fell down before Him.” The uniformity of action on the part of all evil spirits in the presence of the Lord, in that they should fall down and confess Him, is exceedingly remarkable. These fallen beings seem to be under a law that should thus acknowledge the Son of God.

“Not to reveal His identity.” A sinner is forbidden to preach, lest anyone listening to his preaching should follow him in his error, for the devil is an evil master. He always mingles false things with true, that the semblance of truth may cover the witness of fraud. All persons healed by Christ are ordered to be silent concerning Him.

THE APPOINTMENT OF THE TWELVE VERSES 13-19

Verse 13

There was yet to be formed a compact, an organized body of disciples, commissioned to teach His doctrines. When dawn came, He called out of the disciples about him twelve whom He ordained.

1. They were to be with Him—that is especially and continuously with Him.
2. They were to be sent forth to preach as His special .
3. They were to have power to exercise His authority over demons.

“Apostle” means “one sent,” and is very close in meaning to our words “ambassador” and “missionary.” It was a necessary condition of this apostleship that the should have been with Jesus, and so be qualified to tell of His words and actions, particularly of the resurrection. The can therefore have no successors.

Verse 14

The number 12 was evidently with purpose, for they were to be tribal judges of the twelve tribes of Israel Luke 22:30, and were, according to Paul, ministers to (the twelve tribes), or to the circumcision, rather than to Gentiles. Galatians 2:7-9

Verses 16-19

Peter was first to publicly confess Christ, and because the Lord saw in him peculiar gifts of bold, aggressive leadership, Peter was given the right to open the doors of the Divine of heaven. Jesus had prophesied that Simon should be called Peter. The name signifies a piece of stone broken from mother-rock, and indicates Jesus’ prophetic insight into his character. Probably because of their vigor and zealous, stormy dispositions, James and John were surnamed “Sons of Thunder.” James’ vigorous character probably lead to Herod’s slaying him, and John’s vigor sustained him to a ripe old age.

John's writings, too, reveal the vigor; he denounces sin in strong terms, such as "liar," "antichrist," "deceiver," "children of the devil," and "murderer." James and John were sons of Zebedee and Salome and were perhaps cousins of Jesus.

Philip, like the four preceding disciples, was a native of Bethsaida, and became allied to Jesus on the latter's return from temptation in Galilee. Philip brought to Jesus Nathaniel, who is generally identified with the Bartholomew here named.

John always names Philip and Nathanael together, while the Synoptists, name Philip and Bartholomew.

Matthew is Levi, and describes himself in the list of as "the publican," as if recalling the depth from which grace had raised him.

Thomas is also called Didymus. Both words mean "twin," the first being Aramaic and the second Greek. His attachment to Jesus was deep, but a tendency to misgiving and despondency probably accounts for his doubting the news of Christ's resurrection, until the sight of his beloved Master brought that explosion of affection, "My Lord and my God!"

James is called "son of Alphaeus" and "James the Less," distinguishing him from James the son of Zebedee, not to be confused with James the Lord's brother, who became a leader in Jerusalem church, and wrote the Epistle of James. Thaddaeus is called Judas, son of James, in the two later Gospels—Luke and John.

He may have been known as Thaddaeus in the early days to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot. He is not the author of the epistle Jude, written by the Lord's brother.

Judas, famed for his infamy, is called Iscariot, from his native city Kerioth, in Judea, he was the only one of the twelve not from Galilee. He was treasurer of the group.

It is a strikingly human group, possessed in varying degrees of fear, ambition, rivalry, impetuosity, vows, weakening faith, yet real loyalty—a group

of men, and no supermen, with common virtues and common faults, to do an uncommon work with Divine power and under Divine guidance.”

(Standard Bible Lesson Quarterly, Jan, Feb, March 1918)

OPPOSITION VERSES 20-27

FROM FRIENDS Verses 20-21

Verse 20

The activity on our Lord's own part is left to be inferred, but it must have been an intense activity of teaching and healing, continuing we know not how long.

Verse 21

His friends of verse 21 are “his mother and His brethren” of verse 31. Mark alone tells of their setting out in search of Him and of their motive.

Considerably later His brethren did not believe on Him John 7:5, and probably they persuaded His mother on this occasion, playing perhaps, upon the anxiety of maternal love.

His friends heard of it—of the great throng that was about Him and of the busy life He was living—and went out from their home in Nazareth where they were all living, mother, brethren, sisters, a little later, when Jesus visited the place. Chapter 6:1-6

The news reached them there, and brought them down to Capernaum, a distance of perhaps twenty miles. They came to lay hold on Him—that is by force, as one who was not fit to take care of Himself. They said, “He is beside Himself, insane”—a conclusion from the exiled life that He seemed to them to be living; perhaps the more plausible from the quietness and placidity of the years that He spent with them at Nazareth.

OPPOSITION FROM ENEMIES VERSES 22-27

Verse 22

Mark omits the occasion of this conversation, which is carefully given by Matthew and Luke—namely; the healing of the blind and dumb demoniac (Matthew 12:22) which cause many to inquire, “Is not this the Son of David?” that is, the Messiah. The scene is still “at home,” and most probably in the house of Peter. “Pharisees” are present (Matthew), and so are the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem. (Mark) This language distinctly indicates an embassy, men who had come on purpose to watch and harm Him.

These were spies--indignant at the suggestion that this was the Christ, they were ready with their explanation of His mighty works, the reality of which they thus explicitly admitted. He has Beelzebul. The name has been variously interpreted.

The name from which it came was Baalzebub, “lord of flies,” the god the Philistines worshiped at Ekron.

The god was named, from this supposed control over the swarms of flies and similar insects that torment the East. After a time, the Jews, thinking all heathen deities to be evil spirits, adopted this name as a title of the chief of evil spirits, but changed it by one letter, making Beelzebub into Beelzebul.

Some think that in this change they intentionally degraded and insulted it, even as a word, by turning it into a name which meant “lord of dung” or “of the dunghill.” He has “Beelzebul” means “he is possessed by the spirit who is lord of all the rest, and who orders them in and out at his pleasure, as a man commands his servants. By the prince of the devils he casts out, devils, or demons.

Verses 23-24

He called them—the Scribes from Jerusalem—and getting their attention, He brought them face to face with Himself and their own words. No more terrible accusation than this was possible; it was the direct charge of a positive and practical league with infernal powers. He spoke to them in parables.

The world does not require a narrative, such as we often associate with it. The point lies in the fact of a comparison. Here the fact to be confirmed is given in the first question Verse 23; it is then confirmed and illustrated by two comparisons, of the kingdom and of the household.

Verses 24-25

“How can Satan cast out Satan? The principle is that no intelligent power works against itself and defeats its own purposes. It is assumed that the dominion of Satan is an intelligent dominion, with character and purposes; that the kingdom of evil is one intelligent kingdom, managed by one mind who knows what he is doing.

The individual spirits that torment men are not identified personally with Satan, but they are identified morally with him, so that their presence is his presence, and when they are cast out he is cast out.

If Satan were casting out demons, he would be rising up against himself. His sole purpose is to injure men. If he brings in health, calmness, purity, reason, godly gratitude, piety to the souls of men, and if he sets them free from the bondage by which they were held away from these blessings, he will be acting directly against his own nature.

Such a work as that of Jesus cannot possibly be attributed to him, any more than demonical possession can be attributed to God.

Verse 27

No one can plunder the property of a strong “lord of the mansion” until he has bound the “lord of the mansion” himself. So, if Jesus is doing a great triumphant work of mercy in setting men free from the inferior agents of Satan’s kingdom, he must already be master over Satan himself.

Not to be with the conqueror of Satan is to be with Satan. (W. N. Clarke)

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN VERSES 28-30

Verse 28

We learn clearly from these verses what this fearful sin consists of; the only one of all the evils which the sons of men commit which will not be forgiven.

Verse 29

In order to see something of the wickedness of this sin we must realize that all our Lord's teaching was on the side of God and goodness, and all His miracles, especially that of the expulsion of evil spirits, were done to enforce such teaching, and to set forth the character of God—the God Who sent Him, as at once a holy and benevolent God.

God was desirous to free men from the yoke of moral and spiritual as well as of all physical evil.

To call the spirit of such a One as our Lord an evil spirit was the extremist form of that wickedness denounced by the prophet when he said: "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness. Isaiah 5:20

For a man to have a mind which could deliberately ascribe such a spirit to the Savior is, as far as man can, to cut himself off from redemption—to make the acceptance of redemption impossible to him.

This will be more clearly seen, remembering certain words said by the Lord, which are recorded in the book of Matthew. Matthew 12:31-32

Verse 30

If a man shall simply blaspheme against God, he is not declared to be beyond the hope of pardon, but those who have offered outrage to the Spirit, it is said that God will never forgive them. "Why is this, because those only are blasphemers against the Spirit, who slander His gifts and power contrary to the conviction of their own mind?"

Two observations on this may not be out of place:

1. It is clear that no one can have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit who desires the influence of the Holy Spirit to deliver him from sin, and make him love God for such a one must believe that the power exhibited in Christ was on the side of God and goodness. He must believe that Christ was actuated and impelled by a holy and good spirit which must be from God.
2. Looked at in the light of this one exception to the forgiving power of God, how exceedingly broad and large is the promise implied in the 28th verse, “Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men.”

“The one exception proves the universality of the rule. If any sinner has a mind to lay hold on the Divine mercy, no memory of past sin need deter him; and the state of mind which he has towards sin, and his desire of deliverance, forbids the idea that he has committed the one unpardonable sin.” (M. F. Sadler)

THE HOUSEHOLD OF CHRIST VERSES 31-35

Verse 31

His mother and brothers had come “to take Him.” But because of the crowd, they were standing outside, and sending their message in through the crowd which they could not penetrate.

Verse 32

The moment too, was a solemn one; He had just been speaking of the deadly opposition between the two kingdoms, and was in a frame of mind to praise most highly those who were “with Him” and were not “scattering abroad.” Any attempt to “scatter abroad,” to weaken His work, would then be especially painful to His soul, and the more if it came from those who ought to know Him well.

Verses 33-35

The center of his true kindred is not his mother, the brother, or the sisters, but the Father. Whoever is doing the will of God is united to Jesus by a tie stronger than any tie of flesh and blood.

Does this passage make God (or doing the will of God) the way to Christ, rather than Christ the way to God? Yes, in a sense. Whoever comes to Christ does the will of God and in doing so it is in the doing of what God appoints that Christ accepts him.

THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHAPTER 4:1-34

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER VERSES 1-9

Mark records, an important juncture in history, the beginning of our Savior's allegorical instructions, as a part of the preparatory process by which He contributed to the reorganization of the church. Although He did not make the change during His personal presence upon the earth, because, as we have seen, it was to rest upon His death and resurrection as it's cornerstone.

The other part of his preparatory work consisted in the choice and education of the men with whom the change was to be afterwards effected.

In Chapter 3, Verse 9, we read that He directed a small vessel to be ready, if the crowd should be so great as to prevent His standing on the shore with safety or convenience. Here we find Him actually entering into the boat, no doubt the one already mentioned to be in readiness, and sitting in the sea, that is, upon the surface of the lake, while his vast audience was on the land.

Verse 2

Mark's aim was not to furnish an exhaustive history, but to use parables to illustrate by examples the ministry of Jesus.

Verse 3

By the use of the word, “hear,” Mark implies the power and intention to communicate something particularly worthy of their attention.

“To sow,” distinguishes his going out for this specific purpose, not from his going out on other errands.

Verse 4

“It came to pass” means something happened.

“By the way” must therefore mean along the path trodden by the sower himself and hardened by his footsteps, not along the highway leading to his place of labor.

“And it was trodden down” that is, it fell upon the path where he was walking. The principal circumstance in this part of the parable is not the treading of the seed, which Luke only adds to specify the place, but it’s lying exposed upon the trodden path, and there devoured by the birds, birds of which his readers were well acquainted with to commit such depredations.

Verse 5

“Stony ground,” is a reference not to loose or scattered stones, but to a thin soil overspreading a stratum or layer of concealed rock, allowing the seed no room to strike deep root, but only to spring upwards.

Verse 6

“When the sun came up” that is, when it had grown above the surface,” it withered away.

Verse 7

Some seed fell among the thorns and when it began to grow it was choked out, or stifled, or deprived of life by pressure.

“Choked” refers to the fatal influence on vegetable life when coming too close in contact with a different and especially a ranker growth and yielded no fruit.

Verse 8

The “good ground” yielded, or produced, thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold increase.

Verse 9

This verse implies a rebuke as well as an exhortation. “Why should you have the sense of hearing, if you do not use it now? To what advantage can you ever listen, if you turn a deaf ear to these admonitions?” Communication calls for close attention, in default of which, it can impart no knowledge and confer no benefit.

THE EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

VERSES 10-20

Note: This is the first parable the Savior spoke as far as we have record.

Jesus spoke the parable to a vast audience in whose minds the story was lodged and left for reflection with an explanation of its meaning. He had sowed, in this illustrative way, the seed of the Divine “broadcast” and in many a heart it would live until it burst forth, full of meaning, to bear fruit. His, not accustomed to this mode of teaching come to Him privately and ask the meaning.

Christ is the Great Sower, and all whom He sends forth to preach are sowers under Him. The seed sown is His Word, the Gospel of the Kingdom. The soil where the seed is cast is human hearts.

Four kinds of human hearts are described.

1. The wayside hearer; the light flippant, indifferent hearer upon whom no impression is produced.

2. The stony hearer; the heart that exhibits a fading feeling at the appeal of the gospel, but upon whom no permanent impression is made.
3. The thorny soil; the heart that takes in the Word, but is full of worldly cares. These soon gain the mastery. This describes the world - serving hearing.
4. The good soil; the good and honest heart; the heart that receives and retains the truth. In such a heart the seed will grow and the new life will be manifest.

Three needful things:

1. One who sows
2. Good seed
3. A good and honest heart

A dishonest man cannot be converted until he casts out his dishonesty. He who quibbles at and deceitfully entreats the word of God will not be profited.

Verse 10

Though the parable was new to His disciples it was not a new method of instruction. A number of parables occur in the Old Testament, and it was frequently adopted by the Jewish rabbis.

It is an imaginary illustration of real truth. In this instance the Savior stated some facts familiar to all the farming population of Palestine and made them the vehicle to carry spiritual truth.

Verse 11

A mystery is not something obscure, but something plain to those initiated, but a secret to those without.

The Savior says no more than that there are matters that My disciples shall know, that those without can never understand. When one makes Jesus the Master and himself a pupil (disciple), of course he has the vantage ground and

will be admitted to spiritual knowledge that he could never obtain had he not entered the school of Christ.

Verse 12

But He was aware, that, in consequence of the long standing of their prejudice, they could not, in the first instance, see “the secret of the Divine without being repelled in spirit, and confirmed in their dissent and dislike.

He wished, therefore, that they should not “see.” But, at the same time, He graciously wished that they should “look,” and keep “looking,” so that they might, if possible, get such a glimpse of the inner glory as might fascinate their interest and attention.

Moral inability always is the fruit of moral unwillingness. Those who cannot see, were in the first place unwilling to see, lest they should be converted.

Men willfully close their hearts to the truth, lest they should be led to repentance and reformation. They will not, therefore they cannot.

Verse 13

“Do you not understand this parable?” This is not a reproof, but means, “You find you cannot understand this parable without assistance.”

The next question, “And how will you understand all the parables?” extends the thought to all parables, but intimates further: “The first parable of the Divine is the base of all the rest.”

Verse 14

The Great Sower is Christ; the seed sown is the Word of God, the Gospel, whether spoken by Christ, His , preachers, Sunday school teachers, any disciple, or written in the New Testament, or upon the printed page of the book, tract, or newspaper.

Verse 15

The word sown on hard ground represents the hardened, worldly hearts that never allow the seed of the Divine to enter at all. They never allow one word to

get under the surface of their thoughts. The way is the heart, beaten and dried by the passage of evil thoughts.

Sin has so hardened the heart, worldliness has so deadened the feelings, sinful pleasures and desires have so dulled the conscience that God's truth makes no impression, more than a passing dream, or a pleasant song, to be heard and forgotten.

The object of the preaching of the word is to save souls; the aim of Satan is to destroy souls.

Verse 16

Under the figure of the stony ground, He depicts that lively but shallow susceptibility of spirit which grasps the truth eagerly, but receives no deep impressions and yields quickly to worldly temptations. These are those whose feelings are touched, but not their conscience or their will.

"The hearer describe has not counted the cost; whatever was fair and beautiful in Christianity, as it first presents itself, had attracted him—its sweet and comfortable promises, the moral loveliness of its doctrines, but not its answer to the deepest needs of the human heart; as neither, when he receives the word with gladness, had he contemplated the having to endure hardness in his warfare with sin and Satan and the world." (Trench)

Verse 17

They make profession and begin, but do not hold out, because the good seed has not rooted deeply. These are they who are moved by emotion, not by a deep sense of conviction.

Verse 18

The seed which takes root, but is stifled by the thorns that shoot up with it at last becomes strong enough to crush it, so that the received truth is utterly lost. The evil here is neither a hard nor a shallow soil—there is a softness enough, and depth enough, but it is the existence of what draws all the moisture and richness of the soil away to itself, and so starves the plant.

Verse 19

What are these thorns?

1. The cares of this world—*anxious, unrelaxing attention to the business of this present life.*
2. The deceitfulness of riches—*fruits of this worldly care.*
3. The pleasures of this life—the enjoyments, in themselves they may be innocent, in which worldly prosperity enables one to indulge.

These “choke” or “smother” the word; drawing off so much of one’s attention, absorbing so much of one’s interest, and using up so much of one’s time, that only the dregs of these remain for spiritual things, a fagged, hurried and heartless formalism is at length of the religion of such persons.

Verse 20

A heart soft and tender, stirred to its depths are the great things of eternity, and jealously guarded from worldly engrossments, such only is the “honest and good heart,” which “keeps,” that is, “retains” the seed of the world and bears fruit.

The “thirty-fold,” is designed to express the lowest degree of fruitfulness; the “hundred-fold,” the highest, and the “sixty-fold” the intermediate degree of fruitfulness.

Let us look at the four kinds of seed.

1. The first did not spring up at all.
2. The second sprang up, but soon withered away.
3. The third sprang up and grew, but yielded no fruit.
4. The fourth sprang up, grew, and brought forth fruit.

And as there are three causes of unfaithfulness, so there are three degrees of fruitfulness, but only one cause of fruitfulness.

Verses 21-22

These verses must be studied together. The Lord had adopted a new role of teaching, in which He veiled His meaning from the multitude under parables, but this was not because He intended their meaning to be permanently hidden from the world, but because He intended that it might be better known to the world. To this end He made known the interpretation to His Apostles, not for themselves, but for the world.

His truth—the truth of the Gospel—was the lamp; this lamp of truth He intended not for a corner of the world, or for a select few, but for all men of all nations, who would turn their faces towards it and receive it, and so He gave it now to the Apostles, who after Pentecost, were to make it known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

God does not conceal any mystery, any religious truth, merely for the sake of concealing it. If He conceals any truth it is that He may ultimately make it better known.

If any truth ever shone forth upon the lampstand of the church it is that which is taught us by this parable, that the word of the gospel is efficacious or not, according to the state of the heart of the recipients, so that men must in every deed “take heed” as to “how” they hear and “what” they hear.

This meaning is still more clearly enforced by the true reading of the first clause of Verse 22. There is nothing hidden, save that it should be manifested.

We lose much of the significance carried about in the hand. It is the lamp of the house put upon the lampstand, or candelabrum, which is so elevated that any lamp upon it can lighten up the interior.

Verse 23

If any man has ears to hear, etc. If this was said not in the hearing of the multitude, but to the Apostles, or to those select ones to whom He had just expounded the parable, then it implies that there are still deeper mysteries of grace which require, for their apprehension, a more effectual opening to the soul's ears, and a deeper preparation of heart.

A WARNING FOR HEARERS VERSES 24-25

Verse 24

“Take heed to what you hear.” Not, “Be careful what you listen to,” as if He would warn against dangerous teachers but, “Carefully consider what you are hearing; observe how important it is; remember how necessary that you make the right use of it.”

This saying, “With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you,” proverbial in form, is applied in the Sermon on the Mount. It is applied to the retribution that must come upon those who are uncharitable and self-willed in judgment.

Here our Lord gives it a quite a different application; it is a law of life, and may be applied in many ways. In this case its lesson is, “You will be dealt with, as to truth, as you deal with others. Hide it, and it will be hidden from you; impart it, and it be imparted to you.”

How many souls, in dealing with trust as God had given it to them, have found it even so—that concealment was loss, while giving was gain! If they had kept their truth as a private trust, how their souls would have shriveled! “Shall more be given” is a promise of return, which shall not be merely as the gift, but greater. Luke 6:38

Verse 25

This verse contains what was evidently more or less a proverbial saying with our Lord. “For whoever has, to him shall more be given.”

Here by a very striking turn of thought, “whoever has” is identified with him who imparts his trust of truth to others, the free giver, the true apostle, messenger of grace and truth; while he “who does not have,” is identified with him who keeps his trust of truth to himself, content to be ever a disciple without becoming an apostle. The giver has—the miser has not.

How is this? “He that has not, and yet he that has, there is something that he can lose. Yes; the spiritual miser possesses much in his own esteem; much

truth has been entrusted to him; but if he is not a giver of truth, and so a possessor, his possession shall become no possession.”

What he has shall be worthless to him.

THE PARABLE OF SECRET GROWTH VERSES 26-29

Verse 26

“He casts the seed upon the ground and it grows.” Only to some extent does the sower know how it grows. He only knows that the earth brings forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear.

Verse 27

He may know still farther, that it grows by the chemical action of light, warmth, and moisture, but still there is a part of the process he does not know.

Verse 28

Although the sower knows not how the seed grows, and he remains not to see its growth, still it grows. From sowing time till harvest, the man has nothing to do; no intermediate cultivation is required.

Verse 29

The Divine is like this, in that the seed of the Divine, which is the Word of God, when sown in a community, even though the sower go away and neglect it, will spring up of itself and bear fruit, and will be ready at a future day for the harvest.

This is often exemplified in the labors of the evangelist. He preaches in a community faithfully, and apparently without success, for a length of time, and then, after a lapse of months or years, returns to the same place, and with comparatively little exertion reaps an abundant harvest.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED VERSES 30-32

Verses 30-31

In using the plural, “we,” our Lord seems to conceive of His disciples as deliberating with Him in the choice of a comparison; not that He was in doubt as to how the gospel should be illustrated, but because He would have them also watch for comparisons.

The world was full of them, and they, the teachers of men in higher things, must learn, as well as their Master to find them. Yet possibly He may sometimes, like any one of them, have had to feel after an illustration in nature that was suited to His thought—such as a “grain of mustard seed.”

“The ordinary mustard of the East has grown as high as a horse and the rider. It is a small grain producing a large result; the least of the husbandman’s seeds, becoming the greatest of the husbandman’s herbs. This is the point of the parable, and gives the only sense in which the Divine of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed.”

Verse 32

“It becomes larger than all the garden plants.” One would think it impossible that such an herb could spring forth from so small a seed. The comparison calls for very little explanation, the lesson being, small beginnings and great results—being very plain. Such is the Divine, begun obscurely, with no human prospect of greatness, no seeming possibility of success.

It began among the Jews, a disappointed people chafing under foreign masters; it was rejected by them; it seemed powerless at home, and without opportunities abroad, and its founder crucified on a cross. Even after the day of Pentecost it seemed a feeble sect.

Consider also the power of the name and principles of Jesus in the world today, and the ever-widening circle of Christian influence. The Divine has grown out of all resemblance to its humble beginning.

THE LAST WORDS ON PARABLES VERSES 33-34

Verse 33

“As they were able to hear it,” that is, as some understand it, to hear intelligently or with patience.

It may however have the stricter and the more simple sense, as they had opportunity and leisure to attend and receive His instructions.

Verse 34

This cannot mean that He never taught them in any other form, which would be contradicted by the whole course of history, but only that whatever He did teach in parables He did also teach in other forms, but, as the last clause more explicitly asserts, reserved the explanation for a private interview with His disciples.

THE FIRST WITHDRAWAL CHAPTER 4:35—CHAPTER 5:20

THE STILLING OF THE TEMPEST VERSES 35-41

Verse 35

This verse describes a storm on the Sea of Galilee, when our Lord and His disciples were crossing it, and a miracle performed by our Lord in calming the storm in a moment. From this verse, we learn that Christ’s service does not exempt His servants from storms.

Verse 36

In this verse, we see twelve disciples in the path of duty. They were obediently following Jesus, wherever He went. They were daily attending on His ministry and hearkening to His word. They were daily testifying to the world, that, whatever Scribes and Pharisees might think, they believed on Jesus, loved Jesus, and were not ashamed to give up all for His sake. Yet here we see these men in trouble, tossed up and down by a tempest, and in danger of being drowned.

Verse 37

If we are true Christians, we must not expect everything smooth in our journey to heaven. We must count it no strange thing if we have to endure sicknesses, losses, bereavements and disappointments, just like other people.

Free pardon and full forgiveness, grace by the way, and glory at the end—all this our Savior promised to give. But He has not promised that we shall have no afflictions.

He loves us too well to promise that. By affliction He teaches us many precious lessons, without which we should never learn. By afflictions He shows us our emptiness and weakness, draws us to the throne of grace, purifies our affections, weans us from the world, and makes us long for heaven.

In the resurrection morning we will all say, “It is good for me that I was afflicted.” We shall thank God for every storm.

Verse 38

We need to learn that our Lord Jesus Christ was really and truly man. We are told in these verses, that when the storm began, and the waves beat over the ship, Jesus was in the rear of the vessel “asleep.”

He had a body exactly like ours—a body that could hunger and thirst, and feel pain, and be weary, and need rest. No wonder that His body needed rest at this time. He had been diligent in His Father’s business all that day. He had been preaching to a great multitude in the open air. No wonder that “when evening had come” and His work finished, He fell “asleep.”

Let us mark this lesson also attentively. The Savior in whom we are bid to trust, is was really man as He is God. He knows the trials of a man, for He has experienced them. He knows the bodily infirmities of a man for He has felt them. He can well understand what we mean, when we cry to Him for help in this world of need. He is just the very Savior that men and women, with weary frames and aching heads, in a weary world, require for their comfort every morning and night.

“We do not have a high priest which cannot to touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” Hebrews 4:15

Verse 39

We need to learn that our Lord Jesus Christ as God has almighty power. We see Him in these verses doing that which is proverbially impossible. He speaks to the winds and they obey Him. He speaks to the waves and they submit to His command. He turns the raging storm into a calm with a few words—
“Peace be still.”

Those words were the words of Him who first created all things. The elements knew the voice of their Master, and like obedient servants, were quiet at once.

With the Lord Jesus Christ nothing is impossible. No stormy passions are so strong but He can tame them. No temper is so rough and violent but He can change it. No conscience is so disquieted but He can speak peace to it, and make it calm. No man ever need despair, if he will only bow down his pride and come as a humbled sinner to Christ.

Christ can do miracles upon his heart—no man ever need to despair of reaching his journey’s end, if he has once committed his soul to Christ’s keeping. Christ will carry him through every danger. Christ will make him conqueror over every foe.

Our temptations may be great but it is all for nothing. If Christ is on our side, and we are in the ship with Him. Greater is He that is for us, than all they that are against us.

Verses 40-41

Finally, we learn from this passage, that our Lord Jesus Christ is exceedingly patient in dealing with His own people. We see the disciples on this occasion showing great want of faith, and giving way to the most unseemly fears. They forgot the Master’s miracles and care for them in days gone by. They thought of nothing but their present peril.

They woke our Lord hastily, and cried, "Do you care not that we perish?"

We see our Lord dealing gently and tenderly with them. He gives no sharp reproof. He makes no threat of casting them off because of their unbelief. He simply asks the touching question, "Why are you fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" Psalm 103:13

The Lord Jesus Christ does not deal with believers according to their sins, nor reward them according to their iniquities. He sees their weakness. He is aware of their short-comings. He knows all the defects of their faith, and hope, and love, and courage. And yet He will not cast them off. He bears with them continually. He loves them even to the end. He raises them when they fall. He restores them when they err.

His patience, like His love, is a patience that passes knowledge. So when He sees a heart right, it is His glory to pass over many a short-coming.

We leave these verses with the comfortable recollection that Jesus has not changed. His heart is still the same that it was when He crossed the Sea of Galilee and stilled the storm.

High in heaven at the right hand of God, Jesus is still sympathizing—still almighty—still pitiful and patient towards His people.

Let us be more charitable and patient towards our brethren in the faith. They may err in many things, but if Jesus has received them and can bear with them, surely, we may bear with them too.

Let us be more hopeful about ourselves.

We may be very weak, frail, and unstable: but if we can truly say that we do come to Christ and believe on Him, we may take comfort.

The question for conscience to answer is not, are we like the angels? Are we as perfect as we shall be in heaven?"

The question is, "Are we real and true in our approaches to Christ? Did we truly repent and believe?" (J.C. Ryle)

THE FIERCE DEMONIAK Chapter 5:1-20

Note: The Gadarenes and Gergesenes were simply two different names for the same people. Mark and Luke in this account, speak of the Gadarenes, while Matthew calls the people the Gergesenes.

Verse 1

Gadara was a great city which gave name to all the people in the district, while Gergesa was a small village on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Verse 2

When the Savior came out of the boat immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him.

The tombs were caves formed by nature, or cut in the rocks, with cells at the sides for the reception of the dead. They were ceremonially unclean. The unclean, or demoniac, was one whose being was strangely interpenetrated by one or more of those fallen spirits.

These spirits are constantly asserted in Scripture (under the name of demons, evil spirits, unclean spirits (their chief being the devil, or Satan), to be the enemies and tempters of the souls of men. He stood in a totally different position from the abandoned, wicked man, who morally is given over to the devil.

Verse 3

The man with the unclean spirit had his dwelling among the tombs.

The tombs are frequently used in Palestine by certain of the poorer classes as dwelling places. The caves which were cut out in the rocks made them a perfect shelter.

Verse 4

The demoniac had been bound with fetters and chains. Fetters were for the feet, chains for any other part of the body.

The dark tyrant-power by which he was held clothed him with super human strength and made him scorn restraint and he broke the chains and fetters that bound him.

Verse 5

Night and day in the tombs is a sad story that is told of the unfortunate. He wandered about night and day in the solitudes, but crying loudly like a ravenous beast, cutting himself with stones. There is sometimes a strong propensity in maniacs to wound and even maim themselves.

Verse 6

Probably when he saw Jesus land he ran from his lurking place among the tombs on the mountain side. There seems to be a kind of double life in the man; one his own, and the other the overwhelming influence of the spirit that possessed him. The man wanted help, and sought it in Jesus, even as the will of the demon tried to overpower him.

“He felt himself at once attracted and repelled by Jesus; this led to a violent crisis in him which revealed itself first off in a cry. Like some ferocious beast submitting to the power of his subduer, he runs and kneels, protesting all the time, in the name of the spirit of which he is still the organ, against the power which is exerted over him.”

Verse 7

It was the man's voice that cried out, but it was the controlling spirit that dictated the words. It is no uncommon thing in our time for a person to be absolutely under the influence of another's will.

The spirits who had possession of the poor man's body, wielded his organism of speech as if it were their own. These demons knew the Lord and confessed Him. The demons believe and tremble. “I implore You by God.” To implore is to entreat solemnly, as if under oath, or the penalty of a curse.

This is the language of the demon, not of a man; not a mere blasphemy, but a plausible argument.

Nothing is more common today than swearing by God, on the part of the ungodly, the infidel, and even the atheistic.

“Do not torment me.” Deal with us as God Himself does; not to precipitate our final doom, but prolong the relief we now enjoy.

Verse 8

Jesus had been saying to him, “Come out of the man you unclean spirit, leave him, and no more control him.”

Verse 9

Jesus asks this question of the afflicted man. “What is your name?” Why did He ask him his name? There is nothing so suitable as a calm and simple question to bring a madman to himself.

A man’s name becomes the expression of his character, and a summary of his life.

The first cure of this afflicted man was a return to the distinct feeling of his own personality. The man was asked, but the demon answered, showing his entire mastery over him.

“My name is Legion,” the unclean spirit answered. The Roman legion consisted of about six thousand. The word had come to signify any large number, with the idea of order and subordination.

“He” the man speaks, but he speaks under the influence of the spirits, and pleads for them. The petition of the devils may be regarded as equivalent to, “Send us anywhere, anywhere but to perdition; send us to the most shattered man; send us to the lowest creature, into man or beast, bird or reptile, anywhere but to hell!”

The demons knew well that Christ had come to destroy the power of the devil, and had already implored, “Torment me not.” Verse 7

Verse 11

“Now there was on the mountain side a great herd of swine feeding.” They were the property either of the Gentiles, or of Jews engaged in a traffic which was unclean according to the Mosaic Law.

Verse 12

The devils asked to be sent away. "Send us into the herd of swine so that we may enter them." There might have been cunning malice in their intent—malice toward Christ and toward all the other parties concerned.

They aimed at this, that they might move the owners of the herd, and the rest of the people of the country, to be discontented at our Savior.

Verse 13

Jesus granted them their request and the evil spirits entered the swine and the swine rushed down the steep bank and into the sea and were drowned.

A heavy loss was certainly recognized by the people of the city and the result was panic. Perhaps the act of the swine was the result of panic, and in spite of the evil spirits. It is the very nature of evil thus to outwit itself.

Verse 14

The herdsmen were frightened and fled in fear at the loss and the marvel, to the city of Gergesa or Gadara.

Verse 15

They came to Jesus. Matthew says, “The whole city came out to meet Jesus.” They behold the demoniac sitting clothed and in sound mind.

The contrast of the man’s former condition caused them to be afraid. They felt the presence of a power which inspired them with awe and alarm. There was moreover, the terror of a guilty conscience.

Verse 16

The people who had witnessed the transaction tell the citizens what had been done for the demoniac and about the swine—their swine; that settled

their minds. They cared more for the swine, than for the man who had been healed. They would rather have swine than Christ.

Verse 17

The citizens of the city began to pray for Jesus to leave the city.

Jesus had overcome the rage of the storm that met Him when approaching their coast. He had cast out the legion of devils that opposed His entrance into their country.

The only thing which could effectively turn away the Savior was the will of man. Christ appears never to have visited the country of the Gadarenes again. He does not abide where He is not wanted.

Verse 18

The demoniac prayed that he might go with Jesus. Was it that he feared, lest in the absence of his deliverer the powers of hell should regain their dominion over him, and only felt safe in immediate nearness to Him. Or was it merely out of the depths of his gratitude he desired to be a follower of Him to whom he owed this mighty benefit?

Verse 19

Jesus told him to go home to his people. To be a missionary for Christ, in the region where he was so well known and so long dreaded, was a far nobler calling than to follow Him where nobody had ever heard of him.

The first act God requires of a convert is to, "Be fruitful." The good man's goodness lies not hidden in himself alone; he is to strengthen his weaker brother.

The Lord called upon this man to become a home missionary.

Verse 20

The healed man went to Decapolis (ten cities in the eastern part of Jordan) and became a preacher, not only where Christ had been rejected, but where he had not gone.

His message was his own experience. How much his preaching affected history does not appear of record, but we know that nearly forty years later this district of Decapolis became the refuge of the church of Jerusalem when that city was destroyed.

THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER VERSES 21-43

Verse 21

The miracle on the eastern side of the lake took place in the early morning, and later in the day Jesus and his company were back on the western side, but not in the town of Capernaum.

Verses 22-24

The name Jairus is the name of one who was a great man at the conquest of Canaan. As is probably the case, he was a ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum. He would naturally be one of those who were sent by the centurion who had “built a synagogue” to intercede for him when his servant was sick. Luke 7:3 In that case he would be no stranger to the healing power of Jesus.

His eagerness appears in his falling at Jesus' feet and his entreating Him greatly, that is, earnestly and persistently—“My daughter lies at the point of death.’

Luke says that, “He had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.” Mark and Matthew also add that, “He will lay His hands upon her,” with the full expression of confidence that that will be the means of restoration.

The request was brought to the lake-shore, where Jesus arrived in the boat.

Jairus may have even been among those who were “waiting for Him” when he came.

The crowd heard the request and followed, as Jesus went with him up from the lakeside into the town.

“The pressure of the throng,” are very strong words. In Luke, “crowd to suffocation” well represents it. Not much rest or our Savior after the overpowering weariness of the previous evening—only the sleep on the boat.

The healing and the repulse across the lake, a crowd waiting for Him on His return, and now a call to go and give life to a dying child! But His compassion never failed, and He never considered Himself.

He was the one perfectly unselfish Being, never false to His Divine character.

THE TIMID WOMAN’S TOUCH VERSES 25-34

Verses 25-26

While on His way the woman with the hemorrhage for twelve years, timidly pressed through the crowd, touched Him and was healed. She had endured much at the hands of the physicians and had spent all she had and was not helped at all, only to grow worse. Like many of the New Testament characters, this woman appears once and then disappears to be seen no more.

Verse 27

She had heard of Jesus, but had never met Him, and had heard of the wonderful Teacher, and of His Divine power over disease.

In the crowd she was able to touch His garment which may have been the “hem of His garment.”

The word which we translate “the hem of the garment” denotes one of the four tassels or tufts of woolen cord attached to the four corners of the outer robe.

The ordinary outer Jewish garment was a square or oblong piece of cloth (worn something like an Indian blanket, or with a hole in the center for the neck) with tassels at each corner, and a fringe along the two edges.

A conspicuous deep blue thread was required to be in the tassels. One of the four tassels hung over the shoulder at the back, and this was the one which the woman touched.

Verse 28

She was timid, not doubtful. It is implied that she wished only to touch some part of His clothes, no matter which.

Verse 29

She knew, that is, by a feeling in the body, that she was healed.

The cure was effected by an exercise of Jesus' will, which responds to the woman's faith in His miraculous power, not through the mere touching of the garment. The result was instantaneous and complete.

Verse 30

Jesus permitted power to go forth for the healing of the woman when her faith was properly exercised.

Jesus turned around and said, "Who touched my garments?" Not because He was ignorant, for His searching glance showed to the woman that she was not hid from Him, but to draw out her confession of her faith.

If she had been allowed to carry away her blessing in secret as she purposed, it would not have been at all the blessing to her, and to her whole after-spiritual life, that it now was, when she obliged by this repeated question of the Lord to own that she had come to seek, and had found health from Him.

Verse 31

Luke says that, "Peter and they who were with Jesus." It was much like Peter to speak, both for himself and as spokesman for the disciples. But Jesus affirmed that someone had touched Him, implying a touch of intention and faith, and not a mere thoughtless and accidental pressing of the multitude.

Verse 32

Jesus required no one point out the one who had pressed upon Him the touch of faith, for it cannot be doubted that He was conscious all the time of what was in the woman's heart.

Verse 33

The timid woman felt that she had stolen a cure, was amazed at the sudden change wrought within her and knowing little of the tender compassion of Christ was filled with dread of the wonderful Being who had wrought her cure.

Perhaps, too, she expected to be rebuked for touching Him without His permission; perhaps, also, the women feared Christ's anger and His rebuke for polluting Him by her touch; or, possibly, the indignation of others in the crowd, in which she had joined without in any way indicating her uncleanness.

A sense of her cure brought her forward to testify to, and for Christ. So, always, the sense of pardon and acceptance will lead the trembling believer to full confession and to an open testimony for Christ.

This was just what Christ wanted, her public testimony to the facts of her case—the disease with her abortive efforts at a cure, and the instantaneous and perfect relief which her touching the Great Healer had brought her.

Verse 34

Jesus said to her, "Daughter," a term of affection, "Your faith has made you whole."

Her faith, of course, had not been the efficient cause of her cure. Christ's power had been that. And behind His power was His person, the real Healer. But her faith was the condition on her part, that rendered it fitting on His part to put forth His curative efficiency.

THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER VERSES 35-43

Verse 35

Up and until this time Jesus had not shown His power over death. His presence need not be out of place in the house of mourning.

Verse 36

Jesus, perceiving the mischief which the message might work, at once put in a comforting and hope-inspiring word, “Do not be afraid any longer only believe.”

“Belief” is in one sense the only thing needful, because it is the one condition on which we can receive salvation and grace from the Lord. But what does the Lord mean here by “only believe?” Only believe what?

Why, evidently, that, “I have power after death, that My might reaches beyond the grave.” If the man believed that his daughter was dead, and the Lord bid him, “Fear not,” it must mean fear not, but I will give her to you again. “Believe that I am life to the dead. You may not know how, but let not your faith in Me fail, and you shall see.”

Verse 37

No one was to follow Jesus, except Peter, James and John. The three were to be witnesses of His Transfiguration and of His agony.

Verse 38

Those who wailed and wept were those, no doubt, of these hired mourners, such as are described in Jeremiah 9:17-18.

Verse 39

Some have said that the maiden had fallen into the death-swoon which often precedes and then passes into actual death. But those watching her must have been conscious that so far as the help of man was concerned, all was over, or they would not have sent the message to the ruler which they did.

Verse 40

“They were laughing at him.” This ridicule would be stimulated by their interests for the wages as mourners depended on the death having actually taken place.

Verses 41-42

Them that were with Him were Peter, James and John. Taking the child by the hand Jesus said to her, "Talitha kum!" The very Syriac or Aramaic words which the Lord used are properly translated, "Girl arise."

Jesus takes the dead person by the hand; He is God since He commands her to live, and to arise, and is immediately obeyed.

Verse 43

Jesus compelled her to confess her healing before the crowd. How is it, that here He forbids the parents to make it known?

Very probably He foresees how in some cases the fame of some mighty deed might be a hindrance to, as in other cases, it might forward His real work.

Or in each case He might have had regard to the spiritual temperament of those whom He charged.

Jesus commanded that she be given something to eat. There must be some reason why this is specifically mentioned. It may have been to show the completeness of the recovery, in that one, a short time before utterly prostrated and weak, should be able to take ordinary nourishment. It may be mentioned for a mystical significance, that those to whom God has given spiritual life, require spiritual food for its continuance.

THE GREAT TEACHER AND THE TWELVE CHAPTER 6:1-13

Verse 1

Jesus went out from Capernaum to Nazareth, the town where He had been reared from childhood and had lived until He was thirty years of age. The twelve Apostles follow Him and now constantly attend to His needs.

Verse 2

The seventh day of the week, Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, always observed by the Savior as a part of the Jewish law which remained in force until He died upon the cross.

It had been the practice of Jesus, from early childhood to attend all the synagogue services; and He was still suffered to do so, in spite of the opposition He had excited. When Sabbath came He went to worship.

The synagogues of the Jews were the town and village churches where they worshiped in their various quarters for ordinary occasions when they need not go up to Jerusalem.

In all the Jewish synagogues there was a freedom of speech allowed, and there would be no objection, therefore to one like Jesus, who had already achieved for Himself a name as a remarkable rabbi, addressing the assembled congregation.

The usual effect upon those who heard the wonderful Teacher was produced. The sentiments which follow were probably expressed while He was teaching.

Verse 3

The Jewish custom required every father to teach his son a trade. Christ worked in His earlier years at the carpenter's trade with His father. The word translated carpenter here is of wider meaning than our word "carpenter." It includes all workers in wood—our cabinet-maker as well as carpenter.

Though neither of the evangelists speak of Joseph's death, yet it may be plainly inferred that Christ was now called "the Son of Mary," because of her being a widow.

Of the four brethren named, James came to have the authority and the leading figure in the church at Jerusalem. He was called by early writers, "James the Just," and wrote the Epistle of James.

Of Joses and Simon nothing more is known. Judas was probably the author of the Epistle of Jude. The brothers were offended. That is, they stumbled, and fell into error.

That Jesus was a carpenter, had grown up in their midst, and that they knew all about His family, proved to them that He could not be the Messiah, whom they expected to be a temporal prince surrounded with earthly splendor. His pure life for thirty years in their midst, His surpassing wisdom and mighty words counted nothing with them.

Verse 4

“A prophet is not without honor,” was a common proverb that Christ applied to His case, showing that He was rejected on these natural principles, not because they had no evidence in His works, but because that had prejudice against His lowly origin among men.

There is a kind of natural jealousy among the companions and neighbors of a man who rises from their level until he is far above them.

Verse 5

“And He could do no miracle there.” Jesus’ power was not changed. His miracles were not feats of magic, but required two conditions to call them forth—an opportunity, and a sufficient moral purpose.

“Unbelief” prevented both. The unbelieving would not come for healing; to heal such would be contrary to His purpose in the miracles, the demonstration of His spiritual power.

Verse 6

Our Lord does not marvel at other human things generally, but He does marvel, on the other hand, at faith, when, as in the case of the centurion, it overcomes in its grandeur all human hindrances, and, on the other hand, all unbelief, when it can, in the face of numerous Divine manifestations, harden itself into a willful rejection on Himself.

It seems that Jesus left Nazareth, never to return to it, or preach in its synagogues, or revisit the home where He had so long toiled as the village carpenter. “He went round about the villages,” appearing to have commenced a short circuit in Galilee, in the direction of Capernaum.

Verse 7

He called unto Him the twelve. After long wanderings and continuous trials, the twelve were now, in their Master’s opinion, in a measure prepared to work by themselves in spreading the new Divine.

The Master wished to train them for their great work under His direction. They were sent out in pairs that they might counsel, help and encourage one another, an example that might still should be followed today with profit.

Jesus gave them power over unclean spirits. Their work was to cast out unclean spirits in the world and the Divine authority was given to cast them out of the men who were possessed of demons.

This power was needful that they might be able to demonstrate that they were the Lord’s messengers.

Verse 8

There follows now the charge that He gave them, “Nothing for their journey.” Make no preparation, such as is ordinarily made the eve of a journey; set out just as you are. God will provide for all your wants. A staff only, a walking stick, as used in journeys upon foot to support and ease the traveler.

Verse 9

“Be shod with sandals.” In Matthew, they are directed not to wear shoes; here, to be shod with sandals. “Do not put on two tunics.” The tunic was the inner garment, worn next to the skin, usually with sleeves, and reaching to the knees. It answered rather to our shirt than to our coat.

They were going to their brethren and the best way was to throw themselves on their hospitality. They were accustomed to live in this way.

Verse 10

“Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town.”

On their arrival at a city, they were to settle down in the first house in which they obtained access. Once settled in a house, they were to keep to it, and try to make it the center of a Divine work in that place.

Verse 11

“If any place would not receive them, they were to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them.”

By this symbolic action they shook themselves from all connection with such, and all responsibility for the guilt of rejecting them and their message.

Verse 12

“They went out and preached that men should repent.” Going about from the Lord’s presence, or the place where he delivered these instructions, they proceeded to fulfill them, not at random or confusedly, but on a systematic method, going about or through the country and among the village, or from town to town.

“Men should repent,” is the same message which had already been brought by John the Baptist and by Christ Himself.

The time had come for preaching the cross of Christ.

Verse 13

“They were casting out many demons and were anointing them with oil.” To suppose that oil was used medicinally is contrary to the whole tenor of the narratives. It was “the vehicle of healing power committed to them”—an external sign such as our Lord sometimes used to connect Himself and the person cured. It was probably also a symbol of anointing by the Holy Spirit. The Jews were in the habit of anointing their faces and hair with oil every day when they were among their fellows.

This was omitted when sick or fasting. The anointed a sick man when about to heal him with a word and send him forth. It means that the patient was able to go out among his fellow-men.

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST VERSES 14-29

Verses 14-15

King Herod was “king” by courtesy only, since Herod was but a Tetrarch, that is, governor of the fourth part of a divine or province. Jesus warned His disciples to be aware of Herod.

King Herod heard of these healings and that Jesus’ name had become well known and that the people were saying: “John the Baptist has risen from the dead and therefore these miraculous powers are at work in Him.”

He must have imagined that John the Baptist having risen from the dead would necessarily do mighty works.

Evidently, Herod was no Sadducee, who says, “There is no resurrection,” or his guilty conscience and superstitious fears had obscured his religious belief, for John the Baptist had worked no miracles during his lifetime. John 10:41

Herod seems to have imagined that John the Baptist having risen would necessarily do mighty works.

In these two verses three opinions are given concerning our Lord. He is John the Baptist raised from the dead, or Elijah, Malachi 4:5, or another prophet. Elijah had not died, but had been taken up to heaven while conversing with Elisha. 2 Kings 2:11 There was therefore an expectation among the Jews that Elijah should return to earth as the forerunner of the Messiah.

Verse 16

Herod had John the Baptist beheaded and now fears to meet his victim again.

Verse 17

Mark here refers to a preceding event. Herod had had John the Baptist bound and imprisoned, probably in Machaerus (the Black Fortress), which Herod the great had built, and which was situated east of the Dead Sea.

This castle had been in the possession of Aretas, father-in-law to Herod Antipas, and Emir of Arabia Petraea. Probably Herod had seized this castle when his lawful wife, hearing of his marriage with Herodias, had fled to her father at Petra. Machaerus was both a palace and a prison.

At this period Herod was probably living there with an armed retinue, on account of the war with Aretas in which he was engaged. Herod lost the day, and the Jews considered this defeat a punishment for the beheading of John the Baptist.

Verse 18

John had been saying to Herod, “it is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” Luke also tells us that John reprovved all the evils which Herod had done. Luke 3:19

Verse 19

Herodias had a grudge against John’s boldness in rebuking Herod. Naturally his boldness in rebuking Herod would arouse her anger and resentment, which was all the keener because she perceived that John had a great influence on Herod, who feared John.

Verse 20

Herod kept John from Herodias’ vengeance, at least for a time. Herod was awed by John’s virtue. He feared and esteemed him, and did many things to please the Precursor, but not the one thing against which John’s rebukes were chiefly directed. Herod would not put away Herodias.

Herod had his better moments, but he did not have the courage to conquer his vices and to amend. It was easier to listen than to yield, and the many

things evidently did not cost him so much as the one necessary sacrifice would have done.

Verse 21

“A strategic day,” that is, for the vengeance of Herodias, that she might win by stratagem, where she had failed by direct petition. Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.

Verse 22

Salome, the daughter of Herodias, here dishonors herself and family by performing the part of a hired scenic dancer. Moreover, these oriental dances were generally immodest. It was customary to give such entertainment at the close of the banquet. Herod said to Salome, “Ask whatever you want and I will give it to you.”

Verse 23

Herod swore to her again that whatever she asked, it would be given her, up to half the kingdom. It was a boastful assertion made in the presence of his flatterers; possibly he was not sober when he made it.

Verse 24

She went to her mother and asked, “What shall I ask for,” and her mother replied, “The head of John the Baptist.”

Verse 25

Immediately Salome went before the king. Herodias feared delay, lest she should ultimately meet with a refusal. When Herod was sober, he might again refuse to accede to the request of his daughter.

Verse 26

The king was very sorry and was filled with great sorrow and grief. Because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.

Verse 27

Herod feared to keep his rash oath, yet he had not the manliness to break it, by refusing to commit a crime. To keep a rash oath is a sin against the Second Commandment. Herod by keeping his oath broke the sixth commandment also. Immediately Herod sent an executioner and commanded him to go to the prison and bring back the head of John the Baptist.

Verse 28

The executioner brought John's head on a platter and gave it to the girl and the girl gave it to her mother. The crime is now accomplished.

Note: It was said by Jerome that Herodias glutted her vengeance by piercing the saint's tongue with needles. Nicephorus states that Salome met with a terrible death as punishment for her share in the sacrilegious crime. When crossing the ice, it broke under her, and the fragments drifting together severed her head from her body.

Verse 29

When the disciples heard of this, they came and took away the body and buried it in a tomb. Herod allowed them to perform this act of respect. They buried the headless corpse only.

In this narrative four details are given by Mark alone.

1. Herodias was John the Baptist's enemy rather than Herod, who esteemed him.
2. Herod "kept him" for a time at least from her vengeance.
3. Salome consulted her mother regarding the request.
4. Herod sent a special executioner to behead John.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND VERSES 30-44

The death of John the Baptist occurred in the spring, and there remained just a year of the ministry of Jesus after the death of the Forerunner. They have

returned. Jesus crosses the lake with them in search of rest, and there feeds five thousand.

Verse 30

The news of the death of John the Baptist would seem to have reached Jesus while He was still alone; but at about the same time His disciples were again gathered around Him. They reported what they had done but Mark adds what they had taught. In their teaching He would certainly see defects, but His response to their report would be nothing less than cheering. He was training them, and He would not fail to encourage them.

Verses 31-32

The invitation was addressed to the twelve alone. “Come with Me into a desert place and rest for a while.” The place probably was Capernaum. This invitation seems to have two motives, one in Matthew and one in Mark.

1. In Mark, we should attribute it to tender care of the , weary from their work, and His desire to be alone with them for a while.
2. In Matthew, it is when Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist that He withdrew privately to the desert place.

Joined with the other motive was the desire to be quiet, that He might have leisure for the thoughts that the death of John suggests. His personal love for John would make Him now a mourner; and the event must also have awakened the thought found in Matthew 17:12.

The two motives were one in effect, driving Him away from the shifting, intruding, exacting crowd to be alone with His own. In the early morning they went away in the boat.

Verse 33

They succeeded in getting away, but not unobserved. Luke says they went to Bethsaida; John says that Jesus “went up into the mountains,” Matthew and Mark merely that the place was desert, that is uninhabited.

The fact seems to be that they went to Bethsaida, which stood at the extreme north of the lake, where the Jordan River enters it, [chapter 8:22](#). They then proceeded a little to the south-east, to some convenient point in the hills that rise from the shore of the lake, where they might hope to be alone.

It may be that at Bethsaida itself they did not touch at all, and that Luke's mention of it is meant only for a general designation of the locality. The distance from Capernaum to the vicinity of Bethsaida would not be more than six or eight miles, and could be traversed on foot about as quickly as by boat.

In the journey for rest, there would be no haste, and the pursuing crowd arrived first. The people "were out of all cities," that is, from many towns in that region, especially from those that must be passed on the way.

The crowd grew as they went. John speaks of Jesus already seated in the mountains, lifting up His eyes and seeing the crowd approaching, which may be a reminiscence of the fact that they came, not all at once, but kept streaming in.

John also connects the mention of the coming throng with the fact that the Passover was at hand. It may be that some part of the multitude was made up of pilgrims to Jerusalem, who turned aside to see the Prophet of Galilee.

Verse 34

Jesus departs from the boat. The disciples may have been impatient that the ever-present throng was even here; with the Master, however, it was not impatience, but compassion. The activity of the day was rich and various. The motive, pity for the spiritual state of the multitude, seems to have been often affecting Him with a sad surprise. The Shepherd impulse was strong in His heart and the sight of the sheep un-shepherded always drew if forth.

He began to teach them "many things about the Divine of God," into which as a fold He would gather the un-shepherded. He also healed the sick. Such was the rest that He found and such the opportunity for quiet meditation. He had no leisure time to eat; but, while He became a Shepherd to those un-shepherded, no doubt His heart was full of the sentiment of [John 4:32-34](#).

Jesus did not propose Himself to feed the multitude; He said to His disciples, “You give them something to eat.” It was only natural that they should think first of their own resources, and inquire how the thing could be done. It was not altogether unbelief that made them speak of buying bread for the people. They knew that they had nothing adequate, and were equally sure that it was impracticable to buy—two hundred penny-worth of bread.

In Mark alone are the disciples sent to find out how many loaves they have.

The loaves were thin and brittle; it appears that three would be required for a meal for a single person. The fish are called in John (not elsewhere) *opsaria*, a word that denotes a condiment, something eaten with bread or other staple food. Hence the idea of “small fishes;” but that idea cannot be insisted on, as the word had come to be used of fish generally.

After the report of a hopeless quantity, Matthew adds the reply of Jesus: “Bring them to Me”—the one hope of making the small supply sufficient.

The proposal to feed the people was another suggestion of the Shepherd’s heart. Bodily wants were not beneath His notice, and yet this act had predominately a spiritual purpose. Brief though the record is, that had been a great day of power and teaching, and such a day might well close with a climax of convincing might.

The people must sit down in order to secure orderly and impartial distribution. Heavenly things must be handled with earthly wisdom; bread produced by a miracle must be distributed in the best human order. Jesus commanded them to all set down by companies upon the green grass. They sat down not exactly by ranks, but rather in blocks like garden-beds, some in groups of a hundred and some in groups of fifties.

Matthew and Mark record that Jesus looked up to heaven and blessed, that is, He praised God in thanksgiving. Luke records, “He blessed them,” the loaves and fishes—invoking the blessing of God upon them; John, “He gave thanks.” It was simply the grateful prayer before eating, “grace before meat,” offered by the host or head of the family.

Though Divine power can produce a super-abundant supply, still it is right “that nothing be lost.” Mark says at the very end, just after mentioning the great store of fragments that was left, “they that ate of the loaves were about five thousand men.”

Matthew says there were “about five thousand men, besides the women and children.” The women and children would be arranged, according to Jewish custom, separately from the men, and in such a multitude would be less in number.

JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER VERSES 45-52

The effect of the miracle was to confirm them in their false Messianic hopes, for they interpreted it as a sign and pledge of the highest temporal prosperity under His rule, who could not only heal the sick of all their diseases, but feed five thousand men with five loaves of barley bread.

He must immediately dismiss them. It appears that He sent away the disciples first, perhaps that the excitement of the multitude might not seize upon them. After His disciples had departed, the Lord proceeded to dismiss the multitude, perhaps now more willing to leave Him that they saw His special attendants had gone. As soon as all had left Him, He went up into the mountain alone to pray — the second instance mentioned of a night so spent; the first being the night prior to the choice of Apostles.

We assume that the place where the people were fed was the southern angle of the plain of Butaiha, where the mountains meet the lake. From this point the Apostles, to reach Capernaum, would pass near Bethsaida at the mouth of the Jordan River; and as Jesus proceeding along the shore must necessarily pass through it, we find no difficulty in supposing that they directed their course toward it with the design of stopping there, and taking Him with them into the boat when He should arrive.

An author translated this latter passage as, “They (the Apostles) were making for the other side of the sea in the direction of Capernaum.” He adds: “It would

appear as if the disciples were lingering along shore, with the expectation of taking in Jesus; but night had fallen and He had not yet come to them, and the sea began to be stormy.” (Alford)

“The great wind that blew” and the tossing waves made all their efforts to reach Bethsaida useless. Nor could they even make Capernaum. In spite of all their endeavors, they were driven out into the middle of the lake and southerly, down opposite the plain of Gennesaret.

The wind howled down every wady, from the northeast and east, with such fury that no efforts of rowers could have brought a boat to shore at any point along that coast.

No wonder the disciples toiled and rowed hard all night, and how natural their amazement and terror at the sight of Jesus walking on the waves. The whole lake, as we had it, was lashed into fury.

Only Matthew mentions Peter’s attempt to walk on water to meet Jesus and Mark records that after he had been rescued they entered the boat and the wind stopped.

HEALING ON THE PLAIN OF GENNESARET VERSES 53-56

Verse 53

Having crossed the lake from east to west, they came to the land of Gennesaret. A small land mass, four miles long, and two or three wide, on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, or Lake of Tiberias.

Josephus, a Jewish writer, describes this district as the garden of the whole land and possessing a fertility and loveliness, almost unparalleled. Capernaum appears to have been in or very near this delightful region.

Verse 54

As the disciples along with Jesus left the boat, the men of that place immediately recognized Jesus whom they had seen before, as they lived so near His home and the center of His operation.

It is an interesting thought that during the three years of our Savior's public ministry, His person must have become perfectly familiar to the great mass of the population, at least in Galilee.

Verse 55

The people in the whole area began at once with beds or pallets to carry those who were ill to Jesus, wherever He was, for healing.

Verse 56

The *agora* of ancient cities was an open place or square, sometimes immediately within the gates, but usually near the center of the town.

The sick or more exactly, the infirmed came to Jesus to be healed.

Throughout the course, as well as at the opening of our Savior's ministry, His miracles were many.

Those recorded in detail were only a few selected samples. His constant practice was to heal all who needed and desired it.

CONFLICT WITH PHARISEES CHAPTER 7: 1-23

Conflict over washings Verses 1-8

Verses 1-4

The place is still Capernaum. The Scribes and Pharisees who are mentioned here are probably Galileans who had been at Jerusalem and had just returned. They saw some of Jesus' disciples eat bread, not ceremonially purified according to their ideas of necessity.

The Pharisees and all the Jews have a loose popular expression to show that this custom of the Pharisees was widely received. "Except they wash," is probably descriptive of the washing of one hand by rubbing it with the other. "Except they wash, they cannot eat." The word "wash" is "baptizo." In Luke 11:38 the Pharisees wondered that Jesus had not first bathed Himself before dinner.

It is not the baptizing of their hands, but of themselves, or, strictly, the being baptized or bathed, that was insisted upon.

In verse 4 the word for “washings,” in washings of cups, is from the same root, But it is not the word that is used to denote the Christian baptism, which is a neuter word, baptisma.

The cups were drinking cups. As for the pots, the Greek word xestai is a pot that held about a pint.

The law provided, at least in certain cases of defilement, that the earthen vessels should be broken, and the wooden ones should be rinsed in water.

The greater part of these minute requirements lay outside of the Mosaic Law. Tradition was the ecclesiastical version of the law—the law as it came out of the hands of great teachers.

It was regarded as equally authoritative with the written law itself.

It was the very life and mission of the Pharisees to keep the traditional interpretations in full force.

Verses 5-7

Of course, they must call Him to account, and not the disciples—the rabbi, not the pupils. He and they were reproved oftener for neglecting the traditions than for departing from the genuine law. Jesus replied, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, instead of teaching doctrines and commandments of men.”

Jesus condemned outward worship without heart, the profession of the lips with no inward devotion or obedience. The Prophets declared that their worship was in vain, it was empty, fruitless work; it went for nothing.

God condemns the foisting or adding to His religion, human traditions and human commandments.

His worship must be upon the basis of His own requirements, and no human arrangement may take its place beside what He has appointed.

Verse 8

“Laying aside (or leaving) the commandment of God, you hold the traditions of men. He charges them, not with addition, but with subtraction. They have forsaken command for tradition, God for men. The leaders are their chief authority, not Moses or Jehovah; they are not serving God. The rebuke is there for idolatry; but in the sight of God the sin of the Pharisees was as heinous as that.

CONFLICT OVER PARENTAL CARE VERSES 9-13

Verse 9

Jesus said to them, “You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.”

Their ancestors may have asked, “When have we despised Your name?”

The answer, “You rejected the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition.”

Verses 10-12

Instead of beginning with the traditions respecting defilements by contact and the necessary cleansings, Jesus goes at once to the Ten Commandments, and convicts them of setting aside the fundamental law of God to Israel. “Honor your father and your mother.”

Jesus adds a second extract, giving the same law as expounded and applied in the legislation of Moses: “Whoever curses father or mother let him die.” Both passages are quoted from what Moses said, but both are adduced as the commandment of God, verse 9 and the word of God, verse 13. Jesus recognizes the Mosaic legislation as the law of his Father; and not merely the milder parts of it, but even the provision for the execution of the disobedient and insulting child.

Viewed in the light of the context, that passage must mean that the spirit of the prohibition can be violated without a profane or blasphemous word and

that not to bless parents by such care as a child can give is to curse them, according to the true intent of the law. Such then, is the “commandment of God’ respecting parents; they must be treated with honor, and no one is at liberty to withhold from them what blessing he can give.

Verse 13

“Thus, invalidating the word of God by your tradition,” means, making it of no effect. It means “to deprive of authority or lordship,” and so, of a law,” to annul.” It implies more than neglect; it tells of actual nullification.

CONFLICT OVER THE SOURCE OF DEFILEMENT VERSES 14-23

HIS MESSAGE TO THE MULTITUDE

Verses 14-16

When Jesus had exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, He took a bold and significant step. Calling the multitude to Him, He publicly announced that no diet can really pollute the soul; only its own actions and desires can do that; not that which entered into the man can defile him, but the things which proceed out of the man.

Jesus does not yet proclaim the abolition of the law but He surely declares that it is only temporary, because it is conventional, not rooted in the eternal distinctions between right and wrong, but artificial.

Such teaching, addressed with marked emphasis to the public, the masses, whom the Pharisees despised as ignorant of the law, and cursed, was a defiance indeed.

HIS MESSAGE TO HIS DISCIPLES

Verses 17-23

When they were alone, “the disciples asked of Him the parable,” that is, in other words, the saying which they felt to be deeper than they understood, and full of far-reaching issues.

But Jesus rebuked them for not understanding what uncleanness really meant.

For Him, defilement was badness, a condition of the soul. And therefore meats could not defile a man, because they did not reach the heart, but only the bodily organs.

In so doing, He made all meats clean, and thus pronounced the doom of Judaism, and the new dispensation of the Spirit.

Paul did little more than expand this memorable saying, “Nothing goes into a man that can defile him.” Here is the germ of all the decisions about idol meat—“neither if ‘one’ eat is he the better, neither if he eat not is he the worse.”

“The things which proceed out of the man are those which defile the man.” The rule is absolute: “Whatsoever from without goes into the man, it cannot defile him.”

THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN VERSES 24-30

Verse 24

Jesus and His disciples left Capernaum and went to the land (or district) of Gennesaret. "Arose," standing up, most often denotes nothing more than starting out, putting one's self in motion in reference to journeys.

They went away from the malice of His enemies, or from the crowd and bustle even of His friends and followers. There may have been a higher and more important motive that led to this retreat, and that is to convince by one act of His public life that His personal ministry was to the Jews and that His saving benefits were also for the Gentiles.

It is important to remember that these movements were not made at random.

Verse 25

The reason that He could not be concealed is now recorded. “For a woman, having heard of Him,” that is, of His arrival now, or of His miracles before, but even in the latter case, the other fact must be supplied. “Whose little daughter had an unclean spirit,” or demon. It appears from this case, that these demoniacal possessions were not confined to Jews or to any age or sex.

Verse 26

The remarkable circumstance in this case is that the woman here described was a Syrophenician Gentile woman. She asked or begged that Jesus cast forth the demon, or expel the demon from her daughter.

Verse 27

Our Lord’s refusal to perform this miracle, is the first and only instance recorded of Jesus refusing to help.

Even here, however, it was not an absolute and permanent refusal, but a relative and temporary one, designed to answer an important purpose, both in its occurrence and in the historical account of it.

Verse 28

The woman answers in faith and humility. There is no dispute as to the meaning of this admirable answer. “Yes, Lord, it is true that it would not be becoming to deprive the children of their food, in order to supply the dogs; for these are not to eat the children’s bread, but the crumbs falling from the table.”

The whole is therefore an assent to what our Lord had said, including His description of the Gentiles as the dogs beneath the table, and a thankful content to occupy that place and to partake of the inferior provision. Matthew 15:24-27

The “crumbs” is not here a partitive expression, as it sometimes is, but simply indicates the source from which the nourishment is drawn.

The idea suggested by an ancient and adopted by a modern writer, that the word translated crumbs here means the pieces of bread which the ancients used as napkins.

It is not only a gratuitous refinement, but a needless variation from the usage of the word, which is a regular diminutive of one itself denoting a crumb, a bit, or morsel, especially of bread.

Verse 29

Her request was granted and Jesus told her to go her way. The merit of her answer was, “her great faith.”

Her request was granted instantaneously, the demon actually left her child when her gracious words were uttered.

Verse 30

This is merely a fact that she found the Savior’s declaration verified on reaching home.

The daughter was lying on her bed and the demon had actually departed from her daughter.

HEALING A DEAF MUTE VERSES 31-37

Verse 31

Jesus left the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. Jesus will perform one of His miracles on some “mountain” (near the lake) where many were gathered about Him.

Often it is the organs of speech that are thus conceived of as smitten, and the word then means “dumb;” sometimes it is the organs of hearing, and it then means “deaf,” as here. The other descriptive word means “speaking with difficulty;” not “speechless.” It appears here that this person had an impediment in his speech.

Verses 33-34

Three peculiarities appear in this act of healing.

1. The privacy of the transaction.
2. The use of signs and physical media
3. The unusual vocal utterances of the Healer

In the case of the deaf man words would be of no avail; and if any such appeal was to be made, it must be done by signs. In the present case Jesus probably saw in the man himself some reason for judging it best that the cure should be private.

The withdrawal from the crowd would impress him, though he could not hear its tumult, with a sense of solemnity. Perhaps Jesus saw in him a vanity that would render anything like a public act of healing hurtful to him.

In any case, it was a solemn and touching experience to be alone, or almost alone, with Jesus to be healed.

Jesus put His fingers into the man's ears. Not a mere touch, but an insertion. Then He spit and touched His tongue, that is, touched the man's tongue with a finger perhaps moistened with His own saliva—another sign of the transference of something from Himself to the afflicted man, this time with reference to his injured organs of speech.

Then He stood looking up into the heavens to indicate that this was an act that depended upon a heavenly power—an act, indeed, of Heaven upon earth.

How better could He show a deaf man that he was receiving a gift from above? Then he sighed, or rather, "groaned."

This was no artificial utterance intended for effect: it was a spontaneous utterance of genuine sorrow in sympathy with human suffering. It came from the same source as the tears at the grave of Lazarus.

Although the man could not hear the groan, he might be aware of it, for doubtless his eyes were busy in observing what His Benefactor was doing; and

if he was aware of it, he must have felt, however, dimly, that there was a deep and genuine sympathy in the Healer's heart.

This could be no magician's performance to him: this was a deed of love. And then at last Jesus spoke. "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." "Ephphatha, Be opened." was addressed to the man with reference to his organs of sense, which are conceived of as closed.

Verse 35

It would seem that the moment of the Ephphatha was the moment of change. His ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plain," or rightly, normal. But now, his organs of sense were opened, and hence forth all was done (orthos) in the natural or normal way.

Verses 36-37

Jesus charged them, not merely the man himself, but the people who were around to remain silent about His works.

Jesus was now in search of retirement and quietness, the request was especially to be expected. But as usual, it was all in vain; the attitude of the healed and the wonder of the spectators were too strong, and the story must be told.

FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND CHAPTER 8:1-10

Verse 1

We have now come to what is called "The Second Miracle of the Loaves." In this miracle, we have a peculiar phase of Christ's love and power presented to us, and by its repetition commended very urgently to our notice, so that we should be very anxious to realize all that is taught us in these two accounts.

Verses 2-3

In the former miracle Jesus felt equal compassion for the multitude, but did not express it. The disciples urge upon Him to send them away, and then He, as it were, invites them to suggest some exercise of the mighty power which they had so repeatedly seen put forth by Him.

The Lord Himself begins: "I have compassion on the multitude for they have been with Me three days. If I send them to their own houses, they will faint by the way."

Verse 4

The backwardness of the Apostles to believe in Christ's readiness to feed the multitude miraculously, is in strong contrast with their readiness to believe in His powers of healing.

Verse 5

And Jesus asked them, "How many loaves do we have?" This question was not for information. Jesus knew well how many they had, but He asked it that there should be no mistake about the miraculous nature of the feeding.

Verse 6

Jesus gave thanks for all food, whenever received, thanks should be rendered, and we also learn how we ought to be thankful for all means and opportunities of doing good to others. The thanks of the Lord would be tendered to His Father not only in anticipation of the actual food soon to be so marvelously provided, but for the opportunity of showing forth the Divine glory and power, and also of relieving the wants of so many who were following Him for a good purpose.

"And gave thanks, and broke the bread, and gave to His disciples." There is some particular lesson which the Lord and His Spirit would have us draw from this. The lesson seems to be that the true feeding in the church of Christ is not that each man should take for himself, but that all that can be called food is to be given through ministerial intervention.

Verses 7-10

From the mention of a few small fishes, it seems evident that the disciples gave all their provisions of every kind for the sustentation of the multitude; but notwithstanding this they were not in want, for a much larger quantity of fragments or broken pieces was taken up than in the case of the miracle of the

feeding of five thousand: the word here signifying hampers or panniers, rather than baskets.

The same word is used to denote the basket in which Paul was let down from the walls of Damascus.

“And immediately Jesus entered into a boat with His disciples and came to the area of Dalmanutha about half-way down on the western side of the Lake.

THE DEMAND FOR A SIGN VERSES 11-13

Verse 11

The Pharisees came and began to question Him, that is, they came out from their homes when they heard that Jesus was there. These were in all probability Pharisees of Dalmanutha. Matthew associates the Sadducees with them and they were seeking from Jesus a sign from heaven.

What they asked for was something like the manna, or thunder from a clear sky, or fire from heaven. There was a popular impression that, although miracles upon the earth might be spurious and deceptive, signs from heaven could not be counterfeited.

It was expected that they would accompany the coming of the Messiah, and therefore Jesus was repeatedly asked to fulfill this expectation. If Jesus was the Christ, they thought He would certainly be able and willing, and even anxious to give this proof of His claim—but they were tempting Him, that is, they were trying to entangle Him, to His own injury with the people.

Since they themselves hated Him, they must take all measures to prevent Israel from supposing its hopes to be fulfilled in Him, so they would play upon false hopes and studiously repress all spiritual expectations.

Verse 12

At human misery Mark sighed; at human sin amounting to criminal inability to discern the truth he sighed deeply in his spirit. This deep sigh, or groan, was the sign of the chafing of his spirit against spiritual barriers.

To the physically deaf he could say “Ephphatha,” but not to these spiritually hardened self-imprisoned Pharisees.

What voice could reach them? When the rich young man departed sorrowful, he pointed His disciples to the brighter side, saying, “With God all things are possible.” But in the case of these proud and hardened men He could only sigh, for the gates of spiritual possibility seemed closed.

This generation, the men of His time, who had the opportunity to know Him—why should they ask for a sign? If there was no spiritual recognition of Him, the case was hopeless; signs would teach them nothing.

He Himself was the True Sign from heaven, the Living Witness to the present God. If they did not see that He was in the Father and the Father in Him, their spiritual blindness must remain.

Verse 13

Disheartened and repelled by this reception in “His own country,” He abruptly turned back, without going on, as it appears, to Capernaum. He re-embarked to return to the eastern shore. It is little to say that he must have gone in sadness.

He felt the grief of rejection, not merely as a personal wrong, but more as the rejection of God and goodness and saving love.

WARNING AGAINST THE LEVEN OF THE PHARISEES

VERSES 14-21

Verse 14

The neglect to take a supply of bread was doubtless the result of their haste in again setting out; and in that view of the matter, Jesus Himself was responsible for it, since He had hurried them away.

Verse 15

It was Mark alone who mentions the one loaf that they had with them in the boat, and Jesus charged them, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of Herod."

"Doctrine" refers rather to the teaching than to the substance of what was taught; and when used of Herod it must be substantially equivalent to "influence." To the corrupting influence of Pharisaism and Sadduceeism or of political Herodianism, that is, to the spirit that was manifested in these forms—it was due that Israel had departed from God, and had so lost all spiritual sense of Him as to be clamoring for signs from heaven. So the warning means, "Beware of the unspiritual, irreligious, godless teaching through which has come to pass that God is no longer recognized."

Yet the land is full of it under the influence of this unholy teaching, and it cannot fail to be working as a leaven in their minds.

Verse 16

The disciples thought Jesus had referred to their supply of bread.

And they reasoned, or considered, together saying, "It is because we have no bread," represents the spirit of their utterance perfectly, though not a good translation.

They dimly supposed Jesus must mean that food received from the hands of His enemies was to be rejected, because of the unworthiness of those who might offer it. If the Pharisees and Herodians were so defiled, they were not fit persons for them to obtain food from.

They tried to understand Him, but this low and uncharacteristic meaning was all that they could find, as if He had said, "You will have bread to buy, and you must be careful from whom you buy it, and had forbidden them to eat the bread of His enemies."

Verses 17-18

Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of spiritual perception. He said these words to them, “Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear, and do you remember when I broke the five loaves and how many baskets full of fragments you took up? Do you not yet understand?”

These questions of Jesus are sharp and cutting, full of surprise and indignation.

Verses 19-20

Whatever meaning they might have found in His warning, the one they did find was one that their experience with Him ought to have rendered impossible. They had been with Him twice when He fed thousands from a handful, yet they were talking perplexedly among themselves, as if He could possibly be thinking of where the food was to come from. His rebuke means, “When you are with Me, and I am responsible for your want of food, you need have no anxiety, and you may know that whatever I may say refers to something else than the way in which food is obtained.”

Here was indeed the unspiritual heart, upon which the spiritual thought seemed almost wasted. More than in the case of His townsmen at Nazareth, He marveled because of their unbelief.

If Christian teachers find even their brethren slow in perception in spiritual things, they may hear their Master saying to them, “You know that they misunderstood Me before they misunderstood you.” (John 15:18)

Verse 21

In Matthew the final question, “Do you not yet understand?” is expanded into a direct intimation that the warning did not refer to bread.

Matthew adds also that they did at last perceive that He was warning them against the teaching and the principles of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But it is quite certain that they did not take in His full meaning, and that when the subject was dropped Jesus knew that His utterances had not reached His aim.

It was not His method to urge truth upon them faster than they were able to receive it. John 16:12

HEALING THE BLIND MAN OF BETHSAIDA VERSES 22-26

Verse 22

Mark here records a miracle not given in the other gospels, one of the very few passages peculiar to him.

It was probably to illustrate and exemplify still further our Lord's variety of methods in the working of His cures, by stating a case in which the cure was gradual.

Jesus and His company, the twelve Apostles and perhaps some others who attended Him from place to place, traveled to Bethsaida in Perea, on the northeast shore of the lake in a solitude near which the five thousand were fed.

A blind man, not one born blind, for he knew the shape of trees, but blinded by disease or accident, wanted to touch Jesus that he might be healed.

Verse 23

Taking the hand of the blind man, Jesus led him outside the city. After spitting on his eyes or (into his eyes), and putting His hands upon Him as had been requested by his friends, Jesus asked if he saw anything?

Verse 24

And looking up, raising his eyes, trying to use them, he said, "I see the men walking about walking about as trees, that is, undefined in form and figure. I behold men because as trees I see them walking."

Verse 25

Jesus laid His hands upon the man's eyes again and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he began to see everything clearly.

Verse 26

Jesus sent the man away telling him to not even enter the village but to return to his home. The man having just been brought out of the town, though not residing there, would naturally think of going back to tell and show what had been done to him.

But this our Lord explained: “Go home; go directly home; no, not into the town, but home; not even for an hour or a moment; do not go into the town at all; not even to tell what I have done; do not so much as speak to any person in the town; but go directly home.”

JESUS THE MESSIAH VERSES 27—9:1

Jesus and His disciples depart from this scene of work to another. They go into the towns away from the populous cities.

They went to a city at the northeast extremity of Palestine and at the foot of Mount Lebanon, anciently called Paneas, and now Banias.

Jesus’ conversation on the way was very much like usual.

1. The turn it often took when the disciples were left to themselves disputes concerning greatness, etc.
2. The turn Jesus gave to it — inquiring’s concerning His mission and person.

Learn:

1. Avoid foolish and worldly talk.
2. Improve passing opportunities, and
3. Let your talk be often about the Savior.

On the way Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” The following conversation refers to three points: (1) the Christ, (2) the suffering Christ, and (3) the disciples of the suffering Christ.

Verse 28

As Jesus had not openly declared that He was the Messiah, but had allowed men to hear His surpassing wisdom and see His life and works and draw their own conclusions, there would naturally be various opinions.

1. “John the Baptist”—who had been killed by Herod a few months before, now restored to life. This was one popular notion regarding Him.
2. “One of the prophets”—The Jews believed that at the coming of the Messiah the prophets were to rise again.

Verse 29

Jesus turns to His disciples and asks, “Who do you say that I am?”

Jesus had never openly spoken of His Messiahship. It was His will that the revelation should dawn gradually on the minds of His children; that it should spring more from the truths He spoke, and the life He lived than from the wonders which He wrought.

It was in the Son of man that they were to recognize the Son of God.

Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This confession not only sees in Jesus the promised Messiah, but in the Messiah recognizes the Divine nature. It was a decisive answer, and given as out of a higher inspiration. The Lord Himself traced the thought of its Divine source. (Matthew 16:17) and yet it was no doubt founded on evidence which the disciple had diligently studied.

The Lord in the passage in Matthew declares that the grand truth confessed by Peter is the rock on which His church shall be built. By faith in this truth men become disciples of Christ and members of His church.

Verse 30

Jesus charged them to tell no one, for the time had not yet come to proclaim that He was the Christ. To do so prematurely would result in harm rather than good. He must first demonstrate His Messiahship by His resurrection.

Verse 31

Jesus began to teach them that He must suffer many things. The great lesson of our two years of His ministry was that He was the Christ; after this had been learned by the they were ready to be taught that He must die a violent death. So, from this time onward we find Him speaking more and more plainly of the “decrease which He must accomplish.”

The supreme purpose of His advent was not to teach truth, nor to work miracles, nor to illustrate the perfection of manly character, but to die (to die for sinners) to bear their sins in His own body on the tree.

He was to be rejected by the Elders, the Chief Priests, and Scribes. The three constituents of the Sanhedrim.

The elders (leading men) would be chosen of their material and political influence; the High Priests, because of their elevated ecclesiastical position; the Scribes, because of their literary and rabbinical qualifications.

Now, for the first time, the disciples received full and clear information of the sufferings and death of Christ.

Verse 32

Peter began to rebuke Jesus. The same Peter who but just now had made so noble and spiritual a confession and received so high a blessing, now shows the weak and carnal side of his character.

This world has many Peters, who wish to be wiser than Christ and to prescribe to Him what it is needful to do.

Verse 33

Jesus, seeing His disciples, singles out Peter for special warning. Jesus rebuked Peter saying, “Get behind Me, Satan, for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” Christ saw, with the glance of His spirit, in the words of Peter, a suggestion not so much of His as of Satan’s.

This is the very temptation that fell from the lips of Satan in the wilderness when he offered to surrender the kingdom of the world to Jesus without His suffering on the cross. The Lord when He says, with sudden vehemence, “Get behind Me Satan!” was not speaking directly to Peter but to the prince of darkness, who had for a moment taken possession of Peter’s mind and lips.

Peter had been greatly elated over the Messiahship of Jesus, still expected an earthly King Messiah after the type of David, in whose Divinity he would have a great place. To hear the Lord talk of the cross was a cruel disappointment to his ambitious hopes.

Verse 34

The great lesson of his Christhood and death on the cross had been given to the Apostles alone. Now the throng and His disciples are united and the Lord teaches a grand truth that springs directly from what had occurred just before.

“Will come after Me.” “Will become My disciple.” There was an eagerness among many of the people to “come after Him.” “Let him deny himself. The word is strong in the original—let him deny himself, let him entirely renounce himself.”

Let him be prepared to say “no” to many of the strongest cravings of his nature, in the direction more particularly of earthly ease, comfort, dignity and glory. Our common thoughts of “self-denial,” that is, the denial to ourselves of some pleasure or profit, fall far short of the meaning of the Greek. The man is to deny his whole self, all his natural motives and impulses, so far as they come into conflict with the claims of Christ.

“And take up his cross,” even as the Lord would take up His cross at Jerusalem. So every disciple must crucify the old man,” his selfish nature, give

up his old life and become dead to it. The cross is the pain of the self-denial required in the preceding words. The cross is the “symbol of doing our duty, even at the cost of the most painful death.”

Christ obeyed God, and carried out His work for the salvation of men, though it required Him to die upon the cross in order to do it. And ever since, the cross has stood as the emblem, not of suffering, but of suffering for the sake of Christ and His gospel as the highest ideal of obedience to God at any and every cost.

“Follow Me.” Obey and imitate Christ.

Verse 35

“Whosoever will save his life.” Whoever makes this the end will lose life. All self-seeking is self-losing. Even in spiritual things, he who is perpetually studying how to secure joy and peace for himself loses it. A certain measure of self-forgetfulness is the condition of the highest success, even in Christian grace.

“But whosoever shall lose his life,” in the sphere of the present, “For my sake, and the gospel’s.” It is only loss for the sake of Christ that has this promise.

Multitudes of people lose their lives for gain, pleasure, or fashion. Each of these has more martyrs than the cross ever required; but the loss was without compensation or hope. But whosoever loses for the love of Christ, for the sake of preaching and advancing the gospel shall save it—shall have a blessedness and glory which will a thousand times compensate for every loss.

Verse 36

“What shall it profit a man”? Let each student try to conscientiously answer this question and the one which follows.

Verse 37

“What shall a man give in exchange for his soul”?

What would a man not give? If he had the whole world, would he not willingly give it, provided he really knew, believed, or felt, that otherwise he would be utterly lost?

Verse 38

“Shall be ashamed of Me and of My words,” as many would be prone to be. The temptation to shame, in reference to the Savior and the Savior’s sayings or doctrines, continues to the present day, and is pervading society to the core, even in countries called Christian. It is one of the severest temptations which young converts have to encounter. The participation of it is one of the mightiest motives to keep men away from conversion. “This adulterous and sinful generation.” Adulterous here as in the Old Testament, means “unfaithful to God.”

“When He comes,” that is, the glorious coming to judge the world, when all nations shall appear before Him.

Chapter 9

Verse 1

“Some of them that stand here,” is an illusion to the final coming of the Divine of Christ in power which took place on the day of Pentecost. The day of Pentecost, when the descent of the Spirit took place, marks the beginning of “the dispensation of the Spirit,” “the new economy,” for the Divine of righteousness. Its consummation will be seen when all souls shall be converted to righteousness and Jesus shall come.

THE TRANSFIGURATION VERSES 2-8

Verse 2

These six days were probably passed in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi. After the six days, Jesus took Peter, James and John to a high mountain, where Jesus was transfigured.

“Transfigured” literally means, He was changed in form. The radiant form of the Transfiguration was an effulgence of the Divine Glory.

Verse 3

Jesus’ garments became radiant and exceedingly white as no launderer on earth could whiten them. Mark uses the difference between earthly and heavenly brightness to show that the heavenly “fuller” gives perfect purity.

Verse 4

Elijah and Moses appeared before them and they were conversing with Jesus.

Verse 5

Peter said to Jesus, “Let us make three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

Verse 6

We see a touch of nature in Peter, as usual, seeking to give expression to his feelings in hasty outward actions.

Verse 7

A cloud formed overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the bright cloud, saying “This is My Beloved Son, listen to Him.”

Verse 8

Suddenly, as though startled by the touch of Jesus, they looked round about implying searching or curious look. They saw no one with them except Jesus.

THE DISCIPLES ASK ABOUT ELIJAH VERSES 9-13

Verse 9

In what state of mind did the return from beholding the glory of the Lord, and His ministers from another world? They seem to have been excited, demonstrative, ready to blaze abroad the wonderful event which ought to put an end to all men’s doubts.

They would have been bitterly disappointed, if they had prematurely exposed their experience to ridicule, cross-examination, conjectural theories and all the controversy which reduces facts to logical form, but strips them of their freshness and vitality.

Jesus charged them that they should tell no man. His resurrection from the dead would suffice to unseal their lips. When Jesus rose from the dead, the whole significance of His life and its events was deepened.

Verse 10

His mention of the resurrection called them away from pleasant day-dreams, by reminding them that their Master was to die. Coming back from the light and voices of heaven, the cross before Him was as visible as ever to His undazzled eyes, and He was still the sober and Vigilant Friend to warn them against false hopes.

Verse 11

One hope was too strong not to be at least hinted to Jesus. They had just seen Elijah. Surely they were right in expecting his interference, as the Scribes had taught.

Instead of a lonely road pursued by the Messiah to a painful death, should not that great prophet come as a forerunner to restore all things?

But for the present time there was another question. That promise to which they clung, was it their only light upon the events of the future?

Verses 12-13

But, He added, Elijah had already been offered to this generation in vain, they had done to him as they wished. Then a veil dropped from the disciples' eyes. They recognized the dweller in lonely places, the man of hairy garment and ascetic life, persecuted by a feeble tyrant who cowered before his rebuke, and by the deadlier hatred of an adulterous queen.

How much solid greatness would some of us overlook, if it went with the unpolished and unattractive exterior? Now John the Baptist was a rude and

abrupt person, of little culture, unwelcome in the king's house. Yet no greater had been born of woman.

HEALING THE EPILEPTIC BOY VERSES 14-29

Verses 14-15

The time was the day after the Transfiguration (Luke) and the place was the foot of the mountain. It is to Peter, who was one of them, that we owe the mention of what they saw in coming down from the mountain.

How vivid is the picture of the effect of Jesus' approach!: the excitement, the amazement, the instantaneous turning away from the one object of interest to Him.

The crowd was greatly amazed because it was the person of whom they were talking, and they were at once delighted and impressed by a certain sense of solemnity by the appearing of Him who had never failed in a work of miraculous healing.

Their eager interest with which they all turned from futile discussion and failure to the Mighty One appears in their running to meet Him.

Verse 16

Jesus cared for His own, and they came down like a father to his children in trouble, asking the crowd, and especially the Scribes, what they were discussing with His friends. He knew their weakness, and saw that they were perplexed and defeated. They were saluting Him with welcome after His absence—not the nine only but the multitude—when He broke in with His question. “What are you discussing with them?”

Verses 17-18

The answer came from one in the crowd, the most interested, and the one who had the best right to tell the story. Matthew says, “He came kneeling.” Luke says that he “cried out” with his request—“I have brought You my son, which has a spirit, which makes him mute. That is, a spirit that seizes its

victim, dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth.

Note: Some versions say that when Jesus addressed the spirit, He spoke to it as deaf and dumb.

Verse 19

Jesus said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you be with you?” They ought, He implies, to have been able to cast out the evil spirit. Perception of the sadness of the case probably repressed their faith; but it ought to have aroused their compassion.

Their compassion ought to have increased their sense of the possibility of healing through the grace of Christ. Our Savior is exacting in the expectation that His friends will be in possession of the spiritual gifts and graces that He offers them.

His almost impatient question means, “How long shall this generation, whose unbelief I am learning so thoroughly, vex Me so? How long must I live among the faithless?” But He ends with, “Bring him to me.” The mighty One now takes hold where the weak have failed.

Verse 20

The sufferer was brought, but the sight of the Great Healer maddened the maligning spirit; so that the boy went into a violent convulsion and wallowed foaming on the ground.

Verses 21-22

The sad sight arrested even the Healer’s mind in the midst of His act of mercy. Nowhere does the true human thoughtfulness of Jesus appear more plainly; He looked on pityingly while the boy suffered, and compassion even stopped Him for a moment while He tenderly inquired how long the infliction had been upon him.

The boy’s father answered, “From a child, and often it had cast him into the fire, and into the water to destroy him.” For healing at the hand of Jesus the

father had strong desire but very little faith. “If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us,” counting himself in with the child as calling for the gift, but looking upon this as a kind of forlorn hope, concerning which he had as much despair as confidence.

The disciples had failed; it was supposed that the Master had more power, but who could tell? “If You can do anything,” was as much as he could say. Was not this one of the faithless generation?

Verse 23

Jesus took up the father’s words, “If You can do anything for us.” This was not really a question as it had been asked. Jesus answered, “All things are possible to him that believes.” “Faith is the secret of ability and of possibility. The power is sufficient on My part; is it on yours? I can give, but can you receive?”

This is another way of saying, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Jesus’ response is a gracious hint that the man will do well to believe. So does Jesus, with the greatest faith, love to encourage faith. Jesus loves to be trusted.

Verse 24

The father’s answer was a cry, strong and eager, “I believe help my unbelief.” This makes help to mean “remove” or “abolish.” So, the thought is, “I believe and yet my faith is scarcely worthy of the name; I hardly dare to call it faith or to plead by it as a believing man. Yet do not wait for something better, but grant my prayer, even to this faith which is no faith. I do believe; but my belief is no better than unbelief, please heal my son. Do not sternly judge my faith, but help me as I am.” He was pleasing Jesus best when he ventured wholly on him, trusting all the defects of his faith to the mercy from which he was imploring help. “Just as I am” is the word most acceptable to Him.

Verses 25-27

The excitement was rising, and it was time that the scene should be brought to an end, more especially as the father was now ready in heart to receive the gift for which he prayed.

Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit to come out of him saying, "You deaf and dumb spirit come out of him and do not enter him again."

The narrative in verses 26-27 is intensely vivid. The prostration of the child, the whisperings of the spectators, and the kindness of the healer! Jesus took the child by the hand and raised him and the child got up.

This is one of the many cases in which we would be thankful to see what has been hidden, and know the subsequent relations of this father and child to Jesus. Did the child appreciate the Healer and grow up into a holy Christian manhood? Were all the demons exorcised in his soul? Did the father grow in faith, as one ought after such a beginning?

Verses 28-29

When He had come into his house His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why is it that we could not cast it out?" Jesus said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer." This is an extreme case, one that can be made to yield only to faith nourished by the earnest use of all the means of strength. Prayer and self-control go harmoniously as the means by which an efficient faith may best be sought.

THE RETURN TO GALILEE AND THE RENEWED PREDICTION OF THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION

VERSES 30-32

Verse 30

Our Lord, with His disciples, then left the district of Caesarea Philippi, and on their journey passed through Upper Galilee.

Our Lord would prevent a concourse of people—not, as some hold, because He was now in the territory of Herod Antipas, but because the disciples needed further instruction, especially concerning His death. Jesus says, "While they abode in Galilee," that is, "we were no longer in the district of Caesarea Philippi."

Verse 31

Jesus wanted to have some time with His disciples to tell them, “That the Son of Man is to be delivered up into the hands of men and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise again in three days.”

Verse 32

Matthew notices the deep sorrow of the disciples and Mark says that they still failed to understand. If the disciples understood what was meant by suffering and death, they would not reconcile it with what they knew of His Person, and were probably at an utter loss as to the sense in which He was to rise again, whether it implied entrance into a higher state, or restoration to common life.

THE CHILDLIKE SPIRIT VERSES 33-43

Verse 33

Jesus came to Capernaum on His return from His journey to Northern Galilee, from the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi and the Mount of Transfiguration.

During His absence He had confessed and had acknowledged Himself as the Christ. Though this was followed by His declaration that He must be crucified, yet His disciples had so little conception of the true nature of His Divinity that they expected a speedy establishment of a royal Messianic throne on the earth with the various accompaniments of earthly royalty.

Not free from earthly ambition, strife had risen among them, as to which of them should be the great ministers of the Messianic King.

Verse 34

Deep shame kept them silent, and that silence was the most eloquent confession of their sinful ambitions. “Who should be the greatest? Who should occupy the chief position under the King—the position of prime minister?”

Verse 35

Simply because the desire to be first, self-seeking, is exactly opposite to the spirit which is the law of Christ's Divinity, the spirit of love, self-denial, helpfulness of others, and humility. Therefore, the more anyone has of the desire to be first, the less he has of Christ's Divinity. The desire to be first makes him last by the very nature of things.

Despotism, self-seeking, ambition, ever make a man a slave. No one is so much a slave as he who desires to be first of all. He is a slave to his ambition, to the whims and opinions of other people, to circumstances.

But voluntary service in the Divine of love, and under the impulse of humility and self-denial, makes a man a spiritual power, gives him an unconscious and blessed greatness.

To be truly great one must:

1. Forget himself in his work.
2. Be humble instead of conceited.
3. Be a helper of his race, or the servant of all.

Verse 36

The disciples asked Jesus a question concerning who should be the greatest, or the grounds of greatness in His Divine Kingdom. Jesus answers by an object lesson. He called a child and first placed the child in the midst, and then took it into His arms, possibly drawing a lesson for His disciples from its ready submission and trustfulness.

Matthew recorded, "Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

They not only should not be first, but they should not enter at all, if they indulged their present spirit.

Chrysostom says, "For such a little child is free from pride, and the mad desire of glory, and envy, and contentiousness, and all such passions, and

having many virtues—simplicity, humility, unworldliness—prides itself on one of them; having a two-fold severity of goodness—to have these things and not to be puffed up about them.”

Verse 37

“Whoever receives one child like this in My name is receiving Me.” There is scarcely a better test of a Christian’s character than his bearing toward children and the childlike.

Our Lord sets a little child in the midst of His disciples everywhere—in the family, in the Sunday school, in the congregation, in the community; that child is our Lord’s representative, and the object of His watchful care.

Just in proportion as there would be readiness to receive our Lord as He is, if we were visibly present in person, is that child welcomed in heartiness and cared for tenderly.

How does that father treat his children, and his neighbor’s children? How does the preacher minister to the children of his flock? How does the church provide for children of its congregation? How are those Christian citizens looking after the children of the community? Receiving in My name is serving with Christian love, and as belonging to Christ—influenced by regard to My name.

Notice, the true way to receive Christ is to receive into our hearts, for Christ’s sake, those who need the hospitality of our sympathies, as the way to serve Christ is by serving the needy and suffering. When we love or receive Him who was one with the Father, we enter into fellowship with Him who was one with the Father, we enter into fellowship with Him who is the Supreme and Eternal Love. John 14:10, 23

Verse 38

John, the disciple, desired to show, as in self-vindication, that he not only “received” his Master, but that he was unwilling to “receive” any who did not openly follow Jesus as a disciple.

John had seen a man who was casting out devils in Christ's name; but since the man was not one of them, they had forbidden him. Had they done right?

The man here referred to they probably met during this tour. He must have been a disciple of Christ, who was enabled by his faith, yet without a commission, to cure the possessed. "Casting out demons in Your name, we tried to hinder him, because he was not following us."

What perplexed John was, that one not belonging to the apostolic band should have wrought precisely the miracle which stood foremost among the signs of apostleship; that which the disciples themselves had so lately attempted, but failed to work. And we hindered him, so far as blaming him, and insisted on the abandonment of the exercise of his gift.

Verse 39

Jesus neither praises nor blames him for following an independent course, and not working with His disciples. He simply declares that he must not be forbidden, and that those who work the same kind of work that we do should be regarded not as enemies, but allies.

Thousands, in every period of church history, have spent their lives in copying John's mistake. They had labored to stop every man who will not work for Christ in their way from working for Christ at all. He who does a mighty work in the name of Christ cannot be an enemy of the Lord. The principle inculcated forbids discouraging any work, by whomsoever undertaken, minister or layman, man or woman, which is really accomplishing spiritual results.

Verse 40

In Matthew 12:30, Jesus said, "He that is not with Me is against Me." There is no belt or borderland between right and wrong. He who is not good is bad; he who is not bad is good. In the highest sphere Christianity and goodness are identical.

Verse 41

A “cup of water” is the cheapest of all bodily refreshments, and therefore suitable to represent the smallest act of kindness done by man to man. “In My name” represents the motive, because he belongs to Christ; with the desire to serve Christ, and honor Him, and express his love to Him. “Shall not lose his reward” because he shall be treated as if it were done to Christ Himself. It will be accepted as an expression of love and honor to his Master.

Verse 42

“Whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble who believes in Me,” represents the weakest and feeblest of God’s flock, not merely the children but the little ones, in intellectual and spiritual power and in ecclesiastical position and earthly honor. The child not yet nestling in his arms, and furnishing the test for his remarks, He warned them of the awful guilt and peril of offending, of tempting, of misleading, of seduction from the paths of innocence and righteousness.

They were not to be taught any wicked thing or of suggesting any wicked thought to one of those little ones.

We are taken to a dreadful scene, a millstone attached to a man’s neck. The fastening, passing through the central perforation of the stone is made secure. It is a sad sight. Yet, turning from another scene, we say, “This is better.” It is better than that the same man should act the part of a seducer, and wrap a childlike follower of Jesus.

“Cast into the sea,” death is less evil than sinning—much less than causing others to sin; for one kills the body, the other the soul! No language or figures could more powerfully portray the deep interest of the Master in the little children. How terrible to lead them astray!

Verse 43-47

“If the hand offends,” causes you to sin or stumble; or ensnare you into evil, means if an object so dear as the right eye, and useful as the right hand, stand

between you and your progress to heaven, and your complete surrender to Christ, that object, however dear, you are to part with it.

The “hand” represents the temptation to do what is wrong—forgery, stealing, or murder. The “eye” represents lusting, and coveting. The “foot” represents going into forbidden ways.

He goes on to warn them that no sacrifice could be too great if it enabled them to escape any possible temptations to put such stumbling-blocks in the way of their own souls or the souls of others. “To be cast into hell.” Hell is not “Hades,” but “Gehenna,” the place of eternal punishment.

Verse 48

“Where the worm does not die,” expresses a future penalty that does not exhaust itself.

Verse 49

“Salted with fire,” seems to be connected with the preceding mention of a fire that is not quenched; thus, “Yes, the fire, I say, is not quenched; for with fire—of one sort or another—all must sooner or later be salted.”

“Salted” at this time was considered as a preservative against corruption in things apt to putrefy, a preservative, however, with a stinging, painful effect on sentient (capable of feeling) life. To this discipline of suffering in one form or another, Jesus says all men must submit, whether freely or by constraint.

The form He here sets before His disciples, for their good, is that of discipline; voluntarily accepted for the sake of the true life, to be safeguarded thereby from corruption.

The best commentary on the whole saying is another equally striking verse, Luke 12:49, “I came to cast fire (of testing) upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled.”

The moral for each of us is the necessity for practice of the sacrifice of self, that “life” may be gained and loss escaped.

Verse 50

The sweeping out of salt that has lost its virtue, and becomes useless or hurtful, is still, travelers tell us, a common sight in Palestine. Salt once spoiled can never have its saltiness restored. So if the qualities which make us the “saltiness” of the true disciple—fidelity at all costs of pain, self-abnegation, and the like—are turned to faithlessness and selfishness, what becomes of the discipleship which should save others from the corruption of worldliness and selfhood? There is no human source of “saltiness” capable of renewing it.

“Have salt in yourselves.” Keep the purifying sacrificial fire alive in your souls, and in particular let it burn up the egotism that destroys unity.

“Be at peace with one another.” Let the saving salt of fidelity to your Divine calling fulfill itself in brotherly relations with one another.

The words seem to bring us back to the disputing of the disciples with which the conversation started. Selfish claims for the chief places destroy peace among men, and are not of the spirit of Jesus’ disciples.

THE PEREAN MINISTRY CHAPTER 10:1-52

Verse 1

Jesus enters into a certain village, no doubt Bethany, near Jerusalem, where He is entertained by the sisters Martha and Mary. After this when in Bethany, beyond Jordan, He hears of the sickness of Lazarus, and returns to Jerusalem and raises him from the dead, then He again retires, but now into the “city called Ephraim.” John 11:54

JESUS IS QUESTIONED ABOUT MARRIAGE VERSES 2-12

Verse 2

The Pharisees question Jesus using the old practice of trying to catch him by questions: “Is it lawful?” They asked Jesus, “May a man put away his wife?”

The law of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1 was not entirely plain in the statement of the admissible grounds of complaint against a wife.

The schools of Shammai, the stricter, and Hillel, the more-lax, contended about it and the people were divided. Therefore, however Jesus might reply, His answer could be trusted to make Him enemies.

Moreover, He was in the territory of Herod, under whom John the Baptist had suffered for his boldness, in the matter of an adulterous marriage.

Verses 3-4

Jesus' answer drove them back to their own authorities. The law under which all their discussions were, and ought to be conducted was the Law of Moses.

“What did Moses command you?” was the first legitimate question. But their answer was evasive. They stated the permission as if it were unlimited, omitting all references to the occasions of divorce which the law recognized.

Verses 5-9

They had omitted the crucial point, the determination of occasions for divorce. Divorce was a permitted thing and the permission was so vague that there might be difficulty in defining its limits. It was permitted, but why? “For the hardness of your heart Moses wrote you this commandment.”

The noun means “hard-heartedness,” “spiritual dullness and incapacity;” “unresponsiveness to God,” amounting to your inability to accept high motives. Moses wrote you this precept, said Jesus in Matthew, “He suffered you to put away your wives” because you were not up to the level of a better precept.

“From the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female.” This passage from the narrative of the Creation was cited to show that the distinction of sexes was originally constituted as the ground for marriage.

By this law, marriage is the union of a male and a female of the human race; and it is such a union as shall form a new center of life to both.

For this cause, that is, because He created them male and female—a man shall leave the parents, into natural unity with whom he was born, and find the center for a new unity in his union with a fellow being of the opposite sex.

Thus the distinction of the sexes was given as the foundation of the family. Now, the duration for which God intended this union may be inferred from His own testimony as to its closeness and completeness. Jesus says, “They shall be one flesh,” that is, the union that is founded on the relation of the sexes makes the two to be one flesh, makes each to be, physically, part and property of the other. Marriage has wrought on actual unity which is not to be broken.

It is the union of one man and one woman, and the blending of life in sexual union establishes between that one man and that one woman a real unity.

By establishing such a relation the Creator showed His intention that a union thus formed should be irrevocable and inviolable, to be legitimately terminated only by death. That one flesh or one body which has been formed in accordance with God’s appointment in the creation of man, let not man put asunder.

Note the contrast between God and man, man may not break what God has made. Man may break this unity, either by personal unfaithfulness to the obligation of marriage or by contradictory enactments permitting dissolutions that God does not permit.

Verses 10-12

Mark alone tells of the late inquiry of the disciples. In Matthew the address to the Pharisees is continued, with the solemn assertion that he who puts away his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery.

In Mark, except for fornication is omitted; but is sufficiently implied. The statement in both Gospels is that a man is charged with adultery when he enters into a new sexual union while the first is still unbroken, that is, when he breaks the exclusive unity of flesh with his wife by an act of union with another.

Verse 12 distinctly enforces the principle of equal responsibility. The custom to which it alludes of the wife putting away the husband, was a custom, not of the Jews, but of Romans and other Gentiles.

Possibly Jesus saw that there was danger, under Roman influence, of its coming in among the Jews.

In verses 11-12, is our Lord's own answer to the original question, whether a man might put away his wife. It is, "No, unless she has already broken her unity with him." Sexual unfaithfulness forfeits the bond, but nothing else does.

The teaching of this passage is strong and conclusive for all who acknowledge the authority of Jesus Christ.

The sexual element in marriage makes of the two one flesh, that is, it was meant that sexual union should be inseparable from permanent personal unity—and only by sexual unfaithfulness can the unity, once established, be broken.

With good reason, therefore, God has made faithfulness in this relation the determining element in the perpetuity of marriage.

Separations for other causes than adultery there may be, but dissolutions of marriage, never. If it is said that such a law works hardship in many cases, the answer is that all laws that are for the general good sometimes work hardship while sin continues. But the purity and permanency of the family are worth so much to mankind that individuals may well afford to suffer hardship rather than contribute to the overthrow of so precious an institution.

CHRIST'S LOVE TO THE YOUNG VERSES 13-22

Note: This region east of the Jordan was called Perea (beyond) because it was east, beyond the river. It included the districts of Bashan and Gilead and in the time of the Savior was fertile and populous, with a mixed population, partly Jewish and partly Gentile.

Verse 13

“They brought young children of varying ages,” for according to Luke, Christ called them to Him. There were parents in those days wise enough to know that it was not well to wait until children were old enough to become hardened in sin before seeking for them the blessing of a Savior.

We bring children to Christ:

1. By daily, constant, earnest prayer on their behalf;
2. By teaching them the truth;
3. By consecrating them to God for this life and the life to come; and
4. By training them up for Christ.

“Set before your child life and death, hell and heaven, judgment and mercy, his own sin and Christ’s most precious blood, labor with him, persuade him with tears and weeping to turn unto the Lord.” Blessings come to those who are near which cannot come to those that are afar off. We must draw near to Christ in order to receive His blessing.

The erroneous Apostles, thought that the Great Rabbi would be annoyed, and His attention diverted from matters of greater importance than anything connected with little children. They think it is to abuse the goodness and misuse the time of their Master.

Dr. Tyng says, “It seems to me that the Devil would never ask anything more of a minister than to have him look upon his mission as chiefly to the grownup members of his congregation, while somebody else was to look after the children.”

When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. Some sign of displeasure was probably on His countenance. How careful we should be not to call forth His displeasure by keeping children from Him.

Verse 14

There were at least five signs of displeasure probably on Jesus countenance.

1. Because they were keeping away from Him those who wanted to come to Him, and for whom He died.
2. They were taking away those who were the very hope of the church, the Divine they were appointed to build up.
3. Because the children are the type of all who shall enter His Divine.
4. Because He loved little children, and rejoiced in their love.
5. Because they were hindering the best workers in His Divine, the mothers.

“Permit the little children to come to Me.” To refuse children access to His grace was to misrepresent His spirit, His mission, and His Divine. The mothers bringing their children to Jesus interrupted Him in an important doctrinal discourse, yet Jesus suspended His teaching, and pronounced a blessing. It signified that there was a place in His thought, in His heart, in His mission, in His church, for children.

“For such is the Divine of God,” they are those who have the childlike disposition toward God. God wants little children in His Divine. People are most likely to come into the Divine as children, since all must become like little children in order to enter the Divine.

Such as die before they have wandered out of God’s Divine into the divine of Satan are certainly saved, since they are “of the Divine of heaven.”

Remember: Little children are the true wards of the church, and ought to be welcomed, cherished, and valued highly.

Verse 15

“Whoever does not receive the Divine of God like a child shall not enter it at all.” Christ now holds up the children as an example to His disciples. He had the ideal childlike spirit, and delighted to see in little ones His own image.

Purity, truthfulness, simplicity, docility, and loving dependence made them His favorite types for His followers.

Verse 16

“Jesus took them in His arms.” Jesus gives more than men ask or think. He had been asked only to touch the children. He takes them into His arms, and lays His hands upon them, and blesses them.

It is well to note:

1. That these children were not babes. The Lord called them to Him.
2. They were not brought to be baptized, but that the Lord might touch them.
3. He did not baptize them. He laid His hands on them and blessed them.
4. All parents and all mothers especially should bring their children to Christ for His blessing, should teach them of Him, of His demands for their hearts, and that they should obey Him.

Verse 17

Jesus now continues His slow journey towards Jerusalem. As He was on His journey a man ran up to Him, knelt before Him, and asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. He sincerely desired salvation; and he imagined that some generous action, some great sacrifice, would secure this highest good.

“What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?” that I may be among those that are the true children of God, lawful inheritors of the Divine? He had not yet learned that he needed first to be good, to have a pure and holy heart, before he could have eternal life.

Verse 18

Christ does not rebuke the young man for employing what was nothing more than the language of respect by any pupil to a teacher. But Jesus asks him whether he looks upon Him merely as any other teacher; or does he

recognize Him as a Divine Teacher—the only one who is truly good, the “Good Master” who knows all things, and whose teaching is eternally true.

Verse 19

“You know the commandments.” Thus does Christ “send the proud to the law, and invite the humble to the gospel.” After uttering His mild rebuke, our Lord proceeds to answer the young man’s question by exhibiting the moral character requisite as “meekness’ for the enjoyment of everlasting life.

Christ gave this enumeration of the commandments to bring out the self-righteous spirit of the young man, which He before saw.

Verse 20

“Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.” He knew little of any one of these precepts in the strictness, spirituality, and the extent of its requirements, who could venture on any such assertion. Yet there was sincerity in his answer.

Verse 21

Jesus read his heart in a moment, and was won by the evident worth of his character. As He looked at him, so earnest, so humble, so admirable in his life and spirit—He loved him.

Jesus loves all, but His sympathies are called forth specially in behalf of those seeking for eternal life. It is out of His sympathy and love He makes a demand on him that will reveal to the young man his own heart.

“One thing you lack.” He thus proposed to him one short crucial test of his real condition, and way to clear self-knowledge. He had fancied himself willing to do whatever could be required; he could now see if he was really so.

“Go your way.” He now gives him proof of what he lacked.

The Lord loved him so well that He invited him to the highest honors, even to become a member of His immediate attendants, like the Apostles.

These had all given up everything in order to follow Christ and the same test and opportunity was offered to this young man.

It was the crisis of his life. Had he accepted the opportunity perhaps his would have been one of the great names in the early history of the church. But the world gained the victory, he loved it better than Christ, he rejected the offer and thus he disappears from sight forever.

“Follow Me.” All these are parts of one whole, the Christian life. He must have all, would he enter eternal life.

Verse 22

“His face fell.” He had been touched where weakest, but this was exactly what his repeated request demanded. “He owned much property.” It was too much. He preferred the comforts of earth to the treasures of heaven; he would not purchase the things of eternity by abandoning those of time. This was “the great refusal.”

THE RICH MAN AND HEAVEN VERSED 23-27

Verse 23

Jesus said to His disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the Divine of God.”

Christian men often become rich, but rich men rarely become Christians. The reason is not far to seek: the process of gaining wealth encourages self-seeking, and the possession of it encourages self-importance; but the spirit that can enter the Divine is the spirit of a little child.

Verse 24

This verse is peculiar to Mark. The astonishment of the disciples was natural, with their ideas of the Divine. “How hard is it for rich men to enter the Divine of God! What can He mean?”

It was not chiefly his riches, but his heart, that sent the man away sorrowful, and a like heart is in all men. To all men, therefore, rich or poor, it is by nature hard to enter into the Divine of God—hard in itself, since sin is what it is.

Verse 25

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.” As for the popular explanation—that the small gate in the city wall, too narrow for a camel to pass through, was called the needle’s eye.

It is a strong way of representing impossibility: “It is so hard for sinful men, rich or poor, to enter the Divine, than for a rich man—one who is especially involved in the unchildlike habits of the world—to enter is harder than for a camel to go through a needle’s eye.”

Verses 26-27

“Then who can be saved?” With such a standard, how would the Divine receive any one? For was not the love of money everywhere? And how could the Divine live, with a law so strict?

“With men it is impossible.” On human principles or by the power of man it cannot be done; the proud man cannot be brought into the Divine of the humble, or the world-minded rich man into the Divine of the poor in spirit.

“With God all things are possible.” He can make new creatures of men; He can impart the spirit of the Divine. The implication is that, even though this case looks so hopeless, God can yet find means of bringing the unwilling rich man to a better mind. In His hands are even life and death.

PETER’S HASTY WORDS VERSES 28-31

Verse 28

Peter, as usual speaks for them all saying, in substance, “We have done what this man would not: we have left everything to follow You, and have accepted the Divine on the right terms at personal sacrifice.”

Here is a statement of self-seeking, even in self-renunciation; self-denial in the hope of direct returns. They were still hoping that their special honors in the Divine would make amends for everything.

Verses 29-30

How tender and wise is the answer! There is no distinct rebuke, but there is a silent one in the fact that the promise is made, not to the only, but to all who make such sacrifices as they speak of.

The rewards of the Divine are for all the faithful, all who, for Christ's sake and the gospel, have forsaken what they held dear. But to the soul all that is given up for Christ shall be returned, and thus graciously multiplied.

The principal of self-sacrifice sweetens life instead of embittering it, and the experience of self-denial surprises the soul with unthought-of wealth. We receive so much in the present age and in the age that is coming with its full spiritual rewards, "eternal life."

Mark alone says these will come with persecutions. No easy way leads to these honors and rewards. 2 Timothy 3:12

The hundred-fold will not prevent the persecutions; but neither will the persecutions interfere with the coming of the hundred-fold.

Verse 31

"But many who are first, will be last; and the last, first."

The judgment of God is according to truth," and rank will finally be determined by true judgment and not according to present appearances.

JESUS FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION VERSES 32-34

Verse 32

The disciples were on the road ascending to Jerusalem, that is, they were still upon their journey when the following discourse was uttered.

Jesus was walking ahead of the disciples and they were amazed and fearful of the danger both to Jesus and to themselves. There is something very striking in the picture here presented of the Savior hastening to death and the Apostles scarcely venturing to follow Him.

Jesus took the twelve aside and told them of what was going to happen to Him.

Verses 33-34

“Behold,” invites attention and prepares them for something strange and surprising, as the intimation of His death was to them. “We are ascending to Jerusalem, the Holy City; the Sanhedrin shall condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles, meaning all nations but the Jews.

This verse describes the part to be taken by the Gentiles in the sufferings of Christ, every particular of which has its corresponding facts in the subsequent narrative; the mocking; the scourging; the spitting; the killing; and the rising.

SELFISH AMBITION REPROVED VERSES 35-45

Verse 35

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were among the earliest disciples and were two of the three nearest to Jesus.

Matthew states that the request at this time comes from their mother, whose name was Salome and who may have been the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The two disciples came asking for the two chief thrones nearest the King Himself. “We want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.”

Verse 36

Jesus gave no pledge but asked for their request.

Verse 37

“Grant that we may sit in Your glory, one on Your right, and one on Your left.”

Verse 38

Personal loyalty was at the bottom of the desire: they had cast in their lot with Him and with Him they desired to have their portion. Yet it was a childish desire, an ambition for the end in profound ignorance of the way. It is like the reply of a father to foolish children. When addressed to men—ambitious men—how humiliating.

“Are you able to drink of the cup that I drink,” that is which I have to drink, the cup of utter self-sacrifice? “To be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” The baptism that is overwhelming in pain and death. The woe is to come like the rushing water over the body of one whom John plunged in the Jordan.

When it comes to this symbolic use of the word, no one doubts that the act which forms the basis of the symbolism is a complete immersion.

The two questions mean the same, and the thought is: “You ask for thrones: can you die, and in spirit suffer death before death, as I do? Can you take up the cross and come after Me, and go to the throne by the way that I take?”

Verse 39

Their unqualified “We can,” contained both good and evil. They knew that they were attached to Jesus, and it was their loyal hearts that spoke. But they knew not themselves, and spoke in ignorant assurance.

The “We can,” came true in later times, when they learned the secret of their Master more deeply. Their claims of victory were premature, but their hearts already had the secret of future victory. The kindness of the answer is something wonderful. There is no tone or spirit of rebuke in it. On the surface it is a denial of the request. Yet the prediction, “The cup that I drink you shall

drink, and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized,” is really a promise of all that is precious in what they asked for.

Verse 40

The remainder of the answer surprises us, for, instead of giving some reason why they must beware of looking too high or expecting too much, Jesus disclaims the power to grant their request, “To sit on my right hand and on my left hand this is not mine to give, “but it is for them for whom it has been prepared.”

Who are they for whom the highest rank has been prepared by the Father? They are the disciples who are most like the Master. Verses 42-44

Verse 41

The ten disciples began to feel indignant toward James and John. Why should they feel indignant, were they not all questioning who should be greatest? It was human nature: they thought it very wrong when two petitioned for what all would gladly have claimed.

Verse 42

Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.”

Recognized greatness among the nations of the world implies the exercise of domination over men; the great ones lord it. This is the ideal of greatness and a Divine which Jesus rejected in the wilderness, and again when the Jews became His tempters. John 6:15

Verses 43-44

“But it is not so among you.” Your principle is not the principle of the world, and you have your own type of greatness and your own way of becoming great. Jesus proceeds to tell of the Christian way of becoming great. Jesus is telling not what He requires, but what a man will do who intelligently seeks the Christian greatness in the Christian way.

What is the Christian principle of greatness and the way by which a wise Christian will seek high rank? The Christian's greatness consists of humble service; and a Christian who wishes to be great will seek it, if he seeks as a Christian, only through humble service.

The desire of greatness is here represented in two degrees.

1. "Whoever wishes to become great among you," telling of the general desire for eminence.
2. "Whoever of you who wishes to become great" expressing the still higher desire for pre-eminence.

Our Lord does not forbid or discourage such desires; He does not say that there are no honors in His Divine or bid us look for a dead-level of spiritual equality; and He does not hint that it is wrong to desire to have a place among the "first."

But He proceeds to tell how a Christian, if he intelligently adopts the Christian principle, will act on such a desire.

Does he wish to become great? He will be your minister, attendant, or assistant, that is, he will make himself a helper to his brethren. Does his ambition reach higher, so that he wishes to become a man of first rank? He will bow still lower, and be the servant of all, a slave for the service of all whom he can be useful.

There is a threefold climax. "First" is higher than "great," indicating a higher ambition in the aspiring soul. Slave is lower than minister, attendant, indicating a deeper humility as the means of reaching the higher honor.

The higher one wishes to rise, the lower will he bend in brotherly service, and the more freely will give himself to many.

Verse 45

The great illustration and example is the Christ Himself.

He came to illustrate not the human idea of greatness by being served, but the Divine idea by serving. Not to "lord it" or "have extreme authority" over

men, after the manner of the Gentiles, but to minister, “serve,” and to give His life a ransom for many.

The footsteps of the Master are shown to the disciples that they may follow. The act of God in providing the propitiation for our sins, and the act of Christ in laying down His life for us, are given as the supreme examples for us.

This is our Savior’s way to glory: the throne was prepared for the Chief Servant, and it will be found that the King is He who has done the most for His brethren. This is the only way by which any throne in His Divine can be reached.

BLIND BARTIMEUS VERSES 46-52

Jericho, the “city of palm trees” is situated fifteen to twenty miles northeast of Jerusalem, in the valley of the Jordan. It was about six or seven miles north of the Dead Sea and about five miles from the Jordan at the base of the mountain rampart.

Verse 46

“They came to Jericho,” that is, as Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem. Bartimeus, a blind man, the son of Timeus was setting by the road begging.

Verse 47

Bartimeus began to cry out when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth and said, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!” The cry of the blind man was a recognition of Christ’s dignity as the Messiah, for this name, “son of David,” was the popular designation of the Messiah.

Verse 48

Many were sternly telling him to be quiet but he began crying out all the more. “Son of David, have mercy on me.”

“Be quiet,” was not because he called Jesus the son of David.

1. It was because he presumed to intrude a private grief upon the King of Israel, when, as they supposed, He was going in triumph to Jerusalem to assume His throne and deliver the nation.
2. Perhaps it was from selfishness, not wishing to have the Lord's attention called away from their instruction.
3. It could have been from the indifference to other's needs.
4. They thought they were pleasing the Master in defending Him from a beggar.

They were not to be silenced, "Lord have mercy on us," came from their lips.

Jesus now permits Himself to be called the Messiah in the presence of all the people, which He had never done before. The time for His acceptance of, and sympathy with, the Messianic hope of His people had now arrived.

Verse 49

Jesus stopped and called them to bring the blind man to Him. The call of Christ is always full of cheer—always, too, a call to do something as a token of trust in Him. His call is always a call or an act of faith. He bids Bartimeus to take courage, arise and come to Him.

Verse 50

Casting aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. No man will be saved while sitting still. The command is, "Strive to enter in" and the promise is made to those only who "ask" and "seek," and "knock." The blind man runs to Jesus without seeing Him. So must we hasten to Him in faith, though we see Him not.

Verse 51

Jesus said to the beggar, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

The blind man answered, "I want to regain my eyesight." Not "how" or "why", but the "desire," which he believes the Lord can grant in the best way. The man whose cry has been hitherto a vague, indeterminate cry for mercy,

now singles out the blessing which he craves, designates the channel in which he desires that His mercy should run.

Verse 52

Jesus said to the blind man, ‘Go your way, your faith has made you well.’ Bartimeus is permitted to follow Jesus and glorify God as loudly, and as amply as he can.

The faith of this man was great; because, being blind, he could not see the miracles which Jesus did. Faith came to him by hearing. He believed on the testimony and report of others; and so he inherited, in a manner, the promise of the Lord His Savior. John records, “Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.” John 20:20

“Go your way, your faith has made you well,” means your faith has made you whole, complete, sound, nothing wanting. A sinner is never whole; never a complete, perfect man. Christ makes us whole.

APPLICATION: This miracle is in one sense a parable. It teaches most forcibly the doctrine and methods of salvation by faith. The blind man represents one without faith, who is blind to the unseen interests of his soul. In his darkness, “the passing of the Savior,” in His gospel preached, may stir him to a sense of his needs.

He then calls, for mercy upon Jesus, confessing his faith in Him as the Messiah King and Healer. Men try to hinder him coming to Jesus. The Lord calls him, but he has first called upon the Lord. The sinner is required to arise and go to Christ in obedience, is then healed of his sins and blindness and follows the Master.

THE LAST WEEK CHAPTER 11:1-CHAPTER 15:47

SUNDAY: THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY CHAPTER 11:1-11

Jesus slept the night preceding the entry into Jerusalem at Bethany, the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, where He had raised Lazarus from the

dead, to which the sweet place of rest and sympathy the Lord often retired when at Jerusalem.

The significance of this entry into Jerusalem has been too little considered. It was Christ's nature to shun crowds; His custom to avoid them. He forbade His disciples from disclosing to others that He was the Messiah, and this prohibition was repeatedly given.

This exceptional assumption of dignity and acceptance of homage is for this reason, the more remarkable and significant.

I believe it to be an emphasis of the truth that He was a King and came as a King; that it throws forth into prominence a truth respecting Him often forgotten, namely that He is Lord and Master, as well as Savior, crowned with authority as well as with humility and love.

Verse 1

Jesus and His disciples ascended up to Jerusalem as Jericho is 3,000 feet lower than Jerusalem. A journey of about eighteen miles, up the rugged ravine, that leads from Jericho to Jerusalem.

As the Passover, with its sacrifices, was just at hand, companies of pilgrims, driving sheep for the altar, would be seen in the highways, all gathering up from the four quarters to the center of the nation's faith. Among them goes the Lamb of God—the one sacrifice—final, perfect, and sufficient, whom these typical altars of thousands of years had heralded with their banners of smoke and flame.

The sending of the two disciples proves the deliberate intention of Jesus to give a certain solemnity to the scene. Till then He had withdrawn from popular expressions of homage; but once, at last, He wished to show Himself as King Messiah of His people. It was the last call addressed by Him to the population of Jerusalem. This course, besides, could no longer compromise His work. He knew that in any case death awaited Him in the capital.

Jesus would have a public testimony to the fact that it was their King the Jews crucified. It is not merely the Messiah that saves, nor the Crucified One that saves, but the Messiah crucified.

Verse 2

Leaving Bethany on foot, attended by His disciples and others, He comes to the place where the neighboring village of Bethpage is in view, perhaps separated from them by a valley.

“You shall find a colt.” It was the colt of a donkey, an animal in disfavor in the West, but highly esteemed in the East. In contrast to the horse which had been introduced by Solomon from Egypt, and was used especially for war, it was the symbol of peace. No one had ever ridden this colt, is a fact mentioned by Mark and Luke. It was probably, in their eyes, significant, as showing that He who used the colt did so in His own right, and not as filling a place others had filled before Him.

Our Lord was “laid in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, which never man was laid before.”

And so our Lord was born of a pure virgin. His birth, His triumph, and His tomb, were thus alike. His appearance, His history, and His departure are thus indicated to be above the level of ordinary humanity.

The owner of the colt either was impressed by the authority of the expected Messiah King, or was a disciple.

Verse 3

“Jesus had need of the colt.” It was enough for the loyal subject of an eastern king to know that his Lord made the demand and it was instantly obeyed. All Israel should be made to know that He who had come to Jerusalem to die was their King.

Verse 4

They found the colt tied at the door outside in the street. Trusting their Master, the two disciples obeyed, and found all as the Lord declared.

Verse 5

“What are you doing, untying the colt?” This was probably spoken by the owner, or members of his household. The reply given was that which the Lord directed, and had the expected effect. The disciples were simply to obey orders, and all the rest would follow.

Verse 6

“And they spoke to them just as Jesus had told them and they gave them permission.” All this was in accordance with a plan predicted 600 years before. The prophet Zechariah had declared that thus the King would make His entry.

Zechariah 9:9

Verse 7

“They brought the colt to Jesus.” It was not the mother, but the colt, upon which no man had ever sat, that Jesus chose for His purpose.

Combining the four accounts, we get the following features.

1. Some took off their outer garments the burnoose, and bound it on the colt as a kind of a saddle.
2. Others cast their garments in the way, a mark of honor to a king.
2 Kings 9:13
3. Others climbed the trees, cut down the branches, and strewed them in the way. Matthew 21:8
4. Others gathered leaves and twigs and rushes. Mark 11:8.

This procession was made up largely of Galileans, but the reputation of Christ, increased by the resurrection of Lazarus, had preceded Him, and many came out from the city to swell the acclamations and increase the enthusiasm.

He who in all His journeys travelled like a poor man on foot, without noise and without train, now He goes up to Jerusalem to die for sinners; He rides, to show His great forwardness to lay down His life for us.

Verse 8

“They spread their garments.” This custom is still sometimes seen in the East. It has not been uncommon to carpet the way for a king. They cut down branches from the palm trees. The wide, spreading leaf of the palm would be well adapted to the purpose of making a carpet for His way.

The “branches” of palm trees,” are not strictly branches at all, but enormous leaves, twelve to sixteen feet long, which spring from the top of the tall, straight trunk.

Verse 9

Two vast streams of people met on that day.

The One poured out from the city and moved upward toward Bethany with shouts of welcome. From Bethany streamed forth the crowds who had assembled there the previous night. The two streams met midway. Half of the vast mass, turning around, preceded; the other half followed.

As they drew near to the Mount of Olives the shout of triumph burst forth from the multitude, “Hosanna,” “Save now, I beseech thee.” “Blessed,” was shouted also as an expression of praise, like hallelujah.

Verse 10

“Blessed is the coming Divine of our father, David.”

This recognizes clearly that Christ’s Divinity is the continuation of the old Divinity of God’s people, whose future glories are prophesied so often in the Old Testament.

“Hosanna in the highest,” in the highest degree, in the highest stains, in the highest heavens.

Verse 11

“They entered Jerusalem.” Jesus, the true Paschal Lamb, thus presented Himself, as required by the law, that the victim to be offered should be set apart four days before the great Day of Atonement.

The word “late” or “eventide,” means two or three hours before sunset, as well as after. The procession, if it started in the morning, had probably been delayed by frequent halts; and its movements through such a dense crowd must have been slow.

The day’s work is completed with the Messianic entry itself; and only a visit to the temple, and a significant look round about it, form the close. What the Messiah has still further to do (the cleansing of the temple) follows on the morrow.

MONDAY, THE BARREN FIG TREE VERSES 12-14

Verse 12

We see, in the beginning of this passage, one of the many proofs that our Lord Jesus Christ was really man. “He was hungry.” He had a nature and bodily constitution like our own in all things, except sin. He could weep and rejoice and suffer pain. He could be weary and need rest. He could be thirsty and need drink. He could be hungry and need food.

Expressions like this should teach us Christ’s power to sympathize with His believing people on earth. He knows their sorrows by experience. He can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities. He has had experience of a body and its daily wants. He has suffered Himself the severe suffering that the body of man is liable to suffer. He has tasted pain, and weakness, and weariness, and hunger, and thirst. When we tell Him of these things in our prayers, He knows what we mean, and is no stranger to our troubles. Surely this is just the Savior and Friend that poor aching, groaning, human nature requires!

Verses 13-14

We learn from these verses, the great danger of unfruitfulness and formality in religion. We are told that coming to a fig tree in search of fruit and finding on it, “nothing but leaves,” Jesus pronounced on it the solemn sentence, “May no one eat fruit from you again,” and His disciples were listening.

We cannot doubt for a moment that this whole transaction was an emblem of spiritual things. It was a parable of deeds, as full of meaning as any of our Lord's parables in words. But who were they, to whom this withered fig tree was intended to speak? Though withered and dried up, that fig tree yet speaks.

There was a voice in it for the Jewish church. Rich in the leaves of a formal religion, but barren of all fruits of the Spirit, that church was in fearful danger at the very time when this withering took place.

There was a voice in the fig tree for all the branches of Christ's visible church, in every age, and every part of the world.

There was a warning against an empty profession of Christianity unaccompanied by sound doctrine and holy living, which some of those branches would have done well to lay to heart—but above all there was a voice in the withered fig tree for all carnal, hypocritical, and false-hearted Christians.

Well would it be for all who are content with a name to live while in reality they are dead, if they would only see their own faces in the glass of this passage.

Let us take care that we each individually learn the lesson that this fig tree conveys. Let us always remember that baptism, and church membership, and reception of the Lord's Supper, and a diligent use of the outward forms of Christianity are not sufficient to save our souls.

They are leaves, nothing but leaves, and without fruit will add to our condemnation. Like the fig trees of which Adam and Eve made themselves garments, they will not hide the nakedness of our souls from the eye of an all-seeing God, or give us boldness when we stand before Him at the last day.

No: we must bear fruit, or be lost forever! There must be fruit in our hearts and fruit in our lives—the fruit of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and true holiness in our conversation. Without such fruits as these a profession of Christianity will only sink us lower into hell.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE VERSES 15-19

Verses 15-16

It seems at first sight, almost incredible that men who professed ceremonial defilement, John 18:28, should actually let out, as they did, a portion of the sacred precincts, the court of the Gentiles, or a part of it, to dealers in cattle and sheep and doves, and to money-changers, but unscrupulous men will do anything for the sake of gain.

It would be a great convenience to a Jew from a distance to buy his Passover Lamb close to the spot where it had to be killed; and the Sadducean priest, taking advantage of this, were themselves the real desecrators of the most sacred building of which they were the guardians by encouraging the unholy traffic.

Jesus drove out all the traffickers, overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those who sold doves to those who were too poor to bring a more costly offering.

According to Jesus, even went further, by forbidding the temple to be made a thoroughfare, so that vessels would be carried through it.

Verse 17

Jesus began teaching and saying to them, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations."

The court of the Gentiles was the least sacred part of the temple, which had been employed for the infamous traffic in which the Lord's words would mean, "My house shall be called the house of prayer for all the Gentiles, but you have driven them out and polluted their share, and made it a den of thieves."

Note: It has been asked, "Was not the future houses of God to be houses of preaching—was not, that is, preaching to be their characteristic?" "No," we answer, and for this reason, preaching may be and ought to be, everywhere; wherever people can be congregated to hear it.

Whereas the celebration of the Lord's supper and also united church prayer ought, if possible, to be in places set apart from the world, its associations, its business, and pleasures, and ought to be in places, the architecture and arrangement and associations of which tend to raise the worshipper above the world.

Verse 18

This is the first instance in the first three gospels of the "chief priests" taking serious measures to destroy Jesus, and notice how closely it follows upon the cleansing of the temple. They sought how they might destroy Jesus.

Their fears made them think that it would be no easy thing to destroy Him. They did not count upon the fleeting nature of all popularity. Three days after this the people who were astonished at His doctrine, made no effort to save Him.

TUESDAY: THE LESSON OF THE WITHERED FIG TREE VERSES 20-26

Verses 20-21

This was the last day of Jesus' public ministry. Of no other day have we so full a record, and none that we know of was more significant in His personal history.

On this day came the greatest decisive conflict, in which His enemies were openly evil, one after another and driven to the desperation of hatred.

On the way to the city they observed the blighted fig tree, which Jesus had cursed, (spoken to), dried up from the roots.

Verse 22

Jesus spoke to them saying, "Have the faith of God." A lesson in faith they were in need of, and so, instead of telling them why this had to be done, He told them how works of faith still greater might be performed.

Verse 23

“Whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and tossed into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, it shall be done.”

Undoubting confidence is the secret of such power; but confidence in what? The belief that those things which God says shall come to pass must have some foundation—what is the true foundation? Plainly, the confidence that is here encouraged is the confidence that the proposed act is in accordance with the will of God, and that the will of God can and will be done.

No man can expect, under this promise, that a mountain will be removed until he is convinced by good reasons that God wishes it to be removed. If he is sure of that, and sure that what God wishes can and will be done, he will believe that the mountain is to be removed.

Verse 24

“Therefore, that is, because faith is so mighty, that all things for which you pray and ask believing that you have received them, they shall be granted you.” The crucial point is the knowing that we are asking according to His will.

But thanks be to God that there is a Spirit who makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God, working in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight.

Verses 25-26

When we pray, we need to forgive if we have anything against anyone, so that God may forgive our transgressions.

Prayer is a tremendous power, but it cannot be used for the gratification of personal resentments. So far from that, the cherishing of such resentments is fatal to prayer itself, being fatal to that full acceptance with God upon which, as a basis, prevailing prayer proceeds. An unforgiving prayer against an enemy would be null and fruitless by its own nature according to this law.

The unforgiving spirit is not the penitent and humble spirit to which forgiveness is promised. Rather is it the hard and self-asserting temper to which the remission of sins cannot be granted.

To harbor resentment while pleading for pardon is to cherish the “guile” of Psalm 32:2. The law limiting the availability of prayer makes power contingent upon love: the true Christian relationship.

JESUS’ AUTHORITY CHALLENGED VERSES 27-33

Verse 27

As Jesus was walking in the temple, very probably employed in works of mercy, according to Matthew, “The lame and the blind came to Him and He healed them.”

“There came to Him the chief priests.” This was the one public intimation which He received from these very dignified persons that His pretensions were known to them. Before, they had simply ignored Him as a body, though individual priests or rulers may have challenged His authority.

Verse 28

“By what authority are You doing these things?” These things were the healing of the lame and the blind, such power of doing good especially in the very temple of God. It was because He had interfered in the management of the temple, that the priests asked this question.

Verse 29

The chief priests knew well the resurrection of Lazarus, which had taken place but a very short time before. They had had their solemn conclave, and an animated discussion about it; but all conducted with the determination of condemning Him, no matter what the signs of His Messiahship showed.

John 11:47

Such was the spirit in which they approached the Lord—insincere, hypocritical, crafty, blood-thirsty. And the Lord met them—met not their words only; but the secrets of their hearts.

Jesus effectively silenced them, not only by a simple question, but by one which above all men, He had a right to ask. They had sent to John to ask who he was, and John had told them that he was but a forerunner—a voice to call men’s minds to the One who should come after.

When John pointed to Jesus; and the Lord fulfilled in His own person all John had foretold: for He had filled the Holy Land, and the neighboring territories, even Jerusalem itself, with the fame of His mighty deeds.

John baptized, but it was not into the belief of himself but One that should come after him.

Verse 30

Jesus asks them a question. “Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.”

Verse 31

John's mission and baptism had no meaning, except as preparing for Another's.

John founded no church, no institution, no sect. He was a herald, and, so far as office was concerned, nothing more; and yet he had so stirred the religious heart of the whole people that they were persuaded that he was a prophet indeed. And the chief priests and Scribes dare not shipwreck their whole influence with the people denying this. And so they were in a dilemma. The Lord in His wisdom conducted them, with their eyes wide open, into the snare.

They were forced to say, “We cannot tell.” We, the judges of the faith and worship of Israel, cannot tell whether the Greatest Teacher who has appeared among us for many centuries is from God or not.

To have to make such a confession was to seal their own condemnation as the leaders of the people of God. And so, the Lord answered them: “Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

THE REJECTED SON CHAPTER 12 VERSES 1-12

The enemies of Christ had already determined on His death. Their only ground of hesitation was His popularity with the throngs who now crowded Jerusalem.

This day was one of constant conflict. The chief ecclesiastical authorities had come to Him to demand His authority for driving the money changers out of the temple but had been silenced by a question that He had hurled upon them.

After Jesus had put to silence the chief priests and Scribes, He spoke to them in three parables.

1. The Two Sons, recorded only by Matthew.
2. The Wicked Husbandmen.
3. The Marriage of the King's Son, given only by Matthew.

It was as if in a mirror held up before them, they might see themselves. Yet even these parables, wearing as they do so severe and threatening an aspect, are not words of defiance, but of earnest, tender, love—spoken, as if it were yet possible to turn them from their purpose to save them the fearful sin they were about to commit, to win them also for the Divine of God.

Verse 1

Jesus began to speak to the chief priests and Scribes whom He had just silenced in parables. The man who planted the vineyard represents the Heavenly Father who had planted the Jewish nation. The image of the Divine of God as a vineyard is not peculiar to this parable, but runs through the whole Old Testament.

The hedge set about it is probably a hedge of thorns, possibly a wall. The hedge around them is the Law, separating them from the Gentiles. That law is a hedge of separation and defense.

The winepress consisted of two parts.

1. The press, or trough, above, in which the grapes were placed and there trodden by the feet of several persons amidst the singing and other expressions of joy.
2. A smaller trough into which the expressed juice flowed through a hole or spout.

Here the smaller trough, which was often hollowed (dug) out of the earth or native rock and then lined with masonry, is put for the whole apparatus, and is called a wine-fat.

Towers were erected in vineyards of considerable height, and were intended for accommodation of keepers, who defended the vineyards from thieves and from troublesome animals.

“The Divine of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing fruit of it.” This represents the rulers of the Jews, but it also represents the people as a whole, a nation or a church.

It is customary in the East, for the owner to let out his estate to husbandmen; that is, to tenants, who pay him an annual rent, either in money, or, as apparently in this case, in kind (in goods or money).

Verse 2

By Mosaic Law the fruit of the trees was not to be eaten for five years after planting. This reasonable provision, though based on religious grounds, gave the tree opportunity of maturing before use.

In the vineyard of our probation all the time of our responsible years is harvest time, in which we are expected to bring forth the fruit to Him who has planted and let to us the vineyard. But as applied to Israel it refers to the

period of her history when, Canaan being fully possessed, God sent His prophets to remind His people of their duty.

“Sent a servant,” probably implies the fullness and sufficiency of warnings given and set forth the long suffering of the householder, and the increasing rebellion of the husbandmen is shown by their increasing ill-treatment of the messengers. These servants, like Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, were sent to demand that a nation for whom God had done so much should yield fitting fruit to God.

Verses 3-5

The gradual growth of the outrage is clearly shown in these verses.

1. The first servant they “caught, beat, and sent away empty.”
2. The second servant, they “cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.”
3. The third servant, they “killed,” and so with many others, beating some and killing others.

Verse 6

He sent his beloved Son last of all, saying, "They will respect my Son."

This was the last and crowning effort of Divine mercy; after which, on the one side, all the resources even of heavenly love are exhausted; on the other side the measure of sins is perfectly filled up.

“His beloved Son.” There is His answer to the question, “By what authority do you do these things?” Mark 11:28

“They will respect My Son,” that is, they will respect and treat Him with due esteem as a messenger. John 3:16-17

Verse 7

The vine-growers said to one another, “Let us kill Him and the inheritance will be ours.” It is the heart which speaks in God’s hearing. The thought of

men's hearts is the true speech, and therefore given as though it were the words of their lips.

“The inheritance will be ours.” They were so connected with a system which must pass away with Christ, with wrong ideas and principles and customs which Christ was doing away, that if Christ prevailed, they must fail. But they imaged that, if they could destroy Christ, they could continue in possession of the inheritance, be rulers over Israel, teachers and leaders of the people, the possessors of the nation.

Verse 8

“And killed the servant” as the Jews did Jesus. They killed that they might possess; and because they killed they lost.

“Threw him out of the vineyard,” may involve an allusion to Christ suffering “without the gate.” Hebrews 13:12-13

Verse 9

“What will the owner of the vineyard do?” “He will rent out the vineyard to other vine growers.” “He will come.”

The coming of the Lord in this place is to be interpreted as the destruction of Jerusalem. The policy of the Jews was destroyed, the temple razed to the ground, their capitol laid waste by the Romans, about forty years after this.

“The others” were the Lord's church which Christ ordained for His Divine.

Verse 10

In the building of the temple the stones were quarried, hewn and marked, away from the site of the temple. For some reason this stone they received had no markings so was laid aside, but was found afterwards to be that on which the completeness of the structure depended. It was the chief cornerstone, where the two walls met and were bonded.

The “stone” is the whole Divine and power of the Messiah summed up in Himself.

The builders answer to the husbandman; they were appointed by God to carry up the spiritual building, as these to cultivate the spiritual vineyard. The rejection of the chief cornerstone answers exactly to the denying and murdering the heir.

The most important foundation stone, joining two walls is a reference to the union of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, but the main thought is that the Messiah, 'even if rejected by the builders,' should become the corner-stone of the real temple of God (His new spiritual Divine).

Verse 11

The making of the Rejected Stone, the head of the corner, is still marvelous and incredible to many that one rejected, despised, and put to death as a malefactor, should be exalted as the Lord of life and glory.

Verse 12

The purpose to seize Him is plainly stated, and that it was a continued effort. Luke states that they were afraid of the people. Matthew says the reason for their fear was that, "They held Him as a prophet."

Their desire to seize Him was increased by this parable; but their fear of the people was also increased, since they, that is, the rulers perceived that He spoke against them, and in the presence of the people, so that they felt themselves convicted before the people. Luke 20:9

THE QUESTION OF PAYING TAXES VERSES 13-17

Verse 13

Foiled in their direct attempt to silence Him, they lose no time in aiming at the same end by a more insidious method, all the parties hostile to Him coalescing for a moment in a joint and several effort to destroy His popularity and influence, by setting Him at variance either with the Roman government or the Jewish people.

The means employed for this end was a series of entangling questions upon difficult and controverted points, both doctrinal and practical, to which it

seemed impossible for Him to return any answer that would not commit Him in the eyes of some important party.

Their design was to catch Him, as a bird caught in fowling, (the hunting of fowl), by a word, by an unguarded answer.

Verse 14

“And they came to Him saying.” Their first words being not a preemptory challenge, but a flattering address intended to ally suspicion and conceal their real purpose, so as to throw Him off His guard and make it easier to entrap Him. “Teacher, we know,” was not necessarily a false profession, since the character here ascribed to Christ was not only true but universally acknowledged.

True, that is, honest, candid, truthful, one who speaks the truth without regard to consequences. We know that You are true and “defer to no one,” but teach the way of God in truth. “Is it lawful to pay a poll tax to Caesar or not?”

“Poll tax,” means an enrollment of the people and assessment of their property with a view to taxation.

Verse 15

“Shall we pay, or shall we not pay? Is it lawful? Shall we do it?” It may be lawful and yet not expedient or binding.

Knowing their hypocrisy, and their testing, Jesus said to them, “Bring Me a denarius to look at.” This was no doubt a sort of grave rebuking irony, intended to disclose His knowledge of their secret motives, and His scorn of their hypocrisy.

Verse 16

“And they brought one.” He held the denarius in His hand creating curiosity and gradually opening the way for the solution of the difficulty which had been suggested. “Whose image and whose inscription is on this coin?” The inevitable answer is, “Caesar’s”.

Verse 17

Jesus said to them, “Render (return, pay back) to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

It is as if Jesus had said, “Pay your taxes and perform your religious duties, but do not mix the two together or attempt to bring them either into conflict or agreement; for they really belong to different worlds or systems, and have nothing common or alike by which they can even be compared.”

So long as the Jews submitted to the Romans and enjoyed their protection they were not only authorized but bound to pay for the advantage.

They were under obligations to the civil power, and then reminding them that till these came in conflict with religious obligations they were no less binding.

In a word, repay to Caesar what he gives you, and to God, the infinitely greater gifts which you receive from Him.

THE QUESTION ABOUT THE RESURRECTION VERSES 18-27

Verse 18

The Pharisees and Herodians having been silenced. It was the turn of the Sadducees to come forward.

Verses 19-23

This is the so-called Levirate marriage (from Latin levir, “a brother-in-law”). Deuteronomy 25:5-10. This provision corresponded to the universal desire in Israel for the perpetuation of name and family.

Childless by all the marriages, the woman was not linked to any one of the husbands more than to the others. “In the resurrection, when the women and the seven brothers shall rise whose wife shall she be?” “It is assumed that she be someone’s wife, and how will Jesus judge between the rival claims of the seven?”

Verse 24

There is something wonderful in the gentleness of Jesus' answer.

Jesus said, "If you had understood the Old Testament rightly, you would have found the resurrection implied in its teaching, or at least would have been prepared to receive the doctrine."

Not unfamiliarity with the Scriptures, but ignorance of their true meaning, kept them from believing in the resurrection. Moreover, a true knowledge of the Scriptures would have prevented their ideas from being so grossly carnal.

As to the power of God, all their conceptions of a resurrection were of a low and carnal mind they underestimated the power of God. They thought only of reestablishment of the present fleshly life. No conception had they of the power of God to make life altogether new in the resurrection-state, but this is what He will do. Now follows the truth on these two points.

Verse 25

THE POWER OF GOD.

He tells them that they have not understood the resurrection: it is something far nobler than they have supposed, and it will work changes such as never been thought of. "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."

Marriage, especially as suggested by the Levirate institution, exists for the sake of offspring. But birth and death are correlatives; they belong in the same world: if one ceases, the other must cease. In that world there is no death; hence no birth, hence no marriage. The power of God will have brought into being that which Paul calls the spiritual body, in which sexual relations will not continue.

It is not said that the holy spiritual relations and personal affinities that may have accompanied marriage will not continue, or that husband and wife will be nothing to each other in the future life.

The questioners thought of that life as a continuation of this, with its relations unchanged; and he simply told them that marriage, in that world, would be out of place.

Upon the relations of the soul with soul in that world He did not touch—
“But as angels which are in heaven.” Not “are angels,” but “are as angels.”

Thus far, Jesus expounded the doctrine of the resurrection. The Sadducees rejected it, but they knew it only in a gross form. Very beautiful is His kindness in thus commending a rejected doctrine by presenting it in a nobler form; as much as to say, “Would not even you have believed it, if you had known it thus?”

Verse 26

Now He turns to prove the doctrine that He has been expounding, that is, to find it in the Holy Writings. He quoted from the book of the law (the Pentateuch), because from it the question has been drawn; possibly also, because the Sadducees prized it above the other Scriptures.

The expectation of a life beyond the present was expressed with greater or less clearness here and there in the Old Testament. Many of the writers had shown that they cherished such a hope, though not with clearness of the gospel.

Verse 27

“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, you are greatly mistaken,” that is, you greatly err in interpreting the text as if He called Himself the God of men who do not now exist. If He is any man’s God, you may know that that man exists.

The Sadducees took the passage to mean, “I am the God in whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob put their trust during their brief existence, which is now forever ended.”

But Jesus reasoned thus: “A God who did for the patriarchs what He did would not speak so of Himself. He was gloriously their God—so gloriously that

He could not call Himself their God in such a sense, if their being had been but transient.

If men were destined to become extinct, He could not be so gloriously a God to them. That such a God is or can be their God is proof that they are more than mortal.” The richness of man’s relation to God is the fact from which Jesus infers His continued existence. See what a God becomes man’s God, and it will be as a fact that lies upon the face of Scripture, so that no one can miss it.

The Sadducees missed it, and others may; but Jesus teaches us that they who explore the Scriptures by the light of God’s nature will find it. As if in order to ensure that this should not be taken as an argument for conditional immortality, that is, immortality for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as chosen ones—Luke adds that “all live unto Him, that is, in such sense that he is God of the living to them, all are alive. This is a distinct statement of the continued existence of all human beings.

THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS VERSES 28-34

This was one of the busiest days of the Lord’s ministry, a day of bitter conflict with His enemies, right in the citadel of their power.

There was but one of two courses before them. They will see their sins and repent, or, being thus accused, and refusing to repent, they will be still engaged against Him. They refused to repent, and filled with a desire for vengeance, they take counsel with the Herodians how they may compel Him to say something that will refute His claims as the Messiah, or give ground for an accusation against Him before the government.

The Herodians first asked a question that they hoped would be so answered that they could accuse him of sedition; then the Sadducees attempted to involve Him in confusion; then the Pharisees put forward a Scribe to ask another, still in hope that He would betray some weakness that would destroy confidence in His wisdom.

Verse 28

“One of the Scribes came,” Matthew says. “He was a Pharisee and a lawyer,” another designation for a Scribe. The Scribes were learned men who preserved, copied and expounded the Jewish law. They were called by Jewish writers, “the schoolmasters of the nation.”

They were reasoning together about the question the Sadducees asked concerning the resurrection and the Lord’s remarkable reply.

They were curious to see what reply Christ would make to one of the puzzling theological problems of the day.

“What commandment is the foremost of all?” First in importance, the primary, leading commandment, the most fundamental one.

The Jews divided the commandments of their law into greater and lesser, but they were not agreed in the particulars.

Some contended for the law of circumcision; others, for that of sacrifice; others, for that of phylacteries; others, for that concerning ablutions.

The Jewish Talmud reckons the positive laws of Moses at 248, and the negative at 365, the sum being 613. To keep so many laws, said the Jews, is an angel’s work, and so they had much question which was the great commandment, so that they might keep that in lieu of keeping the whole.

Verse 29

Jesus answered, the foremost is, “Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9 This passage was one of the four verses of Scripture inscribed on the phylacteries.

It was called the Shema. To say Shema, was a passport into paradise for any child of Abraham.

This every devout Jew recited twice every day; and they do it to this day.

Verse 30

This verse is the language of law, expressive of God's claims. What, then, are we here bound down to do? One word is made to express it. And what a word—LOVE!

Had the essence of the Divine law consisted in deeds, it could not possibly have been expressed in a single word; for no one deed is comprehensive of all others embraced in the law. But as it consists in an affection of the soul, one word suffices to express it—but only one.

Love is an all-inclusive affection, embracing not only every other affection proper to its object, but all that is proper to be done to its object; for, as love spontaneously seeks to please its object, so, in the case of men to God, it is the native well-spring of a voluntary obedience,

It is, besides the most personal of all affections. One may fear an event, one may hope for an event, one may rejoice in an event, but one can love only a person.

It is the most tender, the most unselfish, the most Divine, of all affections. Such, then, is the affection in which the essence of the Divine law is declared to consist—heart, soul, mind, and strength. We may understand this four-fold enumeration as a command to devote all the faculties to the love of God.

1. "Heart" denotes in general terms the affection and will; affectionate choice.
2. "Soul" is the individual existence, the person himself, the seat of the will, disposition, desires, character.
3. "Mind" commands our intellectual nature: "You shall put intelligence into your affection"—in opposition to a blind devotion.
4. "Strength" enjoins the full and entire devotion of all these powers.

Taking these four things together, the command of the law is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your powers—with a sincere, a fervid, an intelligent, and energetic love."

This subordinates the whole life to the love of God and brings the whole being into willing obedience. “This is the first commandment.”

A precept so narrow as to measure the smallest thought of the smallest man; so broad, as to compass the mightiest outgoings of the largest angel; so perfect, as to bind all moral beings to the throne of God, and produce eternal and universal harmony and happiness and progress.

Verse 31

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

To complete the lesson, and to leave no room for perverse distinctions between duties to God and man, our Lord makes the second commandment the necessary result and complement of the first.

The first is the sun, so to speak, of the spiritual life: the second, is the lesser light, which reflects the shining of that other. It is like to it inasmuch as both are laws of love; both deduced from the great and highest love; but both dependent on, “I am the Lord your God.”

Supreme love to God is to manifest itself in love to men. Alike binding, the two are correspondent, not contradictory. He who loves God must love those who are in the image of God, your neighbor.

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

1. Not as he does love himself, but as he ought to love himself.
2. After the same manner, that is, freely and readily, sincerely and unfeigned, tenderly and compassionately, constantly and preserving.

No one can love God without loving his fellowmen, and no one can truly love man without loving God.

Jesus said, “If a man loves me, he will keep my commandments.” The demonstration of love is a loving and faithful obedience. Whether this Scribe finally decided to follow the Lord and entered into the Divine, upon the orders of which he stood, we are not told.

Verse 32

Mark alone records the effect of our Lord's answer upon the scribe. It came home to his heart with convincing power. Doubtless he never before saw so plainly the deep spiritual truths of these commands.

Verse 33

The scribe gathers up in his reply some of the great utterances of the prophets, which prove the superiority of Love to God and man over all mere ceremonial observances.

To say that love was greater than burnt offerings and sacrifices, was a daring utterance, directly opposed to the rigid ceremonial ideas of the Jewish leaders.

Verse 34

Jesus saw that when he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the Divine of God." This man had hold of that principle in which law and gospel are one. He stood, as it were, at the door of the Divine of God.

JESUS' QUESTION ABOUT THE SON OF DAVID VERSES 35-37

Verse 35

As Jesus was teaching in the temple, He asked them a question, "How is it that the Scribes say that Christ is the son of David?"

Verse 36

Mark uses a quote from Psalm 110:1 where David says, "The Lord (the Father) said to my Lord (the Son) set at My right hand until I put thine enemies beneath thy feet." If David himself calls Him Lord, so in what sense is He His Son? The righthand seating showed who was next in power or implies a participation in power.

Verse 37

They still held fast however to the doctrine, that Jesus was to be the Son of David.

The effect of this unanswerable question upon those to whom it was addressed, or at whom it was aimed, is said by Matthew 22:46 to have been that no one could answer Him a word, nor did any one dare from that day, any more, to question Him.

While Mark exhibits Him as silencing their questions, Matthew goes further and describes Him as silencing their very answers.

On the other hand, Mark here describes the impression which His teaching made upon the masses, "And the great crowd enjoyed listening to Him."

JESUS WARNS AGAINST THE SCRIBES VERSES 38-40

Verse 38

According to Luke 11, the chief part of this discourse was spoken in a Pharisee's house, somewhere in Perea.

Jesus was teaching and His message was to beware of the Scribes who walk around in long robes and like respectful greetings in the market places.

Verse 39

The chief seats or couches in the synagogue were the seats nearest to where the sacred rolls of the law were kept. They also liked the places of honor at the banquets.

Verse 40

The Scribes were the ones who devour widow's houses and for appearance offer long prayers. These will receive greater or more abundant condemnation.

Greater, because they had misused their spiritual privileges, betrayed the trust of the simple, and brought reproach upon the name of God.

Jesus' denunciations of the representatives of Judaism in His day seem terribly severe and almost cruel; but what is known of the absurd and heartless refinements of the Pharisaism of that age fully supports the strong language that He used.

THE POOR WIDOW AND HER OFFERING VERSES 41-44

Verse 41

Jesus sat down opposite the treasury watching the people as they put their money in the treasury. The lesson taught by this verse is man's treatment of God's treasury and the true touchstone of piety. Many rich people were putting in large sums of money. Far above these possessions is the privilege of sacred worship. This would be an urgent necessity and a lofty privilege even if man were holy. How much more now that he is a sinner! As all material arrangements are costly, so also is worship.

Verse 42

In the temple scene before us, we behold the devotion of every coin, from the golden mineh, of three guineas value, to the mite of brass, three-quarters of a farthing.

Motives also differ often as much as coins. Some give from necessity. Some give from a sense of honesty; if they did not give, debt and dishonor must ensue. Some give with pride and self-righteousness even before God. Some give from habit acquired from youth. Some give with holy love and joy, as a blessed privilege and rich delight: thus did the widow; so also have many done till now.

As worship is man's highest act, it should be rich and substantial. Jesus beheld men at the treasury. He still directs His eye thither; not that He needs man's gifts; but deeds and gifts test man's love; also, they elevate and refresh man's heart. Men test others' love by deeds and gifts. Jesus challenges us to test "the love of God."

Verse 43

Jesus estimates gifts chiefly by what is retained. This principle alone accounts for the higher worth of the widow's gift.

1. This estimate of gifts according to what is retained agrees with reason. Man's gauge of the moral value of a deed is the power of the doer. The child is not expected to put forth the strength of a man.

Less force is looked for from the feeble than the strong man. A small gift from a narrow income is esteemed as much as a large gift from a vast income.

2. This treasury test accords with general life.

This principle is acknowledged in all departments of life. Men readily meet the cost of their chosen pursuits and pleasures, in the measure of their means. True patriots willingly pay national charges, according to their ability.

Faithful husbands provide for their wives, in the measure of their power.

Loving parents nourish their children, as the resources allow.

Should not Christians thus provide for the service and glory of Christ.

Isaiah 43:22-24; Jeremiah 7:18

3. This treasury test accords with universal Scripture demands. God tested man's confidence and honesty by the forbidden fruit. We know the sad issues.

Jesus tests our obedience, love, and devotion by a treasury. Besides the large dedication of their property to the national religious service, Israel was commanded to open a treasury to the Lord, to build a tabernacle Exodus 35, 36; David to build a temple 1 Chronicles 29; Joash to meet the expenses of worship. 2 Kings 12:1, 9

This woman would give her all to His worship. Who doubts her love? But did she act prudently? She acted according to the rule. She acted for the hour and the occasion. She would not make herself an exception to the rule. She gave her all to God. She left the future to Him. Does anyone think she starved to death because she gave her all to God? Behold, what a grandeur the smallest service acquires, when it is done for God.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE FORETOLD:

CHAPTER 13:1-13

This chapter begins in the temple, as the Lord departs from it and ends upon the Mount of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem and the temple, from the east.

Verse 1

Jesus left the temple after the solemn and pathetic farewell recorded in the later part of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. Those words closed His public ministry to the Jewish nations, and He left the temple never to return. He left it “desolate.”

Verse 2

As Jesus and His disciples left the temple, He said to them, “No one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down.”

The temple was vast, rich, splendid. It was the pride of the nation, and the nation was at peace. Yet, in the short space of forty years all this was exactly accomplished.

Jerusalem was taken by the Roman armies, under the command of Titus, in 70 A.D. Titus ordered the whole city and the temple to be dug up, leaving only two or three of the chief towers, so that those who visited it could hardly believe that it had ever been inhabited.

Verse 3

The words fell on the ears of the disciples, and awed them into silence. It was not till they had crossed to the Mount of Olives that the foremost and most favored ventured to break the silence. Jesus paused before passing the ridge of Olivet, and sat down with His disciples to look back upon Jerusalem.

Nowhere on earth was it possible to find another scene of such commanding interest as that which lay before the eyes of Jesus when He turned to look upon Jerusalem for the last time. On leaving the temple Jesus would descend into the valley of Kidron, and ascend the opposite slope of the Mount of Olives.

Peter, James, John, and Andrew questioned Jesus privately.

Verse 4

“Tell us when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?” The question is given more fully by Matthew 24:3. It embraced three points.

1. The time of the destruction of the temple.
2. The sign of His coming.
3. And of the end of the world.

“What shall be the sign?” By what signs shall we know when these things shall be accomplished. They wanted some insight into Jesus’ plans, so that they might know when and how He was to come, and all the events He had foretold should take place, and His Divine be established.

Verse 5

Jesus’ answer to those questions was framed to afford all the information needful to them, or useful for their guidance, but little to gratify a vague curiosity.

We can now distinguish that He spoke of His coming, not personally, but by the fulfillment of His predictions concerning Jerusalem, and for the final uprooting of that theocracy which had become obstructive to the progress of the gospel; and again of His final coming to judge the world.

Much Jesus said might be applicable to both these great events—both these comings,” being, in fact, comings to judgment; but toward the close His language grew more distinctly applicable to His final coming to judge the world.

The Lord does not answer when, but by admonitions not to be deceived. It is not given to us to know the times and the seasons.

Verse 6

“Many will come in My name.” As the destruction of their holy city drew near, and the Messianic hopes of the Jews were at fever-heat, many enthusiasts arose.

They drew large numbers after them. Acts 5:36-37, 1 John 2:18

Josephus says that in the reign of Claudius (who died A.D. 54), the land was overwhelmed with deceivers who pretended to be the Christ.

Verse 7

“When you hear of wars and rumors of war.” The rumors of an expected invasion are often more dreadful than the invasion itself. There were wars and rumors of wars during this period; but the prophecy must be interpreted rather than those of which the Hebrew Christians would be most likely to hear as a cause of terror.

“Do not be frightened — it is not yet the end.”

1. As if everything was going to ruin. Be not troubled; for you will be safe, both at the judgment and at the destruction of Jerusalem. Every Christian escaped from that destruction.
2. These things do not prove that the great catastrophe and final consummation is at hand.

“That is not yet the end,” neither the destruction of Jerusalem, nor the end of the world. These are not the certain signs of the end, for they occur at other times as well as then.

Verse 8

The war-fiend ran riot in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and throughout the whole Roman Empire. The ten years ending with the destruction of Jerusalem was such a period of civil commotion as the world has seldom witnessed.

The principal earthquakes occurring between this prophecy and the destruction of Jerusalem were:

1. A great earthquake in Crete, A.D. 46 or 47.
2. One at Rome on the day when Nero assumed the manly toga, A.D. 51
3. One at Apamea in Phrygia, mentioned by Tacitus, A.D. 53.
4. One at Laodicea in Phrygia, A.D. 60.
5. One in Campania.

Famines and troubles would naturally follow the devastating civil wars. These woes all precede the awful end of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.

Verse 9

“Be on your guard,” not as a means of escaping from persecution, but as a means of preparing for it, that is, before these public calamities come, they will deliver you up to the courts and in the synagogues you will be flogged. You will stand before governors and kings for my sake as a testimony to them, to give you an opportunity of bearing testimony to Me before them. Matthew 10:17-18 The martyrdoms and persecutions have ever called attention to the religion of Christ and opened ways for it to be made known.

Verse 10

The gospel must be preached, that is proclaimed to all nations, which is the proper conception of preaching. The gospel had been published through the Roman world as then known, and every nation had received its testimony before the destruction of Jerusalem. But, further, the gospel has not yet to be preached universally for a testimony. And the universal diffusion of it by modern Christian missions is now a leading sign of the end.

Verse 11

“Be not anxious.” The idea is: You need not distress yourselves by anxiously considering beforehand how you ought to speak before such high and august personages.

Don't be anxious as to what you are to say for it is the Holy Spirit who speaks through you.

Verse 12

“Brother will deliver up brother to death.” There is nothing that excites such love as the gospel when intelligently received, so there is nothing that occasions such hate as this same gospel when passionately rejected. In that reception or rejection the heart of the heart is concerned. The father will give up his child and children will rise against parents and cause them to be put to death.

Note: In missionary lands this is literally fulfilled today.

Verse 13

“You will be hated because of My name.” The Roman historian, Tacitus, speaks of the early Christians as a hated race. The most shameful practices were attributed to Christians; and partly in consequence of these falsehoods, partly from the hatred of good, they were treated as the garbage of the earth.

“One who has endured to the end shall be saved.” The primary meaning of this seems to be that whosoever remained faithful till the destruction of Jerusalem should be preserved from it. No Christian that we know of perished in the siege or after it. But it has ulterior meaning, according to which the end will signify, to an individual, the day of his death, his martyrdom, as in the case of some of those here addressed; to the church, endurance in the faith to the end of all things.

Verse 14

The “abomination of desolation” is a Hebrew idiom, meaning “the abomination that makes desolation.” Luke 21:20 does not use the expression; it would have sounded strange to his Gentile readers. He says, “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will recognize that her desolation is at hand.”

There is a remarkable passage in Josephus (Wars of the Jews” iv.6), in which he refers to an ancient saying then current, that “Jerusalem would be taken, and the temple destroyed, when it has been defiled by the hands of the Jews themselves.”

This literally took place. While the Roman armies were invading Jerusalem, the Jews within the city went in fierce conflict amongst themselves. It would seem probable that our Lord had in His mind, in connection with Daniel's prophecy, more especially that at chapter 9:27, the eruption of the army of Zealots and Assassins into the temple, filling the holy place with the dead bodies of their own fellow-citizens. The Jews had invited these marauders to defend them against the army of Romans; and they by their outrages against God, were the special cause of the desolation of Jerusalem.

Therefore, our Lord proceeds to warn both Jews and Christians alike, that when they saw these signs they should flee into the mountains.

Not the mountains of Judea, for those were already occupied by the Roman army (Josephus, lib. iii, cap. xii.), but those further off, beyond Judea. We know from Eusebius (iii.15) that the Christians fled to Pella, on the other side of the Jordan River.

The Jews on the other hand, as they saw the Roman army approaching nearer, moved themselves to Jerusalem, as to an asylum, thinking that they would be under special protection of Jehovah, but there, they were imprisoned and slain.

Verse 15

Let him that is on the housetop not go down, nor enter in, to take anything out of his house. The roofs of the houses were flat, with frequently a little "dome" in the center. The people lived very much upon them; and the stairs were outside, so that a person wishing to enter the house must first descend by these outer stairs.

The words, therefore, mean that he must flee suddenly, if he would save his life, even though, he might lose his goods.

He must escape, perhaps by crossing over the parapet of his own housetop to, and so from housetop to housetop, until he could find a convenient point for flight into the hill country.

Verse 16

And let him that is in the field not return to take his cloak. This was the outer garment or pallium. They who worked in the field were accustomed to leave their cloak and their tunic at home; so that, half-stripped, they might be more free in labor.

So suddenly would it come, that they must be ready to flee just as they were clothed. It was the direction given to Lot. "Escape for your life; look not behind thee."

Verse 17

But woe unto them that are with child and to them that are nursing a child in those days! Women in this condition would be especially objects of pity, for they would be more exposed to danger. Josephus (vii. 8) mentions that some mothers constrained by hunger during the siege, devoured their own infants!

Verse 18

"Pray that it not be in the winter." Our Lord thus specifies the winter, because at that season, on account of the cold and snow, flight would be attended with special difficulty and hardship, and would be almost impossible for the aged and infirmed.

Verse 19

"For those days will be a time of tribulation."

The destruction of their city and their temple, and their continued desolation afterwards, were the lessons, by which the Jews were taught that the Christ had indeed come, and that this was the Christ whom they had crucified.

Verse 20

If the time of the siege of Jerusalem had lasted much longer, not one of the nations could have survived, all would have perished by war, or famine, or pestilence. The Romans raged against the Jews as an obstinate and rebellious nation, and would have exterminated them.

But “the Lord” shortened the time of this frightful catastrophe, for the elect’s sake, that is partly for the sake of the Christians would not escape from Jerusalem, and partly for that of the Jews, who subdued by this awful visitation, were converted to Christ or would hereafter be converted to Him.

It may be added that a number of providential circumstances combined to shorten these days of terror. Titus was himself disposed to clemency. Moreover, he was attached to Bernice, a Jewess, sister of Agrippa. All these and other circumstances conspired in the providence of God to “shorten the days.”

Verses 20-21

Josephus mentions one Simon of Gerasa, who, pretending to be a deliverer of the people from the Romans, gathered around him a crowd of followers, and gained admission into Jerusalem, and harassed the Jews. In like manner, Eleazar and John, leaders of the Zealots, gained admission into the holy place, under the pretense of defending the city, but really that they might plunder it.

Verse 23

“But take heed”. The disciples were around him, hanging upon His words. But His admonition is meant for Christians everywhere, even to the end of the world.

THE COMMAND TO WATCH VERSES 24-37

Verse 24

The period of history that lies after the final overthrow of Jerusalem, is that which is meant by “that tribulation.” As Jesus and His disciples left the temple, after His farewell and prediction of the desolation of the temple, Jesus told His disciples, “The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.”

When they reached the Mount of Olives and from its summit looked down on the city and temple, the disciples were still thinking of what He had said, and asked three questions.

1. When shall these things be? That is, when will the temple and city be destroyed?
2. What shall be the sign of Your coming?
3. What shall be the sign of the end of the world?

Note: The answer to the first question extends to verse 28. The answer to the second question with various warnings and exhortations follows.

The present study comes in the answer to the second question and is an exhortation to be ready for Christ's coming. "The sun shall be darkened." Some interpret all that is said of sun, moon, and stars literally, as great natural phenomena that shall precede the coming of the Lord.

Others suppose that these are symbols of great disturbances in the history of mankind. I believe that a correct interpretation only requires that these words be given their usual symbolic meaning. While we can never be certain of the exact meaning of unfilled prophecy, I believe that this prediction has been in a great part fulfilled.

The sun is the usual symbol of Christ, "the Light of the world," the "Sun of Righteousness;" the moon, which only shines with the reflected splendor of the sun, is the church, which only shines in the light of Christ. The stars are and other great lights of the church.

As to the application, the Lord is outlining history to the end of the world. When the apostasy began to develop, about three centuries after these words were spoken, the rays of light that came from Christ's teaching were obscured by the tradition of men, the church therefore ceased to shed her light on mankind, and the were no longer recognized as the great authorities of religious life. They fell from their high place, or from heaven. The Bible was taken away from men and what history has pleased to call significantly "the Dark Ages" came upon the world.

Still, at this time, two-thirds of Christendom are destitute of the Bible and wrapped in the darkness of human tradition.

The “sun” is still darkened, the “moon” does not yet give her light and the “stars” are not restored to their places in the heavens.

Verse 25

“The powers that are in heaven” refers to the spiritual forces that should control mankind.

Verse 26

After this spiritual darkening the spiritual darkness seems to be slowly lifting. We have in this a cheering omen that the coming draws nearer. I understand this to be a literal coming.

As the saw the Lord ascend, “in like manner,” He shall return.

Certain facts may be noted;

1. The Lord shall come as the Son of Man. They that pierced Him shall look upon Him.
2. His coming shall be seen by all mortals. “Every eye shall see Him.”
3. It will be glorious. He shall ride upon the clouds of heaven and shall have “all His holy angels with Him.”

Verse 27

“With a great sound of a trumpet” Jesus shall send forth His angels. They shall gather together His elect.

As the tribes of Israel were anciently gathered together by the sound of the trumpet, so any mighty gathering of God’s people by Divine command, is represented as collected by the sound of the trumpet and the ministry of angels, employed in all the great operations of Providence, is here held forth as the agency by which the present assembling of the elect is to be accomplished.

The “four winds” denote the quarters of the earth’s surface, that is, from all parts of the earth.

Verse 28

“Now learn the parable from the fig tree.” The fig is a native product of the East, and grows in spontaneous plenty in Palestine. In a warm climate fruit forms a very large proportion of customary food. Our Lord spoke this upon the Mount of Olives where fig trees were growing all around Him. He was near to Bethphage (or Fig-ville), so called, probably from the abundance of this product.

Verse 29

“When you see these things happening recognize that He is near, right at the door.” In Luke 21:28, the following words precede these: “But when these things begin to take place, straighten and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Their redemption, in this instance is from Jewish oppression, but in the highest sense of these words, redemption from all the oppressions and miseries of the present state at the second appearing of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 30

“This generation shall not pass away till all these things take place.” There are two explanations for generations.

1. Generation may be taken in the ordinary sense of the persons then living, and the prophecy had one exact fulfillment within that generation.
2. The word translated generation has sometimes the meaning of race or nation, having, it is true, a better meaning implying that the character of one generation stamps itself upon the race, as here in this verse also.

No doubt this meaning is more correct as used here, the meaning of a race or family of people.

Verse 31

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words will not pass away.”

Verse 32

“But of that day or hour no one knows.” No one knows the time of Christ’s return. “The signs of the times,” are left to us; the “time” is in the hands of God.

Dr. Schaff says, “His voluntarily not knowing the day of judgment, during the days of Christ’s flesh, is a warning against chronological curiosity and mathematical calculations in the exposition of Scripture prophecy. It is not likely that any theologian, however learned, should know more or ought to know more on this point than Christ Himself, who will judge the quick and the dead, chose to know in the state of His humiliation.”

Verse 33

“Watch and pray.” To “watch” denotes:

1. To be sleepless.
2. To be vigilant.

In view of the suddenness and unexpectedness of this coming, “watch and pray”; not be always expecting what will come unexpectedly, nor be seeking to know what cannot be known, but be always in a state of readiness because of the uncertainty.

Verse 34

“It is like a man away on a journey.” Jesus left His church, gave authority to His servants the Apostles, and to those who should come after them, and to every man his work, and is now waiting for the consummation of all things. After He had given all the orders concerning the internal affairs, He gives finally, at the door, to the porter, the additional command to watch: this is the point of the parable.

Verse 35

“Watch,” because you do not know when the Master of the house will come. In all the future which lies before us, there are only two events of which we are

absolutely certain: our own approaching death and our Lord's approaching advent.

At evening, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning, are four regular watches, from eventide to daybreak, representing, either periods in the world's history, or pauses in human life.

Verse 36

“Lest He come suddenly and finds you sleeping.”

During the night the captain of the temple made his rounds. On his approach the guards had to rise, and salute him in a particular manner.

Any guard found asleep when on duty was beaten, or his garments were set on fire—a punishment, as we know actually awarded.

Verse 37

“Be on the alert.” The and the ministry are watchmen and porters, yet all believers are also to be incessantly watchful and for the same reasons.

“Watch!” Matthew tells us how the Lord sought to impress these lessons of watchfulness and faithfulness still more deeply by the parables of the “Ten Virgins” ([Matthew 25:1-13](#)), and the “Talents” ([Matthew 25:14-30](#)), and closed all with the picture of the awful day when the Son of man should separate all nations from one another as the shepherd divides his sheep from the goats ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)).

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY Chapter 14:1-9

Verse 1

It is two days before the feast of the Passover, which dates the time of the meeting of the rulers, at the house of Simon the leper.

The Passover meal was the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted for seven days.

The meeting of the chief priest and the Scribes for consultation was at the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest.

It was an extraordinary meeting, held for secret consultation. This plotting was begun at least three months before, after the raising of Lazarus; and more recently, the triumphal entry, the driving out of the money-changers from the temple, and the parables spoken against Jewish leaders, seem to have enraged them, so that they felt that something must be done immediately to put a stop to His career.

The first step in putting Christ to death was taken by the religious teachers of the Jewish nation. The very men who ought to have welcomed the Messiah were the men who conspired to kill Him, but not on the feast day.

Verse 2

The Jews of Galilee and Perea being more friendly to Jesus than those of the capital, might make a disturbance if He were publicly arrested.

Josephus computes that three million persons attended the Passover which is not incredible, seeing that the nation was expected to assemble at the greatest of the festivals.

Verse 3

A simple-hearted, loving woman, who has had no subtle questions of criticism about the matter of duty and right, but only loves her Lord with a love that is probably a kind of mystery to her, which love she wants somehow to express. She comes with her box of ointment, having sold we know not what article or portion of her property to buy it, for it was very costly, and pours it on the Savior's head. This anointing is not to be confounded with the anointing mentioned in Luke 7:36-50.

There is nothing in common between them, except the name of the householder, Simon; and this was a very common name in Palestine. The occasion, the time, the parties, and the spiritual significance are all different.

Jesus arrived in Bethany Friday, and the supper was Saturday evening, just at the close of the Jewish Sabbath, and as John expressly states (12:1), the evening before the triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

Bethany, is a village about two miles east of Jerusalem.

Perhaps Simon, the leper, had been healed of his leprosy by Jesus, it would then be natural that he would have made a feast of gratitude for Jesus. According to tradition, he was the father of Lazarus; according to others, he was the husband of Martha or Martha was his widow. Very likely he was in some way related to the family of Lazarus.

Mary and Martha served John 12:2)

A woman, Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, came to Jesus with an alabaster vial (glass) to anoint Jesus.

These alabaster, or unguent flasks, were usually made of the Oriental or onyx alabaster, with long narrow necks, which let the oil escape drop by drop, and could easily be broken.

Spikenard, from which the ointment was made, was an aromatic herb of the valerian family. It was imported from an early age from Arabia, India, and the Far East. The ointment of nard was highly esteemed, and was a costly luxury.

It was very precious, a price that put it beyond any but the wealthy. Mary had bought a flask or vase of it containing twelve ounces (John 12:3). She broke the narrow neck of the small flask, and poured the perfume, first on the head and then on the feet of Jesus. John 12:3

Anointing with oil was a primitive custom of consecration. It was then used for the ritual consecration of priests; occasionally, also of prophets. The anointing of the head was also a distinction which was conferred upon the guest of honor. Luke 7:46)

Verse 4

Mark reports that “some” had indignation; John knew who had whispered the first word of blame, fixes the uncharitable judgment on “Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son.”

The narrow covetous soul of the traitor could see nothing in the lavish gift but a “waste.”

Verse 5

Judas Iscariot remarks that it could have been sold for three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.

The true friends of the poor, who give most and do most for them, will always be found among those who do most for Christ.

They murmured against Mary, scolded her, and addressed her harshly.

Verse 6

Jesus said, “Let her alone. She has done a good deed to me.” “Let her alone,” is the language of sharp rebuke. Christ was indignant at the hypocrisy which made a pretended consideration of the poor an excuse for attacking and condemning an act of love toward Him.

Jesus measured their moral quality of the act by the motive, the disciples by its seeming futility.

Verse 7

“You have the poor with you always.” You will have plenty of opportunity to aid them, and the more they did for their Master, the more they would do for the poor.

Verse 8

“She has done what she could.” This praise is more precious than the ointment, coming from such a one as Christ. It is like that which He passed upon the poor widow.

“She has anointed my body beforehand, for burial.” Jesus said, “She has anticipated the hour of My decease; anointing My body before death, and thus preparing it for burial.”

Verse 9

Jesus said, “Wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world what this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her.” It is right to record and remember the good deeds of those who have loved Christ; but when the “desire” to be put on record enters, the ointment is spoiled.

THE TREACHERY OF JUDAS VERSES 10-11

Verses 10-11

The “and” connects these verses with the preceding paragraph, not only historically but psychologically. Judas Iscariot’s present act was immediately determined by the gift of Mary and the mild rebuke of Jesus. As a result he determined to deliver up Christ in some way to His enemies.

In robbing the alms from the bag, he was guilty of a breach of trust; in this new development of his master passion the unfaithfulness culminated. It is manifest that the spiritual side of Christ’s ministry had for him no value. It was only the “earthly rewards” that might attend on discipleship that made it attractive to him.

That selfishness was at the root, we may be sure. He proposed money, and asked how much. Thirty pieces of silver, a small sum (Matthew 26:15).

“Fear of the consequences,” if he followed Christ further in the direction in which he was moving, may also have influenced his mind.

Also, there can be no question as to the immediate impulse of wounded feeling, through baffled dishonesty and the sense that Christ saw through him.

The background to all this mental and spiritual movement on the part of Judas is the attitude of the chief priests, “seeking how they might betray Christ.”

THURSDAY: THE LORD'S SUPPER VERSES 12-26

Introduction

Christ gives two of His disciples directions as to the preparation of the Passover Supper for Himself and the twelve. When the evening has come He goes with the twelve to the place prepared for them where an unseemly strife occurs as to which shall be the greatest. Christ prophesies His betrayal. Judas, learning that his treachery is known, goes out to complete it.

The supper, which has been interrupted by this incident, now goes on and ends with the institution of the Lord's Supper at the close of the Passover feast.

Jesus and His disciples leave the upper room and go out into the darkness of the night. They leave the city crossing the Kidron to the ascent of the Mount of Olives where Jesus retired within the Garden of Gethsemane.

Verse 12

The word "Passover" signifies a passing, and commemorates the manner in which the Israelites were spared in Egypt when the Almighty "passed over" their houses, sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, without slaying their first-born.

The Passover was the feast of spring, after the death of winter; the national birthday feast, the springtime of grace, pointing to the birth of the true Israel.

The rabbis claimed that:

1. All were to be present.
2. They must offer thanksgiving offerings.
3. It was a feast of joyousness, looking forward to their complete deliverance.

The directions were given in Deuteronomy 16:1-5, the Passover must be eaten in the place where the Lord's name was recorded or where the tabernacle or temple was located.

Jesus was at Bethany at this time. As that place was within a Sabbath's day's journey of Jerusalem, the Passover could be eaten there according to the rabbis, and the disciples might have supposed that this would be the Lord's decision.

The preparation involved the selection of a guest chamber (Mark 14:15), the selection, sacrifice and cooking of the lamb, the procurement of unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

The lamb had, we may believe, already been bought on the 10th of Nisan, according to the rule of law, the very day of which He, the true Paschal Lamb, entered Jerusalem in meek triumph.

“Prepare for You to eat the Passover.” Note the reverential feeling that dominated the disciples. They did not say, “in order that ‘we’ may eat the Passover.” They hid themselves behind their Lord.

Verse 13

Two of Jesus' disciples, Peter and John, were told by Jesus, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water, follow him.”

A man carrying a pitcher of water is a very unusual sight in the East, where the water is drawn by women.

Verse 14

Jesus said to Peter and John, “Wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”

During the Passover week, hospitality was recognized as a universal duty in Jerusalem; pilgrims and strangers were received, and rooms were allotted to them for the celebration of the feast.

Verse 15

“He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready.” A room on the second floor may have been the “Alijah,” or the room on the house top, furnished with tables and couches. The room will already be swept, and clean, and in order for the feast.

Even at the present day, the very humblest Jewish family generally has at the Passover time the walls of the house white-washed, the floor scrubbed.

The furniture will have been cleaned, and all things made to put on a new appearance.

There are evidently two preparations for the Passover mentioned in this sentence; that of the room, already made by the proprietor, and that of the lamb, with its accompaniments, bread and wine and bitter herbs, which was now to be made by the two disciples, and which they did make.

Verse 16

They procured a “paschal lamb,” multitudes of which were kept for sale in the temple. They procured it to be killed and flayed by the priests and the blood to be poured at the altar. They roasted the lamb and prepared the bitter herbs, the sauce, and the unleavened bread.

As the new day opened, at sunset, the carcass was trussed for roasting, with two skewers of pomegranate wood, so that they formed a cross in the lamb. It was then put in an earthen oven of a special kind, resting, without bottom, on the ground and was roasted in the earth.

The feast could begin immediately after the setting of the sun and appearing of the stars, on the opening of the 15th of Nisan, which was proclaimed by new trumpet-blasts from the temple.

Verse 17

It was probably while the sun was beginning to decline in the horizon that Jesus and the disciples descended once more over the Mount of Olives into the Holy City. Before them was Jerusalem in her festive attire.

White tents dotted the grass, gay with the bright flowers of early spring, or peered out from the gardens and the darker foliage of the olive plantations.

From the gorgeous temple buildings, dazzling in the snow-white marble and gold, on which the slanting rays of the sun were reflected, rose the smoke of the altar of burnt-offerings.

The streets must have been thronged with strangers and the flat roofs covered with eager gazers, who either feasted their eyes with a first sight of the sacred city, for which they had so often longed, or else once more rejoiced in view of the well-remembered localities.

Verse 18

They reclined at the table and did eat. The Passover was originally eaten standing; but this was altered by the Jews when they came to the land of promise and rest.

Jesus said, "One of you will betray Me, one who is eating with Me." This indefinite announcement would give Judas an opportunity of repentance; but it produced no effect.

The announcement by Jesus of His knowledge of the traitor was needed to show that the manner of His arrest was no surprise to Him.

Verse 19

The very thought of treason was to their honest and faithful hearts insupportable and excited great surprise and deepest sorrow. John 13:33 describes their perplexed and questioning glances at each other. "Surely not I, Lord?"

Verse 20

According to the Jewish ritual, the administrator in the course of the supper dipped the bitter herbs in a prepared sauce, and passed the dish to the rest. This Jesus now did.

Jesus' reply to the question of John was simply an emphatic reiteration of His previous declaration. "This is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel, He took and gave it to him. (Judas); John 13:26

Verse 21

Jesus was marching with unfaltering step in the way to the scene of death. "Woe to that man," was a proverbial expression of the most terrible destiny, forbidding the thought of any deliverance, however remote.

Verse 22

Note: While they were still at the Passover table, one memorial institution had now ended its mission; as it departed another was ordained.

Jesus took the bread and broke it. The bread that was broken was a round cake or cracker of unleavened bread. Throughout the entire Passover week no leavened bread was allowed in the house.

The administration of the Lord's Supper was subsequently termed the "breaking of bread."

The bread then is:

1. A symbolic reminder that Christ is God's unspeakable gift to us.

John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 9:15

2. That the gift is perfected only in that He is broken for us

John 3:14; 10:15; 12:32

3. That it is efficacious only as we partake of Him, that is, receive Him into ourselves, so that He becomes one with us as He is one with the Father (John 17:23), as the bread when eaten becomes part of our nature, and so the sustainer of our life.

"This is My body." Jesus' language closely conforms to that of the Jewish ritual. When the lamb was passed the master was asked by one of the children,

"What is this?" and the father would reply, "This is the body of the lamb which our fathers ate in Egypt." Christ uses but modifies, the same formula.

The word for is denotes only likeness.

Verse 23

The cup was provided for the celebration of the paschal feast and was at hand as well as the bread. As before, Jesus gave thanks, and then commanded: "Drink all of it."

Observe that He simply said of the bread, “Take eat; but of the wine, “drink all of it.”

Jesus’ statement uproots the Catholic innovation of denying the cup to laity.

Verse 24

“This is My blood,” a sign or emblem of His blood. This formula occurs again from the forms of the Passover feast. The blood is the life. He laid down His life. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.

Up to this time the blood of bulls and goats had represented Christ’s blood: henceforth the simple wine of this memorial supper would represent it.

Hebrews 9:13-14

New Testament or Covenant? Covenant is used in most passages where the word occurs in the New Testament: the new covenant is contrasted with “the covenant which God made with our fathers.” Acts 3:25

It hardly needs to be remarked that the title of the New Testament is derived from this passage.

The new covenant was that God would renew and save all who believed in Jesus.

In ancient times the ratification of important covenants were made by a sacrificial feast,

“Shed for many.” Shed, in one sense, for all, for the benefits of the blood are offered to all; but “many” accept it and are saved.

Verse 25

Jesus said, “I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine.” He is done with earthly rites, and at this sad moment points them to a future reunion at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The ordinance now receives its prophetic meaning “till He comes” directing believers to the perfect vision and fruition of that time, through the foretaste which this sacrament is designed to give.

Verse 26

It was customary to conclude the Passover by singing the Psalms 115-118.

At the conclusion of the singing of the Psalms, they went out to the Mount of Olives, to the garden of Gethsemane which was on the slope of that mount.

PETER'S BOAST VERSES 27-31

Verse 27

Jesus said, "You will all fall away." Our Lord means that when the disciples witnessed His humiliation and sufferings, it would be a sore trial to their faith and would lead them to doubt that He was the Messiah. That this actually occurred we see from Luke 24:21:

"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." Evidently these disciples no longer hoped, and all were incredulous at first, as regards the resurrection of Christ.

"I will strike down the Shepherd." Zechariah 13:7 Jesus refers the prophecy to Himself as the Good Shepherd. John 10:11

"The sheep will be scattered." Primarily the prophecy referred to the Jewish priests and to the Israelites, but there is a secondary reference to Christ the Messiah and to the disciples, the sheep and His flock. These words were fulfilled when in Gethsemane His disciples leaving him, all fled away (14:50). It was also accomplished in the dispersion of the Jews.

Verse 28

"But after I have been raised, I will go before you into Galilee."

Christ now turns His hand to His little ones. In spite of their weak faith and of their cowardice, He promises to see them again, and foretells once more of His resurrection.

The angel of the Resurrection used these very words and reminded the disciples of Christ's promise. Luke 24:6-7, and Matthew 27:7

In spite of the disciples' predicted defection, Jesus consoles them:

1. By the assurance that He will rise again.
2. And, by promising to meet them in Galilee.

Verse 29

"Even though all men fall away, I will not." Peter, always impulsive and generous, cannot believe such desertion possible.

In his reply we notice:

1. Peter rejects the idea as impossible and bluntly contradicts our Lord. He evidently regarded our Lord's words as a mark of distrust of the disciples rather than a prediction and solemn warning.
2. Peter asserts his strength of character to be greater than that of the other disciples.
3. He trusts in his own strength, though the remembrance of how his faith failed when he was sinking in the Sea of Galilee should have prevented this presumption.

Verse 30

"Truly I say to you." Our Lord uses His solemn statement to check Peter's assumption and enforce the warning.

"This very night," Peter will deny Christ three times before a cock crows twice. It was forbidden to have cocks and hens in Jerusalem, but this prohibition did not affect the Romans, who would certainly have kept fowls in the Castle of Antonia. From there the Jews could hear the cock crowing distinctly.

The Romans used these birds, and even carried them with them when on the march, since they required chickens for their divination.

Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die I will not deny You."

Peter was sincere in his protestations of fidelity, but he had yet to learn how weak human nature is in the face of temptation and suffering. Luke and John

give Peter's protestations more fully. "I will lay down my life for You. (John 13:37) "Lord, I am ready to go with You both into prison and to death (Luke 22:33).

The other eleven (Judas was not present) also said the same thing. We may be sure that they were sincere in their offer, but their inexperience led them to underestimate the force of the trial that awaited them.

STRONG CRYING AND TEARS VERSES 32-42

Verse 32

"They came to a place called Gethsemane." The word means "oil-press," olive oil press.

There is an enclosed spot, lying at the base of the western slope of the Mount of Olives, which is called Gethsemane. It is kept by the Latin Christians, and contains eight extremely aged olive trees.

There Jesus said to His disciples, "Sit here until I finish praying."

The great crisis was at hand; and it was casting its dark shadow on the spirit of our Lord. He felt that He must get into comparative retirement, in order that He might, without distraction, grapple with the appalling difficulties of the trial, and open up His heart, in the time of extremity, to His Father.

Verse 33

Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him as they had been witnesses of the transfiguration. Jesus was very distressed and troubled.

Verse 34

Jesus said to His three disciples, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death." It was a kind of moral midnight within the periphery of His soul.

The weight of woe was literally crushing out the Savior's life.

In bearing it, He was making a more literal sacrifice of Himself than ever had been made on literal altar.

The sacrifice would have been complete, then and there, had it not been that it appeared to Him and to His Father that certain momentous purposes of publicity, in reference to the conclusion of the tragedy, would be better observed by shifting the scene.

“Remain here and keep watch.” Jesus had wished His chosen three to be near Him in His woe; and yet, as it advanced, He felt that He must retire even from them, and be alone with Himself and His Father. No one could be with Him in the agony, none on the altar.

Still He wished that His chosen ones should not be at a distance, and He Said, “Remain here.” He desired to be the object of their active sympathy, and He said, “And watch.”

Verse 35

Jesus went still further from the spot where the eight disciples had been asked to halt. Jesus began to kneel and then fell to the ground and prayed. He continued in prayer and kept addressing His Heavenly father. His aim in addressing His Father is brought out as He began praying, “If it were possible, the hour might pass Him by.”

The “hour” that was imminent and that embraced within its compass His betrayal, His arrestment, and the desertion of His disciples, “might pass Him by.”

He did not pray that the hour of the atoning sacrifice might pass by. It was the incidental woes, inflicted so superfluously and wantonly by men, and to no small extent by His own chosen disciples, it was apparently these more particularly at least, to which the cry of His spirit referred.

Verse 36

“Abba Father, remove this cup from Me.” It was not that our Savior desired to “back out of it.” The “cup,” which He felt so dreadful to drink, had in it ingredients which were never mingled by the hand of His Father, such as the treachery of Judas, the desertion of His disciples, denial on the part of Peter,

the trial of the Sanhedrin, the trial before Pilate, the scourging, the mockery of the soldiery, and the crucifixion.

All these incidental and unessential ingredients were put into the cup by men, willfully and wantonly. Hence the petition, “Remove from Me this cup” —this cup as it is. Without these superadded ingredients the potion would have been unquestionably bitter enough, and it need not be doubted that, in consideration of that bitterness, the exquisite sensibility of our Lord would be conscious of a feeling of shrinking and instinctive recoil.

But still He had come for the very purpose of “tasting death for every man,” and was no doubt willing and wishful to die.

The question with the Savior was not, “What I wish? But what does My Father wish.” There was infinite submissiveness to the wish and will of His Father. If the Father deemed it best that the cup, just as it was, should be drained, the Son was absolutely acquiescent (would not protest).

Verse 37

After some time in agony of His spirit, when He had received strength through prayer, He came to His disciples and found them asleep.

Jesus singled out Peter, partly because he was the leader of the three, and partly because he had singled himself out but a little before. (Verses 29, 31) “Simon, are you asleep, could you not keep awake for an hour,” Jesus said.

Verse 38

It is possible that the three disciples all woke up when Jesus addressed Peter and Jesus said to three, “keep watching and praying that you might not fall into temptation.”

They were in danger of losing confidence in Jesus as the Messiah. There was much need for faithful watching and earnest praying.

Jesus said to the three, “Keep watching and praying that you may not fall into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Verse 39

Jesus' agony returned to Him and He went away praying.

Verse 40

When He returned He found them sleeping for their eyes were heavy. It would appear that they had not deliberately surrendered themselves to sleep.

They did not lie down for instance. They sat, and, to a certain extent, sought to keep themselves awake. They knew not what to say to Jesus in reply. They had no excuse, which they could honestly plead.

Verse 41

Jesus returned a third time and said, "Are you still sleeping?" for their eyes were heavy and they did not know what to answer Him.

Jesus said, "It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners."

It was in compassion that our Lord spoke. His own struggle was past. He did not feel the same need of the intense active sympathy of His disciples which, in the crisis of His agony, He had fervently desired. He saw too that they were still overpowered with drowsiness, notwithstanding the persevering efforts they were making to wake up.

The one who betrays me is at hand and is a reference to Judas.

JESUS BETRAYED VERSES 43-54

The time is after midnight. It is probably between one and three o'clock in the morning of Friday, April 7th. The betrayal took place at Gethsemane, near the base of the western slope of the Mount of Olives, where the Lord had passed the agony.

Verse 43

Judas goes immediately to Caiaphas, or to some other leading member of the Sanhedrin, he informs him where Jesus is and announces that he is ready to

fulfill his compact, and at once to make the arrest. It was not the intention to arrest Christ during the feast, lest it become a popular tumult. Matthew 26:5

This was the opportunity to seize Jesus secretly in the dead of the night when all were asleep or engaged at the paschal meal. His enemies should not hesitate. Judas knew the place, for it was a frequent resort for Jesus and His disciples. John 18:2

Judas was accompanied by a multitude with swords and clubs.

1. The Roman cohort consisted of 300 to 600 men, quartered in the Tower of Antonia, overlooking the temple and ever ready to put down any tumult or arrest any disturber.
2. There were “the captains of the temple with their men,” who guarded the temple and kept order.
3. “A number of the chief priests and elders” also accompanied Judas.
4. And finally, their servants, such as Malchus (John 18:10), and others who had been commissioned by the Jewish authorities.

The soldiers were armed with swords, the officers of the priests with staves (a stick or staff). They also had torches, though the moon was at the full, probably to search under the shadows of the trees and rocks.

Verse 44

“He that was betraying Him had given them a signal.”

Judas had given them a sign previously. It was necessary, inasmuch as (the Roman soldiers did not personally know Christ, and) in the darkness He might be confounded by the soldiers, with the disciples.

The whole account indicates anxiety lest He should escape as He had done before.

The kiss, among the ancients, was a sign of affectionate and cordial intimacy, and particularly a token of fidelity. Nothing could be baser than to come in enmity with the signs of deepest affection.

Thus, Joab betrayed and murdered Abner; a treacherous deed that David could not forget when he was dying.

Verse 45

“Rabbi, and kissed Him.” The salutation was hypocritical reverence.

He kissed Him in an affectionate and earnest manner, adding to the guilt of the betrayal by the manner of committing it.

Verse 46

“They laid hands on Him and sieged Him.” Christ offers Himself to be taken. He could have had twelve legions of angels to defend and rescue Him, had He desired. Matthew 26:53

It was set forth before the eyes of all — including Judas as well—that no man had the power to bind Jesus, or to lead Him away to death, unless “He Himself should lay down His life.”

Verse 47

“One of them drew a sword, and cut off the right ear of Malchus (John 18:10), a slave of the high priest.” The “one of them” was Peter.

The real reason of the non-apprehension was that the servant was healed by the Lord.

The impetuosity of the attack was just like Peter. He asked, “Shall we fight?” and waited not for the answer, but struck at once.

It is likely that Malchus was one of those who had seized the Lord. Peter’s blow was one of his mistakes. Carnal weapons cannot defend the cause of Christ. Beside the Lord needed no defenders.

The death of Christ was a voluntary surrendering of Himself for the redemption of the world.

Knowing the designs of the Pharisees against Him, He could have eluded them by remaining beyond the Jordan River. Knowing the purpose of Judas to betray Him, He could have withdrawn to some place of safety. But now that

His mission of teaching, of healing, of guiding, was accomplished, the hour of sacrifice had come; and He was prepared to meet it.

Verse 48

Judas had cautioned the guard to lead Jesus away securely and when they finally arrested Him they bound Him. Throughout His prolonged sufferings He complained of no other injury done to Him than this; namely, that they came to apprehend Him as a criminal.

Verse 49

Why did they not arrest Jesus while He was teaching in the temple? The offense with which He was charged was one of teaching, not of robbery or violence; it was open, public, unconcealed, and the time to arrest Him was the time of His teaching; He had neither hid Himself, nor surrounded Himself with

His followers for self-protection; the indignity of this midnight arrest was, therefore, gratuitous.

According to the counsel of God, for the salvation of a sinful world, as declared in the Scriptures, the Messiah must suffer; that suffering must be thus brought about. Our Lord's death could not be incidental or accidental.

This declaration also contained consolation for His terrified disciples.

Verse 50

All the forsook Jesus and fled. All had said they would never forsake Him, but as soon as He submitted to His captors they were all panic-stricken, and fled like sheep.

Verse 51

The incident of this young man occurs very briefly, and is narrated apparently for no purpose whatever.

The only solution, certainly the best, is the supposition that it was no other than Mark himself.

Mark was at this time a young man, living probably in Jerusalem with his mother, and was more or less a follower of Jesus, and very likely to be present, from his interest in our Lord, during these awful transactions.

This young man was wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body, and they seized him. The linen cloth was a wrapper thrown over his undressed body. Doubtless this was the “aba,” an outer garment thrown over the dress, and used even to sleep enwrapped the body.

But the word rendered here “naked” often signifies undressed, that is, clad in the under-garments alone. Mark had, probably, been roused from sleep, or was just preparing to retire to rest in a house somewhere in the valley of Kidron, and he had nothing to cover him except the upper garment; but in spite of this, he ventured, in his excitement, to press on amongst the crowd.

This upper garment was worn much like a Scottish plaid, a (checkered pattern worn over the shoulders.)

Verse 52

In attempting to lay hold on him, they grasped only the loose folds of the linen cloth. Letting this remain with them, he fled away and escaped, either not being pursued, or taking advantage of his knowledge of the place, in the darkness of the night, to elude his pursuers.

Verse 53

Jesus was now absolutely alone in the power of his enemies as they led Him away. At the command of the tribune His hands were tied behind His back, and, forming a close array around Him, the Roman soldiers, followed and surrounded by the Jewish servants, led Him once more through the night, over the Kidron, and up the steep city slope beyond it, to the palace of the high priest.

We learn from ([John 18:13-15](#)) that Jesus was first taken to the house of Annas, and, after a brief delay here, to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. It was the duty of Annas to examine the sacrifices, to see that they were “without

blemish.” Christ, the Great Sacrifice, was presented to him, and sent away bound and approved and ready for the altar.

The actual high priest at the time was Caiaphas; but Annas had been high priest, and as such enjoyed the title by courtesy. Luke describes them both as “high priests” ([Luke 3:2](#)) as they were in fact.

It was against the rules of the Jewish law to hold a session of the Sanhedrin or council for the trial of capital offenses by night. Therefore, this gathering was probably an informal meeting one, probably a packed meeting of those who were parties to the plot.

Verse 54

After their flight in the garden, at least two of the , Peter and John, turned about and followed from a distance the group that led the Savior. Peter followed secretly to see what the result would be. John, who was acquainted with the palace of the high priest, secured admission for Peter and himself and began warming themselves at the fire. The spring nights at Jerusalem, 2600 feet above sea level, are often cold. The fire was built in an open court in the interior of the building, open to the sky, around which the palace was constructed.

JESUS BEFORE THE COUNCIL VERSES 55-65

It is early Friday morning, between one and six o'clock. This meeting took place before the dawn of the day on Friday morning, in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest in Jerusalem.

THE COURT

The court convened to try Jesus was the Sanhedrim, or Sanhedrin. It consisted of chief priests, that is, the heads of the twenty-four priestly classes; Scribes, that is, rabbis learned in the literature of the church; and elders, who were chosen from amongst the most influential of the laity. Jewish tradition

puts the number of members at seventy-one. The high priest usually presided; the vice president sat at his right hand. The other councilors were ranged in front of these two in the form of a semicircle. Two Scribes or clerks attended, who on criminal trials registered the votes, one for acquittal, the other for condemnation.

THE TRIAL

The whole criminal procedure in the Pentateuch rests upon three principals.

1. The publicity of the trial.
2. The entire liberty of defense allowed to the accused.
3. And, a guaranty against the dangers of testimony: "one witness is no witness." There must be at least two or three who know the facts.

Jesus was arrested in the night bound as a malefactor, beaten before His arraignment, and struck in open court during the trial. He was tried on a feast-day, and before sunrise. He was compelled to criminate Himself, and this under an oath of solemn judicial adjuration; and He was sentenced on the same day of the conviction.

THE ACCUSATION

The crime for which Jesus was condemned before the Sanhedrin was His alleged blasphemy; that is, an assumption of power and authority which belonged to Jehovah alone. Matthew 26:65)

But when He was brought before Pilate they changed the accusation to one of treason against Roman government, as the only one of which Pilate would take cognizance. Luke 23:2

Verse 55

All the council, the chief priests, Annas and Caiaphas, the ex-high priest and the acting high priest, and the heads of the twenty-four courses, were all present. The judges before whom Jesus was led sat, turbaned, on cushions or pillows, in Oriental fashion, with crossed legs, and unshod feet, in a half circle;

Caiaphas, as high priest, in the center, and the chief or oldest, according to precedence, on each side.

The prisoner was placed, standing before Caiaphas; at each end of the semicircle sat a scribe, to write out the sentence of acquittal or condemnation. Some bailiffs, with cords and thongs, guarded the accused, while a few others stood behind, to call witnesses and, at the close, to carry out the decisions of the judges.

It was necessary to find two witnesses that had been present at the same or a precisely similar offense, whatever it might be. The difficulty was not that they found none but that they could find no one to testify at all.

Verse 56

“Man gave false witness against Jesus.” The charges against Jesus of declaring Himself the Son of God and so making Himself equal with God (John 10:33), was one which it was impossible to substantiate by any witnesses outside the immediate circle of Christ’s disciples. Jesus never publicly proclaimed Himself the Messiah. He forbade the evil spirits from announcing His character. Mark 1:34)

He received the confession of His disciples, but refused to permit them to repeat it to others. Matthew 16:20

Interrogated by the Jews whether He was the Christ, He had refused a direct reply, and had referred them to His works. John 10:24-25

Verse 57

At least two who were willing to give a distorted version of something Christ had said over two years before.

Verse 58

We heard Him say, “I will destroy this temple.” The false witness consisted in giving that sense to Jesus’s words which it appears by Matthew 27:63, they knew they did not bear.

Verse 59

“Their testimony was not consistent.” Their statements varied so much that there was not sufficient testimony on any one point to convict. Therefore, this first plan failed.

Verse 60

During all the wicked attempts to torture testimony against Him, Jesus had maintained unbroken silence. This was galling to the pride of Caiaphas, who saw nothing remained but to force Jesus, if possible to criminate Himself.

The high priest, leaving his official seat, came forward into the middle of the semi-circle, in which the members of the Sanhedrin was seated. The accused stood facing them, so that the high priest was then immediately side by side with Jesus.

“Do You make no answer to what these men are testifying against You?” The question implies a long-continued silence, while witness after witness was uttering clumsy falsehoods.

The first object of Caiaphas was to draw out an answer to the allegations, which, as he well knew, would not suffice, as they then stood, for condemnation.

Verse 61

It was not part of Jesus’ duty, as a defendant, to unravel the contradictions of Jesus’ unprincipled accusers. Jesus was silent; for in answering He must have opened to them the meaning of His words, which was not the work of this hour, and was not fitting for the audience.

Caiaphas became desperate and said to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” He was trying to put the prisoner Jesus, upon His oath to answer questions formed for His own crimination.

Verse 62

And Jesus said, “I am.” His declaration of His Divine Sonship constitutes Christ’s solemn testimony to Himself, uttered at the momentous crisis of His

life, under the solemn sanction of an oath, in the course of judicial proceedings, in the presence of the highest council of the realm, in the far more sacred presence of God and His recording angels, at the peril of His life, and with a clear comprehension of the meaning which not only priests and people would attach to it, but with which it would be forever invested by humanity. If it had not been true it would have been blasphemy.

The “You shall see,” is to the council, the representatives of the chosen people, so soon to be judged by Him to whom all judgment is committed—the power in contrast to His present weakness—sitting, even as they now sat, to judge Him, and the coming of the clouds of heaven looks onward to the awful time of the end, when every eye shall see Him.

Note: This is the Lord’s first formal, public declaration of His Divinity. He now offered up His life in attestation of His Messiahship and Divine character.

Verse 63

“Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, what further need do we have of witnesses?”

The practice of tearing the clothes on occasions of supposed blasphemy was based on 2 Kings 18:37. Originally it was a natural outburst of intense grief and was involuntary; but at a later period, it became a mere form regulated by special rules. The rent, or tear, made in the garment was from the neck downward, and about a span in length.

The body dress and outer garment were left untouched. “What further need do we have of witnesses?” They had called one true witness; His testimony they rejected; and yet on the strength of His testimony they were about to condemn Him.

Verse 64

“You have heard the blasphemy.” Blasphemy here denotes “reproachful, irreverent, or insulting language concerning God, or any of His names or attributes.”

Such would be the making God to be only like a man. Hence, had Jesus not been the Messiah, what He said would have been blasphemy.

“And they all condemned Him deserving of death.”

It may be inferred that none had been summoned who were known or suspected to favor our Lord, though they may have been called to the more formal council at daybreak. This formal condemnation was, as they imagined, according to the Law. (Leviticus 24:16;Deuteronomy 18:20)

The Sanhedrin was forbidden to investigate any capital crime during the night, and according to the Roman law a sentence pronounced before dawn was not valid. This test vote, however, they considered as settling the question. The council now adjourned, to meet at daybreak, when they could legally pronounce the sentence.

The daybreak meeting at which the sentence already pronounced was formally ratified, is described in Luke 22:66-71.

Verse 65

They began to spit on Jesus. One under sentence of death was always, in the rough ages, the sport of mockery by his guards, and those in charge of Jesus, made worse than common by the example of the judges, vented their cruelty on Him with the coarsest brutality.

Their passions, indeed, intensified their bitterness, for they were fierce Jewish bigots. They blindfolded Jesus trying to put His prophetic powers to a mock test.

PETER’S DENIALS VERSES 66-72

Verses 66-68

Peter was below in the courtyard when one of the servant girls of the high priest came to him. Seeing Peter warming himself, she said to him, “You too were with Jesus the Nazarene.”

Peter denied it saying, “I neither know, nor do I understand what you are talking about,” and he went out onto the porch.

Verses 69-70

Once more the maid said to the bystanders, “This is one of them.” But he again denied it. But they answered, “for you are a Galilean too.” One of the bystanders recognized Peter as the one who cut off the ear of Malchus.

Verse 71

Peter began to curse and swear. “I do not know this fellow you are talking about.”

Verse 72

Immediately a cock crowed a second time, this was about an hour before dawn. The trial was just over; our Lord was now in the court passing towards the porch, bound and in the hands of the attendants, and turned to cast a look on the denier.

That look Peter could not forget, but he could hardly bear to speak of it; it also told of his unbroken affection, and that in relating his own great sin he might scarcely dare to record.

What he does relate is the sudden reaction of the second cock-crowing, “and he wept”—he will not even dwell on the bitterness of his anguish.

He omits also the words, “he went out.” He will say nothing of himself save what concerned the greatness of his fall, and the simple fact of his grief (a long weeping), on the awakening of conscience.

When he thought about it, he began to weep, and continued weeping.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE CHAPTER 15: 1-20

Introduction

Though the Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus to death on the charge of blasphemy, they had no power to carry out the sentence and were compelled to carry their prisoner to Pilate, the Roman governor, to secure his sanction.

Pilate goes out and affirms that he finds no fault in Him. The Jews renewing their accusations, to which Jesus makes no reply, and mentioning Galilee, Pilate sends him to Herod, who was then at Jerusalem; but Jesus refuses to answer his questions, and is sent back to Pilate.

Pilate seats himself upon the judgment-seat, and calling the chief priests and elders, declares to them that neither himself nor Herod had found any fault in Him.

According to custom, he would release Him. But the multitude, beginning to cry that he should release Barabbas not Jesus he leaves it to their choice.

Pilate strives earnestly to save Him, but is met by the cry that He is Caesar's enemy. Yielding to fear, he ascends the tribunal, and, calling for water washes his hands in token of his innocence, and then gives directions that Jesus be taken away and crucified.

Verse 1

The next morning the chief priests held a consultation. This was the meeting of the Sanhedrin described by Luke as held at dawn, to ratify formally what had been done before with haste and informality.

The law forbidding capital trials in the night had been broken; the place of session was unusual, if not illegal.

On these accounts it was expedient that a more regular and legal sitting should be held early in the morning as soon as was possible.

While the Sanhedrin had power to try those charged with capital offenses, it had no power to execute the sentence of death. It is generally held that from

the time Judea became a Roman province the authority to punish capitally had been taken away from the Jewish tribunals.

Verse 2

The Jews carefully suppressing the religious grounds on which they had condemned our Lord, had advanced against Jesus a triple accusation.

1. Seditious agitation.
2. Prohibition of the payment of the tribute money.
3. The assumption of the suspicious title of “King of the Jews.”

This last accusation amounted to a charge of treason—the greatest crime known to Roman law. Of the three points of accusation, (2) was utterly false; (1) and (3), though in a sense true, were not true in the sense intended. “Are You the King of the Jews?”

Christ had claimed to be King, but that His “Divine is not of this world.” The “perversion of the people” was not a rebellion that threatened the Roman government.

The defense was complete, as Pilate admits: “I find no fault in Him.”

Verses 3-4

Pilate’s acquittal only kindled the fury of his enemies into yet a fiercer flame. After all they had hazarded, was their purpose to be foiled by the intervention of the very Gentiles on whom they had relied for its bitter consummation?

Jesus answered nothing. He had already explained to Pilate the nature of His Divine and satisfied him that He is innocent of sedition. After that Jesus keeps silent. He will answer honest perplexity, but not willful slander.

Verse 5

Convinced as Pilate was of the innocence of Christ, he was all the more at a loss to understand the forbearance with which Jesus maintained such silence.

Verse 6

It was a Greek and Roman custom to release prisoners on the birthdays of rulers and festive occasions, a custom still followed by rulers.

Verse 7

Matthew says Barabbas was a notable prisoner. Barabbas was plainly a ring leader in one of those fierce and fanatic outbreaks against Roman domination. He had committed murder. In this particular insurrection blood had been shed, and apparently some Roman soldiers had been killed.

It is remarkable that this man Barabbas was confessedly guilty of the very crime with which the priests and rulers had falsely charged Jesus — that of sedition; and no plainer proof of their hypocrisy could be given to the watchful Pilate than their efforts to release the former and condemn the latter.

Verse 8

The mob of the city, pouring from street and alley in the excited Oriental fashion, came streaming up the avenue to the front of palace, shouting for this annual gift. The cry was at once welcome to Pilate for he saw in it a loophole of escape from his disagreeable position.

Verse 9

Pilate presents to the people the two — Jesus and Barabbas — between whom they were to choose. A little interval followed, during which he received his wife's message. He now formally asks the people whom they wished to have released.

They answer, "Barabbas." Pilate hoping more in accordance with his wishes says, "What shall I do, then with Jesus, who is called Christ?" To this they reply, "Let Him be crucified."

Verse 11

The chief priests are induced by the people to consider Jesus as a deceiver, a blasphemer and traitor. Doubtless the friends of Jesus were mostly absent, frightened away by this fearful revolution, or ignorant of what was in progress.

Verse 12

Pilate asked, “What shall I do with Him, who is called the King of the Jews?” “Do with Him” is remarkable since it shows that Pilate made, so to speak, a second offer to release Jesus.

Pilate was called upon by the people to release one prisoner only at the festival, but yet he was willing to leave the fate of Jesus to their decision.

Verse 13

There had been various outcries of the people and with this fresh outburst of fury there was the demand for Jesus’ death.

Verse 14

Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has He done?” The question attested to Pilate’s conviction of the innocence of the Jesus, but it attested also to the cowardice of Pilate, the judge.

Pilate sought to satisfy all the people, by releasing Him from death, but he satisfied none.

Verse 15

Pilate wanted to satisfy all the people, but the pitiful vacillation of a man, devoid of all principle or conscience of duty, did not release Jesus.

Pilate is willing to appease the people. Heaven and hell strive in his bosom for the mastery and the latter gains the victory.

Verse 16

They led Jesus into the Praetorium, the “hall of judgment,” which is the headquarters of the Roman military governor. The “whole band,” or cohort, which was gathered to join in the mockery, was the tenth part of a legion, embracing from three to six hundred men.

Verse 17

Jesus was clothed in purple and they put on Him a crown of thorns, made from a plant similar to the cactus. What crown could have been imagined for

our King Jesus which should have so exactly suited Him as this crown of thorns? He who came to obtain for us the blessing bears what the curse-laden earth brings forth, being made a curse for us.

Verse 18

They began to acclaim Jesus, “Hail, King of the Jews.”

The “King of the Jews,” the title which He assumed, and which these soldiers, like their commander, thought supremely ridiculous, as borne by such a person. It has been well observed that, as the Jews especially derided His prophetic claims, so the Romans mocked at his regal pretensions.

Verse 19

The blow of the reed on the head would have been too light to inflict much pain upon any other part than the head, and there it would aggravate the pain of the thorns.

They spit upon Him as their excitement increased, following the example of the chief priests.

It is remarkable that during the whole of this treatment Christ offered no resistance and uttered no word—He who with a glance of His eye could have scathed them into ashes.

Verse 20

They took the purple robe off of Jesus and put His garments on Him, to signify that He suffered not for His own sin, and led Him out to crucify Him.

“Led Him out,” the place of execution was outside the city walls. “Outside the city walls,” in order to show us that we are not to expect sanctification by the sacrifices offered within the city; and that He died, not for the Jews only, but for all mankind.

After the mocking, and before the royal robes were taken, we have to insert the account which John gives ([John 19:4-5](#)) of Pilates’s last attempt to rescue the “Just Man,” whom he had unjustly condemned. He showed the Silent Sufferer in the mock insignia of royalty, as if asking them, “Is not this enough?”

The cries to “crucify Him!” were but redoubled; and once again the cowardly judge took his place in the official chair and passed the final sentence.

JESUS CRUCIFIED VERSES 21-39

The Lord was taken by the soldiers without the city to a place called Calvary (the place of a skull, or Golgotha) to be crucified. The site is uncertain as to its location.

It was (1) apparently a well-known spot; (2) outside the gate (Hebrews 13:12); (3) near the city (John 19:20); (4) on a thoroughfare leading into the country (Luke 23:26); and (5) contained a “garden” or “orchard,” (John 19:41).

Nothing demonstrates more forcibly the malignity of the Jews than their persistent and boisterous demand that Jesus should be crucified.

Other forms of execution were common; stoning, as in the case of Stephen; killing with the sword, as in the case of James; beheading, as in the case of John the Baptist, and, among the Romans, strangling.

The terrible details of such a death should be noted in order to comprehend what our Savior suffered for us.

Jesus was stripped naked of all His clothes. He was laid down upon the implement of torture. His arms were stretched along the cross-beams, and to the center of the open palms the point of a huge iron nail was placed, which, by the blow of a mallet, was driven home into the wood.

Then through either foot separately, or possibly through both together, as they were placed one over the other, another huge nail tore its way through the quivering flesh. To prevent the hands and feet being torn away by the weight of the body, which could not “rest upon nothing but four great wounds,” there was, about the center of the cross, a wooden projection strong enough to support, at least in part, a human body, which soon became a weight of agony.

And then the accursed tree, with its living human burden hanging upon it in helpless agony, and suffering fresh tortures as every movement irritated the

fresh rents in hands and feet, was slowly heaved up by strong arms and the end of it fixed firmly in a hole dug deep in the ground for that purpose.

The body was terribly wrenched when the cross was raised and dropped into its place; the concussion often dislocated the limbs.

Inflammation of the wounds in both hands and feet speedily set in, and ere long rose also in other places where the circulation was checked by the tension of the parts; intolerable thirst and ever-increasing pain resulted; the blood, which could no longer reach the extremities, rose to the head, swelling the veins and arteries in it unnaturally, and causing the most agonizing tortures in the brain, besides, it could no longer move freely from the lungs; the heart grew more and more oppressed, and all the veins were distended.

The weight of the body itself, resting on the wooden pin of the upright beam, the burning heat of the sun, scorching the veins, and the hot winds which dried up the moisture of the body, made each moment more terrible than that before.

The numbness and stiffness of the more distant muscles brought on painful convulsions; and this numbness, slowly extending, sometimes through two or three days, at last reached the vital parts, and released the sufferer by death.

Verse 21

The Roman officer had official authority to press into the military service, for a special purpose, either horses or men, and he compelled Simon a Cyrenian to carry Jesus' cross. Jesus at first bore His own, as was customary. [John 19:17](#)

Tradition says that our Lord fell to the ground beneath the load.

A more exact expression of [Luke 23:26](#) shows that part of the cross alone, which actually dragged upon the ground, was put upon Simon.

Note: Here, as always, the Savior bears the heaviest part of the burden.

Verse 22

Golgotha in the Hebrew means a skull. From its Latin equivalent, calvaria, comes our English word Calvary, which occurs in the English New Testament only in Luke 23:33, where it should be translated “a skull.”

Verse 23

Wine, mingled with myrrh was a stupefying drink to deaden the pain. It was composed of vinegar or sour wine, in which were mingled certain bitter drugs. It was customary for compassionate people to give a stupefying drink to criminals on their way to execution.

The effect of the draught was to dull the nerves, to cloud the intellect, to provide a deadening against some part, at least, of the lingering agonies of the dreadful death.

Jesus refused the drink! In the refusal He was not going to dull either the sense of suffering or the clearness of His communion with His father. Jesus was going to drink the cup which his Father had given Him to the last drop, and not to dull, either the sense of suffering or the clearness of His communion with His Father, with a slumberous potion.

Verse 24

They nailed Jesus to the cross. There were three forms of crosses, the first in the shape of the letter X, one in the form of the letter T, and third the cross like the preceding one, except that the upright beam projects above the horizontal one.

The garments were prerequisites of the executioners, who parted Jesus' garments casting lots.

As there were four soldiers there would be four shares. The inner robe, however, like the robes of the priests, was of one piece, woven from the top, without any seam or stitching and would be destroyed by rending (tearing).

The dice were ready in their pocket, and one of their brazen helmets would serve in which to throw the dice. It was better to cast lots for this, and let him who won the highest number keep it for himself; and so it was done.

Note: This process had been written ages before and recorded in Psalms 22:18, rightly believed to refer to the Messiah.

Verse 25

The third hour according to the Jewish reckoning was from sunrise, about nine o'clock our time. But according to John 19:14, it was already the sixth hour when Pilate made his last attempt to rescue Jesus. A solution is that John, writing primarily for the churches of Asia Minor, uses the Roman mode of reckoning, that is, from midnight.

Verse 26

It was the Roman custom to place on the cross over the criminal's head a titulus, or placard, stating the crime for which he suffered. Luke 23:38 says that the title was written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and all spectators would be able to read it.

Verse 27

Two thieves were also crucified along with Jesus. These two robbers, in all probability were partners in the crime of Barabbas. The mountain robbers, or banditti, were always ready to take part in such desperate risings against the Roman power.

Verse 28

Note: This verse was omitted in the RSV, not being found in the oldest manuscripts. Later manuscripts add this verse: And the scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was reckoned with transgressors."

Verse 29

Those who passed by railed at Jesus. This was the people going in and out of the city, on the thoroughfare near the place of the crucifixion. They claimed

that Jesus destroyed the temple but their claim was a perversion for Jesus had claimed not to destroy but to rebuild the temple destroyed by them.

Verse 30

“Save Yourself and come down from the cross.”

This may be ironical, or it is a recognition of His miracles or mercy, to taunt Him with a supposed loss of power just when He needed it most for Himself. If Christ had saved Himself He would not have saved others.

Verse 31

The chief priests, and Scribes, and elders, less awestruck, less compassionate, than the mass of the people, were not ashamed to add their heartless reproaches to those of the evil few.

Verse 32

“Come down from the cross that we may see and believe.” If they saw Him with their bodily eyes by a miracle come down from the cross, they would believe.

The only authority for their faith was what they could grasp with their hands, or see with their eyes.

The thieves may have also reviled Jesus. It may have been just one. Matthew and Mark speak in general terms of them as a class of persons that joined in deriding Jesus, but without meaning to say both actually derided Him.

Verse 33

Darkness came over the land at the sixth hour and lasted until the ninth hour. “Over the whole land” does not determine how far the darkness extended. Many would confine it just to the land of Judea.

Verse 34

The ninth hour, three o'clock; so far as appears, during the three hours of gloom the Lord was silent, and, doubtless, all were silent around Him. Then Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, was hast Thou forsaken Me?”

The particular words are expressive of the Divine abandonment, or of the departure of the Divine presence, as part of His atonement endurance. They are uttered by Jesus to show that He is enduring an intolerable agony, deeper than any external infliction.

When He began His suffering on the cross, He said, “Father;” and when He reached its end He also said, “Father;” but in the deep midnight of woe between them, He said, “My God, My God!”

Reasons for the forsaking: one is, God rejects sin, and sin was then laid on Jesus. Again, perhaps the Almighty Father meant that Jesus should now fight the battle single-handed, in order that the glory of the final victory to be gained might be His own.

Verse 35

“He is calling for Elijah.” There is here an allusion to the belief that Elijah would come before the Messiah, hence a sarcastic denial of his Messiahship.

Verse 36

A sponge full of vinegar was out on a reed and offered to Jesus. The vinegar is the posca, the sour wine, or vinegar and water, the ordinary drink of the Roman soldiers.

Verse 37

Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last. He yielded up His spirit.

Verse 38

“The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” Judaism was forever obsolete, and the holy of holies had ceased to be the peculiar presence chamber of Jehovah among men. Nor was a sign wanting that it was so, for the great veil of purple and gold—sixty feet long and thirty broad—before the inner sanctuary of the temple, suddenly rent itself in two from top to the bottom at the moment of Christ’s death.

Verse 39

The centurion, an officer in the Roman army, one who answers to the captain, said, "This man was the son of God." Notice that he says not is but was a Son of God; evidently in his thought the death of Christ was the end.

It is interesting to note that the cross had greater effect on the centurion, who had been before simply ignorant of and indifferent to Christ, than on the Pharisees.

WOMEN WATCHING, DESCENT FROM THE CROSS, THE BURIAL.

VERSES 40-47

Verses 39-41

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention this group of women. Three women are mentioned as belonging to those that followed Jesus, when He was in Galilee, and ministered to Him.

Also, many other women are mentioned by Mark as having come up with Jesus to Jerusalem. They stood afar off, looking on, and with them were "Jesus' acquaintances," that is, the group containing generally those of His friends who were present in Jerusalem.

It is a touching fact that the mother of Jesus appears only there, beside the cross, and not among those who stood afar off.

Mary Magdalene's connection with her Lord began, as that passage leads us to believe, with Jesus' act in casting out of her "seven demons," that is, in relieving her of some severe form of demoniacal possession.

After the healing she became one of the "ministering women," but her recorded connection with her Lord has to do mainly with the scenes of His death and resurrection.

Mary, was the mother of Joseph and James the less, or "the little." Probably a descriptive name given because he like Zacchaeus, was small of stature.

Salome is to be identified with the “mother of Zebedee’s children and probably with the sister of our Lord’s mother. John 19:25. Between the record of the death and that of the descent from the cross, John inserts the narrative, which he alone has preserved, of the breaking of the legs of the two robbers, in order to hasten their deaths before the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, and of the piercing of the side of Jesus with the soldier’s spear, in order to test the reality of Jesus’ death, or rather to decide the question, if there was any doubt.

It is from the outflow of “blood and water” that the inference is drawn respecting the physical cause of death.

Verse 42

The natural inference is that the death occurred not long after the ninth hour, that is, between three and four o’clock by our reckoning. The Sabbath would begin at sunset. It was common enough for the Romans to leave the bodies of the crucified on the cross. They often remained there till they were devoured by birds or fell to pieces in decay--but this execution had taken place under Jewish auspices. And the Jews would not be willing, in view of the prohibition in Deuteronomy 21:23, that the body of Jesus should not remain all night on the cross, and still less over the Sabbath, as the Sabbath of the Passover week was a “great day.”

Verse 43

Joseph of Arimathaea is mentioned by all four evangelists. Arimathaea is of uncertain origin.

It is commonly identified with Ramah, or the home of Elkanah, the father of Samuel—a place which is known in the Septuagint as “Armathaim.” Perhaps the word, standing where it does, indicates that he arrived at the place when Jesus was dying or dead, having only then come into the city from his home. If he had been at Arimathaea since the night before, he may have known nothing of what was going on; in which case the sudden amazement would swell the tide of his indignation and horror, and easily lead him beyond his former self in devotion to the Crucified One. Boldly means “waxing bold,” coming to new boldness. In this new boldness he went to Pilate, to his house or place of

judgment, where the chief priests would not go for fear of defilement. There he literally “asked” for the body of Jesus.

Verses 44-45

Pilate did not know of the breaking of the legs of the robbers. Only a few hours had passed and it seemed impossible that Jesus was dead.

Pilate called the centurion and asked whether Jesus had been dead long (*palai*), not “any while.”

There is a certain rough tenderness in Pilate here; he would do what he could to preserve the Crucified One from insult and help Him to an honorable burial, so the death being officially confirmed, he gave him the body, or rather, “granted the corpse” to Joseph.

Joseph now brought “a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.” This was not necessarily brought beforehand; speedy burials were common in that land and rapid preparation must have been common too. Moreover, there is no reason to doubt that Nicodemus knew all the day long what was going on. He may have been preparing while Jesus was dying.

There is something extremely touching about the coming of these two men to bury the body of Him whom they had not publicly confessed when He was alive.

Verse 46

The fine linen was the sindon, a foreign fabric, probably Indian; said to have been used in Egypt as a wrapping for mummies. The wrapping in this cloth was not a mere enfolding of the body, but, at least in part, the closer wrapping or binding (John, “they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen cloths with the spices”) which was customary among the Jews. When Lazarus came forth, he was “bound hand and foot with grave-clothes,” (John 11:44), each limb wrapped up by itself. The wrapping, however, in the case of Jesus was left unfinished because of haste, the Sabbath coming quickly.

Mark tells us nothing, saying merely that it was hewn out of a rock, or rather, “out of the rock”—that is, not a natural cavern, such as were frequently used for tombs.

It was no rude cave in which Jesus was laid, but a carefully made sepulchre. Luke and John tell us that it was new and had never before used; Matthew, by a single word said that it was the property of Joseph. From John we learn that it was in a “garden” or orchard, an enclosed and cultivated place—the same word that is used of Gethsemane—and that the garden was “in the place where Jesus was crucified—that is, close at hand.

The nearness of the spot is given by John, who says nothing of Joseph’s ownership as the reason for selecting it, the approach of the Sabbath requiring haste. Having thus placed the body, Joseph rolled a stone unto, or against, the door of the sepulchre.

Verse 47

The women had remained at the cross when no apostle was there, and now they followed to the sepulchre, where new friends were doing the work that belonged to the old.

Luke shows them present and watchful during the entombment. He also shows them going home and preparing spices to finish the embalming, but not till after the Sabbath.

That Sabbath was to be a “high day” with the Jews; to the disciples it was a day of despair. In truth, it was the turning point of time, though neither Jews nor disciples knew it. The crime of the Jews and of sinful humanity was completed; the revelation of God as Savior had been made; the breaking forth of the new power of God unto salvation.

But that Jewish Sabbath before the dawning of the first Lord’s Day, was the time of pause and silence: the Prince of Life lay dead.

All their hopes seemed disappointed; the new power was yet unknown and undreamed of in the world. No day was ever like that, or ever shall be.

Matthew adds what was done after the night had passed: the enemies of Jesus secured the placing of the official seal of the governor on the door of the tomb and the setting of a guard there, under the pretense of fear that Jesus' friends might steal His body and declare that he had risen.

SUNDAY: JESUS RISEN CHAPTER 16:1-13

Introduction: The place of the burial was in a new made tomb, hewn out of the rock, belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. It was in a garden not far from Calvary, but the precise location of Calvary or the sepulcher is unknown to man.

Soon after the Lord's death the chief priests came to Pilate, requesting that the bodies might be taken down before sunset, because the next day was the Sabbath.

Obtaining their request, the legs of the two malefactors are broken to hasten their death; but Jesus, being found already dead, is pierced with a spear in the side.

At this time, Joseph of Arimathea goes to Pilate, and informing him that Jesus was already dead, asks His body for burial; and Pilate after satisfying himself that Jesus was actually dead, orders the body to be given to Joseph.

Aided by Nicodemus, Joseph took the body and winding it in linen cloths with spices, laid it in his own sepulcher, in a garden near the cross and shut up the sepulcher.

Some women beheld where Jesus was laid, and, returning home, prepared spices and ointments, that they might embalm Jesus after the Sabbath was passed.

During the Sabbath the council obtains permission from Pilate to seal up the sepulcher, and to place a watch, lest the disciples should steal the body.

Nothing stands more historically certain than that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared again to His followers, or than that their seeing Him again was the beginning of a higher faith, and of all their Christian work in the world.

Verse 1

The Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, Saturday, was over.

Note: The first day of the week, Sunday, is never the Sabbath in the Scriptures, but the “Lord’s day,” or the “first day.”

The Sabbath ended at sunset according to Jewish ideas.

We find that Mark mentions Mary Magdalene, Mary, mother of Jesus, and Joanna, “and others with them.”

They had brought sweet spices consisting of myrrh, aloes and other preventives of putrefaction, and odorous perfumes.

It was customary among the Jews, as a mark of honor to the deceased, after washing the corpse, to anoint it with certain perfumes, or to enclose them in the grave clothes in which the body was wrapped.

They were sometimes burned as incense.

The hurried burial had not permitted this anointing to be completed; it had been commenced by Nicodemus at the time of the interment.

Verse 2

Very early on Sunday morning, Salome the wife of Zebedee, who had a home in Jerusalem; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, who had her home doubtless in Herod’s palace on Mount Zion, came to the tomb. These and the two Mary’s who had gathered the spices also came to the tomb.

Verse 3

They had not known that the Jewish rulers had gone to Pilate and asked for the securing of the tomb with a large stone and the watch he had placed over the tomb.

Their only anxiety after arriving at the tomb was how can we remove the great stone from the mouth of the sepulcher.

Verse 4

Matthew says that an angel came and rolled it away and that there was an earthquake, but the commotion nor the earthquake accompanied the rolling away of the stone.

Verse 5

Mary Magdalene seeing the stone rolled away and supposing the body had been removed by the Jews, runs to find Peter and John. John 29:1-2

The other women proceed to the sepulcher and enter.

Inside they saw a young man, Matthew calls him an angel. Luke says that there were two who stood, that is, appeared suddenly. They were dressed in a long white garment, white as snow and their countenance was like lightning. The white raiment was a symbol of purity and of fellowship with God. They were afraid, yet filled with awe and amazement.

Verse 6

The angel said to them, “Do not be amazed, you are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene—He is not here. He has risen, but here is the place where they laid Him.”

Verse 7

The angel said, “Go tell His disciples and Peter, that He is going before you into Galilee, there you shall see Him.”

Christ’s first appearance is to Mary Magdalene out of whom He had cast seven devils. His special message is to Peter, who had denied Jesus, three times.

Note: Our Savior came to save sinners. Tell Peter, for it will be news more welcome to him than to any of them; for he is in sorrow for sin, and he will be afraid lest the joy of this good news does not belong to him.

Before His death, Jesus had promised to meet His disciples after the resurrection, in Galilee. Matthew 26:32

Verse 8

On the way to tell the disciples, they said nothing to any one, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them and they were afraid.

An observation: Their haste here to tell the story of the resurrection is an illustration of the spirit which should always be active in us Christians.

Verse 9

Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene. John 20:11-17 Mary Magdalene, on finding the tomb empty, went way immediately to inform Peter and John.

She left the other women at the tomb. But soon after these had left, Peter and John arrive in haste, followed by Mary Magdalene. The disciples examine the tomb and depart, leaving Mary near the sepulchre. While weeping there she looks in and sees two angels who speak to her; then, turning back she sees Jesus Himself, whom she thinks to be the gardener, for the tomb was in a garden. She recognizes Him by the tone in which He speaks her name.

Verse 10

While she was going to tell the disciples, Jesus appeared to the other women, who had started before on the same errand. Matthew 28:9-10 Possibly Mary had joined the others by this time. As they went they mourned and wept. It seemed to them that not only had their Friend gone, but every hope of salvation and of the promised coming of the Divine of God, had departed with Jesus.

Verse 11

When the heard that Jesus was alive and was seen by Mary Magdalene, they refused to believe it. It was the testimony of Peter that convinced them. Luke 24:34

In the entire remainder of the chapter Mark gives three appearances of our Savior which illustrates the matter of their unbelief which Jesus' resurrection had to overcome in the minds of the disciples.

Verse 12

1. First of all to Mary Magdalene, whose narrative they did not believe.
2. After that, Jesus appeared to the two from Emmaus, whose account was also disbelieved.

Verse 13

3. And afterwards they went away and reported it to others, but they did not believe it either.

They seemed to have forgotten that Jesus said he would rise again. It was while they were discussing the story of the two disciples who had seen Him at Emmaus that the Lord appeared in their midst and "upbraided their unbelief." Luke 24:36

THE GREAT COMMISSION VERSES 14-20

Verse 14

The eleven disciples were eating when Jesus appeared to them and reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Verse 15

Jesus said to them, "Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation." Here begins the Great Commission, as given by Jesus on the day of His ascension. It had already been given, as recorded by Matthew, on the mountain in Galilee. Matthew 28:16-20 It is properly called a commission, because it committed to the what they had not before received, the authority to preach the gospel, and to announce the conditions of salvation.

Prior to this the had been forbidden even to tell any man that Jesus was the Christ. Matthew 16:20, 17:9 Now their lips are unsealed, with this limitation.

They are to tarry in Jerusalem until they “receive the power from on high.” Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:7-8 Then they are to “go into the world and preach the gospel to everyone.”

Verse 16

He that believes, that is he that believes the gospel. It was to be preached in order that it might be believed, and belief both of this account and because it is from the nature of the case, a prerequisite to repentance and obedience. This is the first act of compliance which salvations demands.

“And is baptized,” is an act of obedience, which could not be without faith and therefore shows that baptism is to be preceded by faith. This commission both authorizes the to baptize believers and restricts them to believers as the subjects of baptism.

It is impossible therefore, that the could have found authority in their commission for baptizing infants.

“Shall be saved” means to be made safe. It implies that the person saved was in danger, or in actual distress and that the danger of the distress is removed. When the term refers to the eternal state it includes the resurrection from the dead and perpetual safety from sin and suffering.

When the term “saved” is used it means that he or she is made safe from his or her past sins, which is effected by pardon and can be effected in no other way. In the statement, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” the salvation promised includes the forgiveness of sins, the promise of pardon to all who believe and are baptized.

If any man’s mind revolts at the idea of placing baptism in such a connection with salvation or the forgiveness of sins, let him or her remember that it is Jesus who has placed it in this connection, and that when our minds revolt at any of His words or collocation of words, it is not His fault but ours. If one should be tempted to say, “True, he that believes and is baptized shall be saved,

but he that believes and is not baptized shall be saved also,” let him ask why Jesus in this formal commission, says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” if the same is true of him who is not baptized.

If he or she that is not baptized, being capable of the act, is as certainly saved as he or she that is baptized, then the Savior spoke idle words in the commission.

Jesus would be offering two plans of pardon to the same class of sinners, showing partiality by offering to release one on easier terms than another.

When the went out to preach under this commission, they knew only from its terms to whom they should promise pardon, and consequently they never encouraged any person to hope for it previous to baptism, nor gave any unbaptized person reasons to think that his or her sins had already been forgiven.

“He who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

Condemnation already rests on those who believe not (John 3:19), but the are here told that it shall especially rest on those who hear the gospel and believe it not. The state of condemnation which now exists will reach forward into eternity, unless its cause be removed.

In like manner as the state of salvation enjoyed by the baptized believer will reach into eternity, unless it be forfeited by subsequent apostasy.

The leading thought in the commission is to state the ground on which men would be saved, and not that on which they would be condemned. The were to be concerned with saving men, not with condemning them. Jesus tells them in detail on what ground they are promised salvation; but as condemnation is man’s own work, not theirs, Jesus speaks of that comprehensively by naming the one sin of unbelief which renders all acceptable obedience impossible, and is the chief cause of all condemnation.

A man should come to the commission; then, not to learn how he may be condemned, but how he may be saved; and this it teaches him right plainly.

Verses 17-18

The promise is, not that these signs shall follow for any specified time, nor that they should follow each individual believer; but merely that they shall follow, and follow ‘the believers’ taken as a body. They did follow the believers during the apostolic age—not every individual believer, but all, or nearly all, the organized bodies of believers.

Signs were intended to convince unbelievers and they were always wrought openly in the presence of the unbelievers: let us see them, and then we will believe. Paul’s expectation was that prophesying, speaking in tongues, and miraculous knowledge, would vanish away 1 Corinthians 15:8; and so they did with the death of the and of those to whom they had imparted miraculous gifts.

Verse 19

The statement that “after the Lord had spoken to them He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God,” establishes a close connection in time between the close of the speech and the ascension of Jesus. The same connection is indicated by Luke both in his gospel and in Acts, where although he quotes none of the words reported by Mark, he reports a conversation quite similar to it which occurred on the same occasion and was immediately followed by the ascension.

Verse 20

Mark overlaps the stay of the in Jerusalem and reaches forward to the period of their greatest activity, when “they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed.”

Thus, Mark brings to a most appropriate termination his narrative of those events that had gradually prepared the for the mission of mercy on which they were sent and which, when recited in their preaching, led men to believe in Jesus, and to accept the offered salvation.